Prodigies 3191

Chapter 3191 Bestowing Attributes and Establishing Profound Truths

The atmosphere stiffened, and for a long while no one spoke. These ancient monsters knew all too well how terrifying the Heavenly Mandate Apostles were. It was not the cultivation of those apostles they feared, but the power and authority behind them. Under such circumstances, who would dare involve themselves lightly?

Lin Xun was not surprised by their silence. He also knew that cultivators who had been trapped here for countless years could not possibly feel no resentment toward those Heavenly Mandate Apostles.

Sure enough, after only a brief pause, a voice transmission reached his ears. “Young friend, there are eleven Heavenly Mandate Apostles of the Li Department in this world. Their leader has the title Six-Yang Heavenly Venerable. They are currently entrenched at...”

In no time, Lin Xun had obtained all the information he sought. He neither exposed the sender nor so much as glanced in their direction. Without a word, he turned and departed with Xia Zhi.

Having learned from the ambush in the Thousand Tribulations Zone, Lin Xun had no intention of waiting for his enemies to strike first. This time, he would act before them and eliminate the threat at its root. Only then would he ascend Dao Defining Mountain to define the dao.

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On the shores of a vast lake, Six-Yang Heavenly Venerable and the other Heavenly Mandate Apostles had long been entrenched here. For years, they had cultivated here in quiet seclusion.

“The Lord has instructed us not to deal with Lin Xun,” a tall man clad in bronze armor said with a frown. “Now that he has entered this world, are we really going to sit idly by?”

“The Lord has his own plan. We need only carry out his command,” Six-Yang Heavenly Venerable replied indifferently. He resembled an aged daoist priest, a tall hat crowning his head and flowing daoist robes draped about him. A horsetail whisk rested lightly in his hand, his expression composed and unreadable.

“Does the Lord truly believe that even if we join forces, we are no match for Lin Xun?” someone muttered, unable to conceal the bitterness in his tone.

“How about I go test his strength?” another said eagerly. “If his power is indeed beyond us, then we retreat. But if he cannot withstand a single strike, then the spoils will be ours.”

Six-Yang Heavenly Venerable fell silent for a moment before repeating slowly, “Test his strength?”

“Yes. Merely a probe.”

Several pairs of eyes lit up with anticipation. Those capable of reaching the Dao Defining Zone were far from ordinary Immeasurable Realm cultivators. Each possessed a formidable foundation.

Just then, a faint laugh echoed across the distance. “You wish to test me?”

Before the echo of his words had faded Lin Xun and Xia Zhi were already striding through the air toward them. Six-Yang Heavenly Venerable’s pupils contracted sharply. They had yet to make a move, but their opponents had already come knocking! The others were equally startled, caught completely off guard.

“Lin Xun, do you intend to fight us?” Six-Yang Heavenly Venerable asked, unable to hide his astonishment.

He still found it hard to believe that Lin Xun would dare walk straight into their stronghold. What kind of confidence did that require?

“If I hadn’t come,” Lin Xun said calmly, “I’m afraid you wouldn’t have been satisfied.”

He paused. “Enough talk. Will you test me one by one...or all at once?”

Six-Yang Heavenly Venerable and the others exchanged grim looks. Lin Xun was far too composed. He had come of his own accord and declared war without hesitation. That alone made them feel uneasy.

“Attack together. If anything feels wrong, withdraw immediately.” Six-Yang Heavenly Venerable transmitted swiftly to the others.

“Understood.”

“Agreed.”

“If the eleven of us cannot defeat the two of them, then there is no point in continuing this fight.”

Their eyes gleamed as they readied themselves.

The next moment—Boom!

Six-Yang Heavenly Venerable and the others struck at once, unleashing their full might in unison. Dao weapons soared into the sky as a raging torrent of power surged forth, blotting out the sun itself.

“This time, let me handle it. Don’t interfere.” Before her words had fully fallen, Xia Zhi had already stepped into the void. Lin Xun was briefly taken aback, then shook his head with a faint, helpless smile. He had no choice but to watch from afar.

Clang!

In the distance, Xia Zhi’s graceful and slender figure became veiled in a hazy rain of light. The white bone spear in her hand glowed faintly as she thrust it forward. A vast river of fate roared into the sky, boundless and endless.

Rumble!

A great battle erupted. The heavens and the earth trembled violently, and even the sun and moon seemed to lose their light. However, the clash lasted only a few breaths before death struck.

Pu!

Xia Zhi's spear flashed. An opponent was pierced cleanly through the chest. With a dull explosion, his body burst apart and was instantly swallowed by the surging river of fate, erased without leaving the slightest trace.

Six-Yang Heavenly Venerable and the other's expressions changed drastically. Without hesitation, they turned to flee. Unfortunately for them, the river of fate was vast beyond measure. It had already blanketed the entire world, sealing off every escape route. When they attempted to break through with all his strength, they were instead battered by the overwhelming river of fate.

Pu!

Seizing the moment, Xia Zhi's white bone spear shot forward once more, piercing another opponent without mercy. The strike was clean and decisive, crushing him as easily as rotted wood. Terror gripped Six-Yang Heavenly Venerable and the others. Driven to desperation, they erupted with all their strength, fighting like beasts forced to the brink of madness.

It was futile. In the moments that followed, Xia Zhi flickered across the battlefield like a phantom. Her white bone spear thrust out again and again, each strike claiming another life. Then, one by one, the apostles fell and were swallowed by the river of fate.

Within moments, all eleven Heavenly Mandate Apostles, including Six-Yang Heavenly Venerable, were slaughtered on the spot. Not a single one survived! Had other cultivators witnessed that blood-soaked spectacle, their souls would have fled their bodies in terror.

However, Lin Xun, who had witnessed it all from beginning to end, remained perfectly composed. From the very beginning, this was never an equal battle. After all, with Xia Zhi's current strength, slaying opponents at the level of an Immeasurable Dao Lord was hardly worth mentioning.

"I expected more from them." Xia Zhi returned, a trace of disappointment flickering across her exquisite face.

"Let's go."

Lin Xun smiled and turned, leaving together with Xia Zhi. Half an hour later, they returned to Dao Defining Mountain. The dozen or so ancient cultivators lingering nearby were visibly startled by their swift return.

“Fellow Daoist Lin...you’ve returned victorious?” one of them asked, unable to restrain himself.

Lin Xun smiled faintly. “From this day forward, those Heavenly Mandate Apostles will no longer appear in this world.”

Before his words had fully faded, he and Xia Zhi had already risen into the air, streaking toward Dao Defining Mountain. In the blink of an eye, their figures were swallowed by the dense primal chaos origin power and vanished without a trace. Lin Xun’s words left the old monsters standing there in stunned silence. After a long pause, they exchanged glances, horror dawning in their eyes.

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With a strange ripple in space, Lin Xun appeared in an unknown world, as though he had stepped into the heavens and earth at the very dawn of chaos, when the primordial wilderness first came into being.

Across the boundless expanse of mountains and rivers grew plants and trees unlike any he had ever seen. Strange birds wheeled through the skies, and unfamiliar beasts roamed the earth. Every living creature here was something he had neither seen nor heard of before.

He stood silently, his gaze sweeping across the unfamiliar world. Only after a long moment did he withdraw his eyes. He then found a broad stone and seated himself cross-legged upon it. Casting aside all distracting thoughts, he began to perceive the laws of the heavenly dao that governed this world.

Only by comprehending and mastering the profound mysteries of the heavenly dao laws could one, when defining the dao, endow all things with their proper attributes and deeper truths, allowing them to harmonize with the great dao of heaven and earth and give rise to a complete and ordered dao realm.

Time slipped by in silence. One day gave way to the next. During this time, a small snow-white creature appeared. It resembled a deer, yet not quite. Its fur was pure as frost, and its movements were light and nimble. Curious, it approached Lin Xun, who sat motionless upon the stone.

Sensing no threat, the little beast remained nearby. By day, it frolicked among the mountains. By night, it nestled beside the stone where Lin Xun sat and slept peacefully. Lin Xun naturally noticed the little fellow, but he paid it no mind, remaining fully immersed in his comprehension of the heavenly dao laws.

Until one evening, the tranquility was abruptly shattered. From the distance, the snow-white little beast came fleeing in panic. One of its legs hung limp and wounded, blood streaming behind it as it staggered forward desperately.

Close behind surged a massive beast resembling a python, but with a pair of azure wings on its back. With every beat of its wings, savage winds roared across the land. However, the giant creature showed no urgency to kill. It simply pursued leisurely, like a cat toying with a mouse.

When they came within a few hundred feet of Lin Xun, the little snow-white beast let out a string of frantic, urgent cries. Then it collapsed to the ground, lying flat as if all strength and hope had drained from its body.

At that very moment, Lin Xun, who had been seated in meditation like a motionless statue, felt a surge of indescribable emotions in his heart. He could hear the meaning carried within those cries. They were not pleas for help. They were warnings, urging him to flee at once.

What moved him even more deeply was that the little fellow, knowing its wounds were fatal and escape was impossible, had chosen to offer its own body to the beast to buy him a brief moment to escape.

Roar!

The ferocious python-like beast plunged down from the sky, its blood-red maw yawning wide to swallow the little creature whole.

“If I allow you to die...how could I ever answer to my own conscience?” Lin Xun’s eyes slowly opened.

At that very moment, the giant beast froze mid-descent, as though bound in place by an unseen force. A terrified wail burst from its throat before its massive body crashed to the ground with a heavy thud, trembling violently.

“Though you have formed an ill-fated karmic bond with me,” Lin Xun said calmly, “you are nonetheless a living being born of this heaven and earth. I shall spare your life. But, from this day forward, generation after generation, your clan shall never surpass the descendants of this little one’s lineage.”

When he finished speaking, he flicked his sleeve lightly, indifferent to whether the beast understood his words. In the next instant, the enormous beast was teleported across space and cast into the distant mountains and rivers, vanishing from sight.

At that moment, the little snow-white beast seemed to awaken from a dream. It struggled to its feet, glancing around in confusion before its gaze finally settled upon Lin Xun. A bright joyful cry burst from its throat. Despite its limp, it hobbled forward and circled the stone again and again, trembling with excitement and delight.

“Since you and I have formed a good karmic bond, I cannot treat you poorly.” Lin Xun smiled faintly. With a light flick of his sleeve, the little beast’s injured leg healed at once as though it had never been harmed.

At the same time, he extended his right index finger and pointed lightly through the air at the space between the little creature’s brows. A mysterious power of attribute arose within the snow-white beast’s body, imprinting itself into the very marrow of its bones.

This was the true meaning of bestowing attributes and establishing profound truths, allowing a being to resonate with the laws of the heavenly dao and align with its rhythm. From that moment onward, it was no longer an ordinary creature of the wild. It could now embark on the path of cultivation and walk the road of transformation!

Following that, Lin Xun named it Snow Spirit Deer.

The Snow Spirit Deer blinked, faintly sensing that something within it had changed. Yet it also felt as though nothing had changed at all. In the very next moment, unconcerned with such matters, it simply curled up comfortably beside the stone where Lin Xun sat and drifted into sleep.

From that moment onward, Lin Xun's spirit sense expanded outward like a vast net, spreading silently through the laws of the heavenly dao that governed this unknown world. Soon, all things within this unknown world, down to the smallest detail, were clearly reflected within his mind.

He spoke softly, "From this day forth, I, Lin Xun, shall define the dao of this world, bestowing upon it its attributes and establishing its profound truths. May all living spirits beneath heaven ascend in resonance with the heavenly dao and open the path to a cultivation civilization that shall flourish for countless generations!"

His voice rang out like a sovereign decree of the heavenly dao. Word by word, it resounded throughout this unknown world, reverberating through the myriad phenomena beneath heaven.

Chapter 3192 Supreme Elder Qing Feng

When his voice fell, a profound transformation swept across the world. All things burst forth with newfound vitality and color. Every blade of grass and towering tree, every bird and roaming beast seemed infused with spirit, as though awakening from a primordial slumber. A grace and wonder never before seen filled heaven and earth.

All that had once been unknown was being defined. Each thing received its name, its attributes, and its distinct profound truths. Within the veins and roots of flowers and trees, traces of the great dao emerged. In the fur, blood, sinews and bones of birds and beasts, a subtle resonance of the dao quietly pulsed.

Even the rocks and gravel, the drifting mist and cascading waterfalls, the flickering flames and wandering breeze...all revealed wondrous imprints of the dao...

This transformation lasted for seven full days.

Even then, Lin Xun was not fully content. Through the heavenly dao laws of this world, he wove the profound principles he had long comprehended, such as the dao of good and evil, the truths of right and wrong, and countless other subtle mysteries, one by one into the invisible traces that permeated the world.

Thus were all spirits beneath heaven gently nurtured, allowing them to, in silence and without knowing it, one day comprehend these profound mysteries.

Only then did Lin Xun murmur softly, “That should suffice...From this day onward, this realm shall be called Daoyuan Realm.”

Standing upon the stone with his hands clasped behind his back, he felt countless insights suddenly surge through his mind.

Is the very act of defining the dao itself the creation of a complete cultivation civilization? When all living beings beneath heaven resonate with the heavenly dao and rise in harmony with the qi of the great dao, then with the passage of time they will inevitably give birth to myriad wondrous cultivation systems, and from then, a true cultivation civilization shall emerge!

If merely defining the dao is already so wondrous...then if one day I were to create a dao never before seen in this universe, what imaginable spectacle would it reveal?

Lin Xun couldn’t help but let his thoughts wander far and wide. At last, he withdrew them and prepared to depart. Only then did he notice that the Snow Spirit Deer had awakened. Its clear, limpid eyes were fixed on him. Within them flickered unmistakable reluctance.

Compared to before, the little creature now possessed a unique transcendent spirituality, as though true intelligence had awakened from confusion.

“Little one, if fate allows, I shall seek you in the Fortune Dominion one day,” Lin Xun said gently with a smile.

He had already comprehended the primal chaos origin power of the Dao Defining Zone and understood that this unknown world he had defined would, like the great dao world he once forged in the Test of Dao Building in the Calamitous Zone, one day emerge among the epochal civilizations born from the Fortune Dominion.

In other words, when he eventually departed the All-Wonder Dominion and journeyed to the Fortune Dominion, he would be able to sense the Daoyuan Realm he himself had defined. As for whether he would ever meet the Snow Spirit Deer again, that would depend on whether it was still alive.

The Snow Spirit Deer seemed to gather its courage and suddenly leapt forward, rubbing its head against Lin Xun's leg. Then it dropped to its forelegs and bowed deeply, pressing its head to the ground as soft cries poured from its throat. Lin Xun understood. The little one was expressing gratitude for the enlightenment he had bestowed upon it.

"Go," Lin Xun said with a warm laugh, waving his hand. "Walk your own dao."

Then, his figure vanished into the void, leaving no trace behind.

Shua!

At the summit of Dao Defining Mountain, Lin Xun appeared. Xia Zhi was already there waiting.

"You're finished?" Lin Xun asked.

Xia Zhi nodded and said in a clear voice, "Next, we head to the Dao Derivation Zone. You must be especially careful there. I doubt our enemies will miss this opportunity to strike."

"You too," Lin Xun said, reaching out to gently ruffle her hair.

Xia Zhi lifted her face slightly and pointed to her forehead. Lin Xun was taken aback for a moment, then immediately understood. He lifted Xia Zhi's exquisite face in his hands and gently pressed a kiss to her smooth forehead.

Then, Lin Xun blinked playfully and asked, "Satisfied now?"

Xia Zhi replied calmly, "No. You haven't given me a child yet."

"..."

Then Xia Zhi broke into a mischievous, radiant smile. “I was teasing you. I’ll only consider having children with you after you marry me.”

With that, she turned and stepped into a heavenly gate, vanishing from sight. Lin Xun paused, a strange emotion stirring in his heart. It seemed Xia Zhi was no longer as innocent as before. At the very least, she now understood that certain matters, especially those concerning children, were not meant to be spoken of so casually.

Then, Lin Xun shook his head with a faint smile and stepped forward. As he did, the heavenly gate opened of its own accord. On this day, he comprehended the mysteries of the primal chaos origin and departed the Dao Defining Zone with effortless grace.

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The Dao Derivation Zone, the eighth sky zone of the Realm of All Spirits.

Any cultivator who entered this realm would undergo something akin to rebirth through possessing, assuming a new body, a new identity, and a new fate. From that moment on, they would be known as a Deriver of the Dao.

The Tianwu Sect was a second tier cultivation sect within the Dao Derivation Zone. It occupied Maple Cloud Spirit Mountain.

“Sect Leader, if your Martial Uncle Qing Feng dares to behave so recklessly again, there will be no need to consult me. Confine him directly to his quarters!” Inside a grand hall upon the mountain, the supreme grand elder of Tianwu Sect, Qing Heng, spoke through clenched teeth, his voice heavy with both frustration and disappointment.

Before him stood a bed, and upon it lay Qing Feng, supreme elder of the Tianwu Sect. His face was bruised and swollen beyond recognition, and his robes were in disarray. He remained unconscious, looking utterly miserable.

“Understood.” The sect leader, Fu Yunzi, hurriedly agreed, though an awkward expression flickered across his face.

Three days earlier, Qing Feng had once again gone to the Tianling Sect to see the woman he had been infatuated with for nine hundred years. He had not even reached the gates before being stopped by the Tianling Sect's disciples. Invoking his status as supreme elder of Tianwu Sect, Qing Feng had attempted to force his way in.

In the end, he was beaten by a mere disciple at the Cyclic Derivation Stage. He was beaten so badly that he collapsed on the spot. After that, the Tianling Sect had sent him back to the Tianwu Sect.

This incident made the entire Tianwu Sect feel utterly humiliated. However, what could be done? After all, Qing Feng was a supreme elder. Even Fu Yunzi dared not punish him without consulting Supreme Grand Elder Qing Heng.

As expected, Qing Heng was both furious and ashamed. Thus this scene unfolded.

After a long pause, Qing Heng added more quietly, "See that the finest elixirs are used to treat his injuries. Do not allow any hidden afflictions to remain."

In their youth, he and Qing Feng had joined the Tianwu Sect on the very same day. Though they were fellow disciples, they had long regarded one another as brothers. For all his anger, Qing Heng's heart still ached at the sight of Qing Feng's battered state.

"Rest assured, Senior Martial Uncle, I will personally see to Martial Uncle Qing Feng's recovery." Fu Yunzi replied earnestly.

"And once he recovers," Qing Heng continued coldly, "have him oversee the Scripture Pavilion. Under no circumstances is he to leave the sect again, especially not to seek that woman!"

With that, he turned and strode away. Fu Yunzi remained standing for a long moment, gazing at the unconscious Qing Feng, his expression complicated. At last, he sighed deeply and departed as well.

Not long after, the figure lying on the bed stirred. Qing Feng slowly opened his eyes. Of course, at that moment, Qing Feng was no longer Qing Feng. He had become Lin Xun. His identity, memories, and experiences had all been inherited by Lin Xun.

“I never imagined I would end up as a useless old fool...a laughingstock known to all....” A strange expression flickered across Lin Xun’s face. Qing Feng was one of the three supreme elders of Tianwu Sect. He had cultivated for a thousand years.

His two senior brothers, Qing Heng and Qing Geng, had both reached the supreme Emperor Ancestor Stage, and were the two strongest figures in the Tianwu Sect. His martial nephew Fu Yunzi, the current sect leader, had already advanced to the eighth realm of the Emperor Stage, the Dao Harmonization Realm.

In terms of status alone, Qing Feng ranked among the top three figures of the sect. However, his cultivation remained only at the Cyclic Derivation Stage. That was...awkward.

Not only was he far inferior to his martial nephew, but even the majority of junior disciples in the sect could also defeat him with ease. Thus, Qing Feng occupied a rather awkward position within the Tianwu Sect. Outwardly, the entire sect treated this supreme elder with proper reverence, but in private, countless regarded him as the sect’s greatest embarrassment.

It did not help that Qing Feng possessed an impatient and impulsive temperament. He lacked the dignity expected of a senior figure and frequently committed acts unbefitting his status. Over the years, he had become the source of countless jokes.

Even now, whenever disciples of the Tianwu Sect traveled beyond its gates, the mere mention of Qing Feng’s name filled them with an indescribable sense of shame and embarrassment.

Just three days ago, Qing Feng had secretly slipped out of the sect and gone to the Tianling Sect in search of Tian Ruojing. He had not even passed the gates before being brutally beaten unconscious. The incident had already spread among neighbouring sects and was now treated as a joke.

The entire Tianwu Sect felt humiliated and indignant. Even Sect Leader Fu Yunzi found it difficult to hold his head high in public. Now that Lin Xun had inherited Qing Feng’s memories, he understood the entire matter clearly, so his judgement was different.

Qing Feng was not wicked by nature, nor was he arrogant or domineering. On the contrary, most of the ridicule he endured stemmed from his cultivation. When a sect's supreme elder possessed only such meager strength, whatever he did would inevitably be scrutinized, magnified and mocked.

Just as three days ago. Qing Feng had gone to Tianling Sect for a reason. Nine hundred years ago, he had fallen deeply in love with a woman of the Tianling Sect named Tian Ruojing. He had been hopelessly devoted to her ever since, and even now, after centuries had passed, he could not forget her.

All he had wanted was to see her once. He had never intended to cause trouble.

Unfortunately, Tian Ruojing had long since ascended to the Supreme Emperor Ancestor Stage. She was regarded as the most promising figure in a thousand years and was said to be destined to step onto the Immortal Path. Within the Tianling Sect, her status was transcendent.

In contrast, although Qing Feng bore the title of a supreme elder of the Tianwu Sect, he remained at the Cyclic Derivation Stage. Between him and Tian Ruojing was a gulf so vast they might as well have belonged to different worlds.

Most importantly, Tian Ruojing had never harbored the slightest affection for him. On the contrary, his persistent appearances over the years had only deepened her aversion. Under such circumstances, how could he possibly have been granted the chance to see her?

Everyone in the Tianling Sect knew Qing Feng's identity and background. There was no reason for them to show him any courtesy. Therefore, when he attempted to force his way through the sect gates, what followed was only natural.

Chapter 3193 The Reason Behind His Infatuation

The Tianling Sect handled the matter with notable restraint. When Qing Feng was stopped at the mountain gate, they did not take excessive measures. After all, he was still a supreme elder of Tianwu Sect and the junior brother of Emperor Ancestor Qing Heng. The Tianling Sect had no intention of offending the Tianwu Sect over someone like him.

Instead, they proposed a condition. If Qing Feng could defeat a Tianling Sect disciple of the same cultivation level, he would be permitted to enter the sect and see Tian Ruojing.

Qing Feng agreed without hesitation. Then, he was beaten senseless. Even as he lay bloodied and broken, he refused to admit defeat. The entire battle was recorded on a jade slip. When the Tianling Sect sent Qing Feng back, unconscious, they also delivered the recording as well.

With that evidence in hand, Sect Leader Fu Yunzi had no grounds to lodge a complaint. Qing Feng had gone to the Tianling Sect of his accord. He had agreed to the challenge. Who could they blame?

After inheriting all of this, Lin Xun could not help but sigh. The man the sect called its disgrace, the figure others mocked as a laughingstock, was in truth simple-hearted and kind. His greatest flaw was that he understood neither human nature nor the ways of the world.

A man so lacking in worldly awareness would inevitably invite criticism. Whatever he did could easily be dismissed as overestimating himself, ignorant of his own limits, blind to the vastness of heaven and earth, and even courting death.

Despite that, Qing Feng did not care. His only wish was to remain by Tian Ruojing's side and grow old with her. As for the malice and ridicule of the world, he paid them no heed.

Unfortunately, reality was merciless. A simple-hearted and almost foolishly naive man like Qing Feng was destined to struggle in the ruthless world of cultivation. Gaining a foothold there for him was no easy matter.

"So...it was love."

After combing through Qin Feng's memories once more, especially those concerning Tian Ruojing, Lin Xun finally understood. When a person endures endless setbacks and hardships, there were usually only two outcomes: either they collapse into despair, or they grow stronger, tempering their dao heart like steel forged in fire.

Qing Feng had done neither. He had not forged an indomitable dao heart nor had he fallen into despair. This was because, from the day he first met Tian Ruojing until now, for nine hundred long years, his heart had never changed. He remained hopelessly devoted.

Because of that devotion, he did not care about any slander or ridicule. Because of that devotion, he did not mind becoming a laughingstock or even a disgrace.

“Unfortunately...it is nothing more than one-sided love.” Lin Xun could not help but feel both a trace of amusement and a sense of sorrow. Immediately, he couldn’t help but feel a little curious.

Qing Feng had cultivated for a thousand years and held the title of supreme elder, so why had his cultivation remained stranded at the Cyclic Derivation Stage? If his aptitude was truly mediocre, how could he have been accepted into the Tianwu Sect in the first place? Something did not add up!

Lin Xun stilled his thoughts and quietly began to examine Qing Feng’s condition. It did not take long before he found the source of the problem. A shocking fissure tore through Qing Feng’s dao foundation! It was as though a massive boulder had been cleaved cleanly in two.

Under such circumstances, it was no wonder his cultivation had remained stranded at the Cyclic Derivation Stage. Even the most gifted genius would have been reduced to the same fate.

“Who inflicted such an irreparable wound upon his foundation?” Lin Xun began to sift through Qing Feng’s memories once more. After a long moment, his eyes narrowed. Understanding dawned.

Nine hundred years ago, Qing Feng had already reached the Cyclic Derivation Stage. At that time, he had cultivated for only a hundred years, and was already able to achieve such cultivation. That alone marked him as astonishingly gifted.

It was during that period that he first met Tian Ruojing and fell hopelessly in love. Back then, Tian Ruojing was merely at the Heaven Ascension Stage. However, her beauty was breathtaking, and her talent equally dazzling. Admirers surrounded her wherever she went.

At the time, Tian Ruojing held Qing Feng in high regard, and the two often traveled and explored together. Unfortunately, during one expedition into a secret realm, disaster struck. Tian Ruojing was caught in a deadly calamity. Without hesitation, Qing Feng stepped forward, stood against the killing tribulation and saved her life.

The calamity was ultimately resolved, but Qing Feng paid a devastating price. Though he survived, he was grievously wounded. When he finally recovered, he discovered that his dao foundation had suffered irreparable damage.

For any cultivator, there was no crueler blow. Despite that, Qing Feng did not regret it. What mattered to him was that he had saved Tian Ruojing, the woman he loved. At that time, Tian Ruojing had been deeply moved. She promised that one day she would remain by his side and grow old with him. Hearing those words, Qing Feng was overjoyed.

However, not long after they returned to their respective sects, a letter arrived from Tian Ruojing. In it, she gently explained that she had entered a critical juncture in her cultivation and would likely be unable to see him for some time.

Qing Feng was understanding. He waited with quiet hope, frequently writing to her, pouring his longing and devotion into every line of ink. At first, Tian Ruojing replied to each letter promptly. Then replies came every three to five days. Then every three to five months.

Any ordinary person would have sensed her feelings have changed. Qing Feng did not. He continued to wait, full of expectation.

Once, Tian Ruojing wrote to him with a request. What happened in the secret realm and how he had saved her must never be spoken of to anyone. He agreed without question. To this day, even his senior brother Qing Heng, his martial nephew Fu Yunzi, and the others remained unaware that the devastating damage to Qing Feng's dao foundation was the price he had paid for saving her.

That alone revealed how deeply Qing Feng cared for Tian Ruojing. Even though he had endured years of ridicule and humiliation, he had never once exposed the truth. Year after year slipped by.

Qing Feng, who had long dreamed of growing old at Tian Ruojing's side, eventually could no longer restrain himself. He began visiting the Tianling Sect in person to seek her out. Unfortunately, every time, the answer was the same: Tian Ruojing was in closed door cultivation.

Still, Qing Feng refused to give up. Every few days, he would return to inquire again. Gradually, word spread throughout the Tianling Sect that Qing Feng, the so-called laughingstock, was actually attempting to pursue Tian Ruojing. This ignited waves of ridicule and scorn.

Qing Feng did not waver. As time passed, mockery turned to open disdain. The entire Tianling Sect came to regard him with disgust. They had never expected his persistence to descend to such shameless extremes.

Meanwhile, the Tianwu Sect felt deeply humiliated by their supreme elder's conduct. Many tried to reason with him, telling him that he and Tian Ruojing no longer belonged to the same world and urging him to let go. Even his senior brother Qing Heng personally sought out beautiful and accomplished women, hoping to persuade Qing Feng to shift his affections.

Despite that, Qing Feng's devotion never wavered. In the end, no one in the Tianwu Sect bothered trying to dissuade him anymore.

After digesting these memories, Lin Xun's brows slowly knit together. If Qing Feng's love had merely been unrequited, if Tian Ruojing had never returned his feelings, then so be it. After all, blossoms may fall in longing while the water flows on in indifference. Such sorrows were common in this world.

Now it seemed the truth was far more complicated! Had Qing Feng not risked his life to save her back then, Tian Ruojing would likely have perished.

What troubled him even more was that, if she had never promised to remain by Qing Feng's side, perhaps he would not have waited so stubbornly for nine hundred years. Even if she had changed her mind, would it not have been simple enough to tell him directly? Why drag it on, letting him cling to the faintest sliver of hope?

"It would be one thing if this woman had merely failed to honor her promise," Lin Xun murmured inwardly. "But Qing Feng once saved her life. To repay kindness with indifference, to stand by and watch him become a disgrace to his sect and a laughingstock of the world because of her...how cold and selfish must her heart be!"

A flicker of anger stirred within him.

"Very well. Since I, Lin Xun, have temporarily borrowed your identity, your memories, and your life, then when I depart, I shall leave behind a favorable karmic destiny for you." Lin Xun let out a long breath and his mind gradually settled into calm.

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Three days later.

The Scripture Pavilion of the Tianwu Sect.

Lin Xun, now as Qing Feng, sat alone at a wooden desk, quietly turning the pages of a book in his hands.

From the side, Sect Leader Fu Yunzi spoke in a lowered voice, “Martial Uncle, Senior Martial Uncle Qing Heng has instructed that you are not to leave the sect again. From this day forward, you will remain here in the Scripture Pavilion. If there is anything you require, simply inform the disciples. So long as it lies within my power, I will see that it is done.”

“I understand,” Lin Xun replied absentmindedly.

Fu Yunzi turned to the two disciples stationed within the Scripture Pavilion. “From this day onward, attend to Supreme Elder Qing Feng with the utmost care. If there is even the slightest negligence, you will answer for it!”

“We respectfully obey the sect leader’s decree!” The two disciples cupped their fists and bowed in acknowledgement.

Fu Yunzi then turned back to Lin Xun. “Martial Uncle, is there anything further you would like us to attend to?”

“Nothing for now.” Lin Xun replied after a brief pause. “Staying here is in truth rather peaceful. Oh, one more thing. Convey a message to Senior Brother Qing Feng on my behalf. Tell him that I will not be going to see Tian Ruojing again and tell him to not worry about me.”

Among all within the Tianwu Sect, Qing Heng was the one who treated Qing Feng with the greatest kindness. The two had entered the sect together in their youths and to this day they were as close as true brothers.

Over the years, although Qing Feng had become the subject of countless jokes, Qing Heng had always shielded him with his power. That was precisely why, although many within the sect regarded Qing Feng as a disgrace, none dared openly slander or show him disrespect.

Fu Yunzi stood there in stunned silence, disbelief written across his face. “Martial Uncle...are you speaking the truth?”

Heavens! Could it be that after that brutal beating, Martial Uncle had finally come to his senses?

“Whether it is true or not, time will tell.” Lin Xun said calmly, giving a casual wave of his hand. “You are the sect leader. There are countless matters demanding your attention. There is no need for you to frequent the Scripture Pavilion in the future.”

Fu Yunzi let out an awkward sound, casting Lin Xun a doubtful glance. Only then did he turn and depart.

“You two may withdraw as well.” When Fu Yunzi had departed, Lin Xun turned his gaze toward the two disciples stationed within the Scripture Pavilion. One was called Chun Ning and the other Dai Yan.

“Elder, we...” They hesitated.

“I know why you are here,” Lin Xun said casually. “You were ordered to keep watch over me so I do not slip out of the sect again. But there is no need to remain inside. Simply stand guard outside the pavilion.”

Chun Ning and Dai Yan exchanged a glance before bowing in acknowledgement and withdrawing from the Scripture Pavilion.

“Remaining here in the Scripture Pavilion is not a bad arrangement. As long as I keep a low profile, no one should notice anything unusual about me...” Lin Xun murmured.

As a Dao Deriver, the moment his identity was exposed, the enemies scattered throughout this world would descend upon him without hesitation. After all, in his current state at the Cyclic Derivation Stage, he was at his weakest. Any enemy who arrived could easily eliminate him.

Chapter 3194 Lie Low and Survive

The territory of the Dao Derivation Zone was vast beyond measure, rivaling an entire heaven domain of the Eternal True Realm. Throughout its long history, four great dao lineages had stood at its apex: the Immortal Pavilion, the Divine Court, the Demonic Gate and the Yao Sect.

Each of these four great powers housed numerous Immortal figures, their foundations deep and unfathomable. Beneath them were twelve first tier cultivation forces. Though these factions also possessed Immortal experts, their foundation and authority paled in comparison to the four great dao lineages.

Below those lay countless second and third tier forces, scattered across various territories of the Dao Derivation Zone. Most of them lacked even a single Immortal cultivator. The Tianwu Sect was one such second tier force, situated in the eastern territory of the Dao Derivation Zone. In that region alone stood more than a hundred similar second tier forces.

Only one first tier power presided over that territory: the Crimson Serpent Immortal Sect. Of note, the Crimson Serpent Immortal Sect was subordinate to the Immortal Pavilion, one of the four great dao lineages.

After learning this information, Lin Xun felt more at ease. The Tianwu Sect was, after all, merely a second tier sect. If he concealed himself here, it would be near impossible for his enemies to discover him in the near future.

In contrast, had he awakened within a first tier force, or worse, within one of the four great dao lineages, the risks would have multiplied tenfold. For Lin Xun, there was only one priority now: To cultivate!

“To derive a dao path that leads directly toward Eternity using Qing Feng’s foundation, spirit, and body...” he murmured. “I must first comprehend the power of the heavenly dao laws of this world...”

Then a frown creased his brow. “At the Cyclic Derivation Stage, I can only touch the dao rhythm and dao intent within the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws. To attempt to grasp the very essence of this world’s laws in one step would be impossible.”

He fell into deep contemplation. Cultivators within the lower five cultivation stages were constrained by their cultivation. At most, they could sense the dao rhythm and dao intent woven through the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws.

Those who walked the Immortal Path, the Saint Path, the Emperor Path, or the Eternal Path could also perceive only the profound mysteries of the great dao that matched their own cultivation realm.

From this, it was clear that for someone at the Cyclic Derivation Stage, directly glimpsing the fundamental essence of this world’s laws was near impossible.

“Then I shall first mend the crack in this dao foundation and elevate my cultivation first. ” Lin Xun decided.

Though he now became Qing Feng, his insight and cultivation experience remained wholly intact. To others, Qing Feng’s fractured dao foundation was beyond repair. However, to Lin Xun, there were thousands of ways to resolve it!

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Days passed. Within the Tianwu Sect, life continued as usual. Few paid attention to the movements of Supreme Elder Qing Feng. After all, who would concern themselves with the affairs of the sect’s greatest embarrassment? For most, it was already a blessing that he no longer ventured outside to make a spectacle of himself.

At first, Sect Leader Fu Yunzi remained somewhat uneasy. However, as time passed and Qing Feng continued to stay obediently within the Scripture Pavilion, he gradually relaxed his vigilance. After all, as the sect leader, he could not possibly devote all his attention to Qing Feng.

Especially now that Qing Feng had become so compliant, he was rarely seen even within the Scripture Pavilion. Even disciples who frequently came to borrow scrolls treated him as though he were invisible. This was not out of open disdain, but because they felt ashamed to be associated with him.

Lin Xun could not have cared less. On the contrary, he welcomed it. The less attention he drew, the better.

A month slipped by in the blink of an eye. Each day, Lin Xun sat quietly within the Scripture Pavilion, sipping tea and reading scrolls until dusk. When night fell, he would return to his residence to meditate and cultivate in silence.

Days became weeks. Weeks became months. No one knew that during these six months, he had already resolved the damage within Qing Feng's dao foundation. With a secret technique, he had rebuilt his lower five cultivation stages entirely, refining each stage to a degree Qing Feng had never even imagined.

Fearing that even the slightest fluctuation in his aura might draw suspicion, he employed another secret art to suppress all signs of this transformation. To the outside world, he remained the same 'disgrace of the sect,' a man everyone was ashamed to be associated with.

During this period, Qing Heng also came by the Scripture Pavilion on several occasions. Though he claimed to be searching for certain texts, it was obvious he had come to check on his junior brother.

Seeing Qing Feng stay quietly within the pavilion, Qing Heng's heart eased considerably. Before leaving, he placed several bottles of carefully prepared elixirs on the table. "These will help restore your dao foundation," he said.

Watching him depart, Lin Xun couldn't help but sigh inwardly. Qing Feng has such a good senior brother!

Seizing the opportunity, Lin Xun later requested permission to cultivate for a time within the sect's forbidden ground, Tianluo Cave. The request startled Qing Heng at first. Then delight overtook him. If his junior brother had finally resolved to focus on cultivation, what greater blessing could there be?

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After six months of secluded cultivation within Tianluo Cave Lin Xun's cultivation surged in one sweeping breakthrough, reaching the ninth level of the Longevity Tribulation King Stage. At this point, even the spiritual energies of Tianluo Cave were no longer sufficient for his cultivation needs.

Without hesitation, he departed and went to seek out Qing Heng. After all, he was now Qing Feng, a man who had been hopelessly devoted to Tian Ruojing for nine hundred years. If he suddenly moved on from her it would be far too unnatural. Such a change would inevitably arouse suspicion.

Within his cave dwelling, Qing Heng looked up as Lin Xun arrived. "Junior Brother, what brings you here?"

"Senior Brother," Lin Xun said, deliberately revealing a trace of excitement, "the elixirs you gave me were remarkably effective. My dao foundation has recovered significantly. I believe it will not be long before I am fully restored!"

"Really?" Qing Heng's eyes lit up with genuine happiness.

Lin Xun nodded with a smile. Then he hesitated. "Senior Brother...I was thinking...perhaps I should make a trip to the Tianling Sect..."

Immediately, the joy drained from Qing Heng's face in an instant. His brows drew together sharply. "It has only been a few months," he said coldly. "And you cannot restrain yourself from seeking that woman again?"

Disappointment laced his voice.

Lin Xun sensed the shift immediately, yet he had no choice but to continue the performance. Lowering his gaze, he said, "Senior Brother...if my dao foundation is repaired, if my cultivation rises...perhaps one day I may stand on equal footing with Miss Ruojing. So I..."

Before he could finish, Qing Heng's expression darkened. "You may see her if you wish, but only after you attain the dao and step onto the Emperor Path. When that day comes, I will personally accompany you to the Tianling Sect. Until then, you will not leave this sect!"

His tone left no room for argument. Lin Xun lowered his head, outwardly helpless. Inwardly, however, he let out a quiet breath of relief. From Qing Heng's reaction, it was clear, at least for now, that no suspicion had arisen regarding his identity.

"Junior Brother," Qing Heng said gravely, "in my view, Tian Ruojing has become the inner demon on your path of cultivation. If you do not ever sever it, you will never achieve true accomplishment in this lifetime."

Then his voice softened. "Now that there is hope of restoring your dao foundation, I cannot allow you to continue to remain so obstinate. From this day forward, every three months, I will personally guide you and impart my cultivation insights."

Lin Xun quickly raised his hands in protest. "No need, no need. Senior Brother. Your time is far too precious, how could I dare trouble you over my trivial matters? I will heed your words and remain in the sect obediently."

Without waiting for further persuasion, he bowed and retreated at once. Qing Heng stood there for a long moment before letting out a heavy sigh. Helplessness weighed on his heart.

Back then Junior Brother's talent was dazzling, but he has now fallen to such a state. It's all because of that woman, Tian Ruojing. One day, I'll find an opportunity to teach that woman a lesson. He gritted his teeth.

After leaving Qing Heng's residence, Lin Xun made his way back to the Scripture Pavilion.

"I may have convinced Qing Heng but I must ensure no one else even begins to question me..."

Thinking of this, Lin Xun suddenly shook his head and let out a faint sigh.

"Martial Granduncle, why the long sigh?" Chun Ning, one of the disciples assigned to guard the Scripture Pavilion, could not help but ask.

“You wouldn’t understand.” Lin Xun sighed again.

Dai Yan hesitated, then asked cautiously, “Martial Granduncle...you’re not thinking of going to the Tianling Sect again, are you?”

Lin Xun fell silent for a moment before replying in a tone of helpless resignation. “I cannot go. Senior Brother Qing Heng just strictly forbidden me from stepping beyond the sect gates.”

Chun Ning and Dai Yan exchanged a glance, speechless. They had only enjoyed a few months of peace, but their Martial Granduncle’s old habit had already relapsed.

That very day, the two discreetly spread the news throughout the sect. When Sect Leader Fu Yunzi heard of it, the corner of his mouth twitched. He had thought his Martial Uncle had finally come to his senses. Who would have imagined he was still hopelessly stuck in his old ways?

As for the rest of the sect, no one was particularly surprised. This was the Qing Feng they knew. None of them realized that Lin Xun had gone to great lengths to stage the entire performance, all to ensure that not the slightest suspicion would take root.

Several days later Lin Xun was seated within the Scripture Pavilion, leisurely sipping tea as he turned the pages of a book, when fragments of conversation drifted to his ears.

One month ago, the four great dao lineages, Immortal Pavilion, Divine Court, Demonic Gate, and Yao Sect, had jointly issued a decree. A warrant for the capture of newly arrived Dao Derivers within the Dao Derivation Zone!

Anyone who provided credible information would be richly rewarded. At the same time, the twelve first tier forces subordinate to the four great dao lineages had cooperated fully, dispatching elites to patrol the lands and search for traces of these Dao Derivers. The news shook the entire world. The Dao Derivation Zone was in turmoil.

According to the information Lin Xun had gathered, in the eastern territory alone, where the Tianwu Sect was located, the Crimson Serpent Immortal Sect had already taken action. They had dispatched ten

supreme Emperor Ancestors and they were now sweeping through the major forces of the eastern territory.

It would not be long before they arrived at the Tianwu Sect to conduct their inspection! A faint chill crept into Lin Xun's heart. He did not need to think twice. This storm was aimed at him.

When it came to Dao Derivers, all the major forces within the Dao Derivation Zone were well aware of their existence. It was common knowledge that Dao Derivers did not belong to this world.

Among the four great dao lineages, more than ten Dao Derivers were publicly known. Every one of them stood as a towering figure on the Immortal Path. Several had already reached the Transcendence Realm.

Someone of Qing Feng's standing also knew that among the Dao Derivers of the four great dao lineages, the seven most powerful were Heavenly Mandate Apostles of the Alpha Origin's Gen Department. The one who led them was Zhu Cheng, the number one figure on the Immortal Path in the Immortal Pavilion.

Having inherited Qing Feng's memories, Lin Xun naturally understood that this storm aimed at him could only be the work of Zhu Cheng and the other six Heavenly Mandate Apostles!

"Fortunately, I made some preparations a few days ago," Lin Xun murmured to himself. "No suspicion was stirred. Even if the ten supreme Emperor Ancestors of the Crimson Serpent Immortal Sect arrive in person, they should discover nothing out of the ordinary."

Chapter 3195 Qing Heng Injured

On the third day after Lin Xun learned of the news the ten supreme Emperor Ancestors of the Crimson Serpent Immortal Sect arrived at the Tianwu Sect. Supreme Elders Qing Heng and Qing Geng personally went to receive them.

Half an hour later, every disciple within the lower five cultivation stages was summoned to the main hall. One by one, they were questioned by the visiting Emperor Ancestors. Even Chun Ning and Dai Yan, who had been stationed outside the Scripture Pavilion, were called over.

This caused Lin Xun to grow more wary. Unexpectedly, his name was never called. It wasn't until noon that Chun Ning and Dai Yan returned, bringing news that the ten supreme Emperor Ancestors of the Crimson Serpent Immortal Sect had already departed.

Lin Xun couldn't help but ask, "I am also only at the Cycle Derivation Stage, why was I not summoned?"

Chun Ning's expression turned odd and he replied with a hint of sarcasm, "Martial Granduncle...what is your status? How could they summon you at their whim?"

Lin Xun cast him a sideways glance. "Who do you think you're fooling with that? Tell the truth."

Chun Ning hesitated before lowering his voice, "When they arrived, they had already heard...quite a bit about you. After confirming matters with Senior Martial Granduncle Qing Heng, they unanimously decided there was no need to see you."

Lin Xun's brows furrowed slightly. "There is more to it. Continue."

Chun Ning shifted uneasily, then finally said in a whisper, "Those experts from the Crimson Serpent Immortal Sect said...you are already pitiful enough. They could not bear to embarrass you further in public."

Dai Yan hurriedly added, "Martial Granduncle, you are a supreme elder of our Tianwu Sect. How could you be interrogated alongside ordinary disciples? Senior Martial Granduncle Qing Heng would never have allowed it."

Lin Xun let out a soft chuckle. "In the end...they simply look down on me."

He lowered his gaze, concealing the faint relief in his eyes. Look down on me? That works perfectly in my favor!

Chun Ning and Dai Yan fell silent. Only now does he realize it?

“Very well. You may withdraw.” Lin Xun waved them away.

This crisis had passed. However,But hiLin Xun’s vigilance only deepened. He knew well that his enemies would not give up until he was found.

“I must raise my cultivation as quickly as possible...” A rare urgency stirred in his heart.

A few days later, he went to seek Qing Heng once more. “Senior Brother, I wish to travel for a time.”

“Travel?” Qing Heng repeated, his brows knitting with suspicion.

“Yes,” Lin Xun replied casually. “I’ve grown restless staying in the sect. I’d like to go out and clear my mind.”

Qing Heng’s gaze sharpened. “Are you planning to take a roundabout route to Tian Ruojing?”

Lin Xun gave a wry smile, “Senior Brother, why not have Dai Yan and Chun Ning accompany me? If I so much as head towards the Tianling Sect, they can report to you immediately. Would that satisfy you?.”

Qing Heng pondered for a long moment before finally nodding. “Very well. So long as you do not go to the Tianling Sect to find that woman, I will allow you to leave.”

As he spoke, he drew a jade talisman from within his robes and placed it in Lin Xun’s hand. “Keep this with you. It contains a wisp of my Will Dharma Form. If you encounter danger, crush it.”

Lin Xun accepted the talisman with a smile. “Thank you, Senior Brother!”

As he turned to leave, a thought surfaced in his heart. Qing Feng is truly fortunate to have such a senior brother.

That very day, Lin Xun departed the sect with Chun Ning and Dai Yan.

However, during the ten-odd days they traveled, he could always faintly sense a presence trailing them in the shadows. Only after it became clear that he had no intention of heading towards the Tianling Sect did it quietly withdraw.

Lin Xun did not need to guess. It was Qing Heng. That night, within an inn along the road, Chun Ning and Dai Yan were both meditating in their rooms. They were completely unaware that in the adjoining room, their Martial Granduncle, the very man they had been assigned to watch, suddenly manifested five dao bodies from within himself.

Without a sound, the five figures transformed into streaks of light and slipped quietly out into the night. From this moment onward, those five dao bodies would cultivate in seclusion amidst the wilderness and deep mountains, studying the heavenly dao laws and pooling their combined insights to derive the future dao path.

With Lin Xun's knowledge and cultivation experience at the Immeasurable Realm, reconstructing his former dao path through the five dao bodies was almost effortless. His speed of advancement would be several times faster than if his true body were to comprehend and cultivate alone.

Ultimately, it came down to the limitations of his cultivation. At his current level, Lin Xun had no choice but to rely on the five dao bodies in order to advance as quickly as possible. Moreover, cultivating through the five dao bodies in the outside world would spare him from countless watchful eyes. Even if they were to break through again and again, it would not cause any disturbance.

It was different within the Tianwu Sect. Too many eyes lingered there. The slightest carelessness could leave behind traces.

"Even if my true body does nothing," Lin Xun murmured softly, stretching his limbs as a rare sense of ease washed over him, "when the five dao bodies return, my cultivation will rise to the same realm."

At dawn the next day, he announced his decision to return to the Tianwu Sect. Chun Ning and Dai Yan were both stunned. They had only been traveling for half a month and already they were turning back?

Lin Xun paid their surprise no mind. His objective for this journey had already been achieved. There was no need to linger any more. On the road back, however, they encountered a group of Tianling Sect disciples. They were all at the Cyclic Derivation Stage.

The moment they recognized Lin Xun, laughter erupted. “Senior Brother Wei, isn’t that the shameless old man you beat senseless back then?”

“Shameless old man? Show some respect. He is a sSupreme eElder of the Tianwu Sect, junior brother to Emperor Ancestor Qing Heng. It’s just that his cultivation...leaves rather a lot to be desired.”

“Someone like him dares to covet our Third Supreme Elder? He’s nothing but a toad dreaming of swan’s flesh.”

In an instant, wave after wave of mockery crashed down upon Lin Xun without the slightest restraint. In Qing Feng’s memory, scenes like this had played out countless times. Had it been Qing Feng himself, he would not have cared in the slightest.

As for Lin Xun, though his brows knit faintly, he could only follow Qing Feng’s example and pretend indifference. Lin Xun felt helpless. If he lost his composure now, he would no longer be the Qing Feng everyone believed him to be...

However, this time he happened to come face to face with the Tianling Sect disciple who had beaten Qing Feng unconscious. The man wore robes as white as fresh snow. He carried himself with striking confidence, youthful arrogance flickering between his brows. His name was Wei Xian.

“You’ve gone too far!” Lin Xun could endure the humiliation, but Chun Ning and Dai Yan could not. Their faces flushed crimson and their eyes blazed with shame and indignation.

In their hearts, no matter how incompetent Qing Feng might be, he was still a sSupreme eElder of the Tianwu Sect. To see him mocked so brazenly by Cyclic Derivation cultivators from the Tianling Sect, how could they possibly swallow that insult?

“Too far?” Wei Xian sneered, glancing at them with open disdain. “We merely spoke the truth. If you’re dissatisfied, why don’t we make it interesting? A little exchange?”

“You think I’m afraid of you?”

Rage surged through Chun Ning. He stepped forward, ready to fight, but Lin Xun’s voice stopped him. “Enough. There’s no need to waste breath on them. Let’s head back to the sect first.”

“Martial Granduncle...” Chun Ning’s voice trembled with anger and disappointment. “Martial Granduncle, I’m standing up for you! Can’t you...show at least a little backbone? Even if I get beaten, I’ll accept it gladly!”

Dai Yan exhaled softly. “Chun Ning. Listen to Martial Granduncle. Let’s go.”

After a long moment, Chun Ning clenched his fists and nodded stiffly. Lin Xun said nothing further and turned away.

Behind them, Wei Xian and the others made no move to stop them, but their laughter and biting words followed like arrows. Not only did they continue to mock and humiliate Lin Xun, but they also dragged Chun Ning into it as well.

By the time they walked away, the veins throbbed visibly along Chun Ning’s clenched fists, as though his anger might tear through his skin at any moment.

Even after returning to the Tianwu Sect, Chun Ning remained silent. When he faced Lin Xun, something had changed. He was still outwardly respectful, but there was a subtle distance now. Dai Yan was no different. Both of them were deeply displeased and disappointed.

Lin Xun noticed it clearly. Instead of taking offense, a trace of admiration rose in his heart. In that situation, they had still dared to step forward and defend him, the so-called ‘disgrace of the sect.’ Such a characters werewas rare indeed.

After a moment’s thought, Lin Xun went straight to find Sect Leader Fu Yunzi and recounted everything that had happened on the road.

Fu Yunzi's expression darkened considerably. Then with visible surprise, he said, "Martial Granduncle...in the past, you never concerned yourself with such matters before. Why..."

Lin Xun gently interrupted him,. "It doesn't matter if others look down on me. But I cannot allow the disciples of our sect to suffer humiliation because of me."

Fu Yunzi understood at once. His expression turned solemn. "Martial Granduncle, rest assured. I will speak with them and see that they are properly reassured."

He had always known that this Martial Granduncle of his was not ill-natured. In truth, he was exceptionally kind at heart. His only flaw was that he was too simple and naive...

Sure enough, the very next day, Chun Ning;s and Dai Yan's attitudes toward Lin Xun had softened considerably.

The sect leader had already spoken with them the previous day. They learned that it was Lin Xun who had taken the initiative to bring up the matter and that, because of it, the sect had rewarded them with generous cultivation resources.

"Martial Granduncle, we weren't angry with you. We were angry that they dared look down on the Tianwu Sect. That is what we couldn't accept." Chun Ning said in a low voice.

"Exactly!" Dai Yan chimed in. "One day, I'll challenge them properly and settle it face to face!"

Lin Xun smiled and said nothing more.

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Time passed like an arrow. A full year had gone by since Lin Xun had entered the Dao Derivation Zone.

"The five dao bodies have been in seclusion for half a year now...I wonder how far their cultivation has progressed."

Inside the Scripture Pavilion, Lin Xun turned the pages of a bookscroll, though his thoughts had long since drifted far beyond the sect grounds.

“Martial Granduncle! Something terrible has happened! Senior Martial Granduncle Qing Heng has returned injured!” Chun Ning’s anxious voice shattered the stillness outside the pavilion.

Lin Xun’s eyes narrowed instantly. He closed the bookscroll in his hand and rose to his feet. “Wasn’t Senior Brother attending the Hundred Sects Grand Assembly’? How could he have returned wounded?”

A month earlier, the Crimson Serpent Immortal Sect had convened the Hundred Sects Grand Assembly, inviting the supreme Emperors Ancestors of over a hundred second- and third -tier sects across the eastern territory.

As the Tianwu Sect’s representative, Qing Heng had attended as well. NAnd now news had arrived that he had returned injured. Even Lin Xun found this unexpected.

Within the entire Tianwu Sect, Qing Heng was the one who cared for Qing Feng most deeply, treating him as a true brother. If anything were to happen to Qing Heng, Lin Xun would not be able to forgive himself.

Chun Ning shook his head anxiously. “We don’t know the details either. Martial Granduncle, perhaps you should go and see Senior Martial Granduncle?”

Lin Xun nodded and strode off without delay.

Chapter 3196 If Bitter Fruit Grows, It Must be Severed at the Root

In the sect’s great hall, Supreme Elder Qing Geng, Sect Leader Fu Yunzi and numerous other elders stood gathered, their expressions dark and grim. Not far away, Qing Heng sat cross-legged, his face ashen and his aura weak and unstable.

“It’s only a minor injury,” Qing Heng said with a faint smile, waving dismissively. “Why are you all so concerned?”

Unfortunately, before he could finish speaking, a violent fit of coughing seized him and a thin line of blood traced down from the corner of his lips.

“You call this minor?” Qing Geng snapped, teeth clenched. “Your very foundation has been shaken!”

His eyes burned with fury. “Tian Ruojing went too far. This grievance cannot be left unsettled!”

Qing Heng gently raised a hand. “Do not speak in anger. At the Hundred Sects Grand Assembly, our duel was fair. I lost...and that is all. There is no one else to blame.”

After a pause, his voice grew heavier. “Moreover...Tian Ruojing has already been chosen by an Immortal figure from the Immortal Pavilion. In ten years’ time, she will formally become an elder of the Immortal Pavilion and cultivate within its secret realm. With her current standing, even the Crimson Serpent Immortal Sect must show her deference.”

A trace of bitterness surfaced in his eyes. “We... cannot afford to make her our enemy.”

At those words, everyone’s expressions shifted uncertainly. The hall fell into a heavy silence. At this year’s Hundred Sects Grand Assembly, an Immortal figure from the Immortal Pavilion, one of the four great dao lineages, had also appeared in person.

In the end, ten supreme Emperor Ancestors were personally selected by that Immortal figure. It was promised that in ten years’ time, they would be taken in as elders of the Immortal Pavilion and permitted to cultivate within its secret realms.

Among these ten was Tian Ruojing, a supreme elder of the Tianling Sect! Everyone understood what that meant. From this moment onward, Tian Ruojing’s status was no longer the same. She had risen to the heavens in a single step.

After all, the Immortal Pavilion was one of the four great dao lineages in the Dao Derivation Zone, a transcendent, supreme power before which even the twelve first tier forces of the world were compelled to bow their heads. Compared to such a colossus, second tier sects like the Tianwu and Tianling Sects were scarcely worth mentioning.

In ten years, Tian Ruojing would formally become an elder of the Immortal Pavilion. Her status would rise so high that even a first tier force like the Crimson Serpent Immortal Sect would have no choice but to lower its head in deference before her!

Under such circumstances, if the Tianwu Sect dared to regard Tian Ruojing as an enemy, the Crimson Serpent Immortal Sect alone would likely move at once to wipe them out. The Immortal Pavilion would not even need to intervene!

Everyone in the hall understood this perfectly well. However, that understanding did nothing to dispel the heavy gloom pressing against their hearts and the stifled resentment with nowhere to vent.

Just then, a figure entered the hall. It was Lin Xun. As soon as he appeared, the elders' expressions darkened further and suppressed anger flickered in their eyes.

"Qing Feng," Qing Geng barked. "Look at what you've brought upon Senior Brother Qing Heng!"

This was Lin Xun's first time meeting Qing Geng in person, but from Qing Feng's memories he already knew him well. Qing Geng possessed a fierce and domineering temperament. He had always regarded Qing Feng as the sect's disgrace, rebuking and berating him countless times.

"I brought this upon Senior Brother?" Lin Xun frowned, his gaze sweeping across the hall. The atmosphere felt heavy and oppressive. A faint chill settled in his heart. Qing Heng's injuries were likely far more serious than he had let on.

"If you hadn't been chasing after Tian Ruojing," Qing Geng said sharply, "Would Senior Brother have sought her out for a duel at the Hundred Sects Grand Assembly?"

Sect Leader Fu Yunzi and the other elders wore equally grim expressions.

"Qing Geng," Qing Heng said quietly from where he sat, "how can you blame Junior Brother? He knew nothing of my decision."

He exhaled softly. "All of you may withdraw. I wish to speak with Junior Brother Qing Feng alone."

“Withdraw?” Qing Geng’s face flushed with fury. “At a time like this, you still protect him? Tian Ruojing has already gained the Immortal Pavilion’s recognition. If Qing Feng isn’t disciplined, what kind of disaster will he invite when he goes running off to the Immortal Pavilion to pester her again? When that happens, will you still be able to shield him, Senior Brother?”

“Withdraw.” Qing Heng lifted his gaze and looked at Qing Geng.

Qing Geng’s expression flickered darkly. After a long moment, he snorted coldly and turned away, sleeves whipping through the air as he stormed out. Before leaving, he shot Lin Xun a vicious glare, his eyes filled with disdain and icy contempt.

Seeing this, Sect Leader Fu Yunzi and the other elders also withdrew one after another. Soon, only Qing Heng and Lin Xun remained in the hall.

“Senior Brother...was it Tian Ruojing who wounded you?”

Lin Xun stepped forward. With a single glance, he could already tell that Qing Heng’s condition was dire. His aura was in disarray, and his breathing was unstable. If Lin Xun’s judgment was correct, Qing Heng had not merely suffered serious injuries, but even his dao foundation had likely been shaken!

A cold unease crept into his heart. From Qing Feng’s memories, he knew clearly that, within the entire Tianwu Sect, Qing Heng was the only one who had ever truly treated him well.

No matter how many laughable things Qing Feng had done over the years, Qing Heng had always stood quietly behind him, using his own strength to protect and defend his junior brother.

Now, seeing Qing Heng so gravely injured, and it was most likely connected to Tian Ruojing, a surge of anger rose within Lin Xun.

Was it not enough that she had ruined Qing Feng’s cultivation? Does she now intend to destroy Qing Heng as well?

“She was involved.” Qing Heng gestured for Lin Xun to sit. A wry smile curbed his lips. “I had hoped to take advantage of the Hundred Sects Grand Assembly to teach her a lesson. Instead...I was the one who ended up being taught.”

Lin Xun’s thoughts churned. So it was true. Qing Heng had sought that duel to vent his junior brother’s grievance and had been wounded because of it.

While the world mocked Qing Feng as the sect’s disgrace, Qing Heng, a supreme grand elder of the Tianwu Sect, had been willing to risk even his own foundation to help him reclaim a shred of dignity.

Warmth rose in Lin Xun’s chest. What a good senior brother!

“Enough of that,” Qing Heng said with a faint sigh. “It’s been a long time since we brothers have truly spoken. Let’s have a proper talk today.”

As he spoke, he took out a jar of fine wine and drank deeply before continuing, “Junior Brother...do you remember when we first entered the Tianwu Sect?”

His gaze drifted, distant with memory. “Back then, nine of us were accepted as disciples. Because of my poor background, I was often ostracized and excluded. Only you treated me as a friend. You never cared where I came from.”

He gave a faint, self-mocking laugh. “You didn’t know...Back then, on the surface, I appeared proud and self-assured. But inside, I was consumed by inferiority. I felt inferior in every way and often pitied myself.

“I still remember Senior Brother Chang. Once, he humiliated me in front of everyone. He stepped on my face and mocked me, saying that someone born as low as I was, even if granted the chance to cultivate and seek the dao, was destined to accomplish nothing...destined to spend my life trampled beneath his feet.”

At this point, Qing Heng lifted his gaze to Lin Xun. “Do you know how I felt that day? I was so ashamed...so furious. My heart was like cold ashes. I even thought of ending my life.”

His voice grew heavier.

“And then you appeared. You rushed forward like a fool and fought him as though your life meant nothing. Even when you were beaten until you coughed blood, you refused to step back. You stood there, shielding me. I can still remember the blood from your mouth dripping down onto my face...”

Qing Heng drew a slow breath and took another drink. “That was the day I swore I would protect you for the rest of my life, even if it cost me my own.”

A bitter smile touched his lips. “But I never imagined you would be entangled by Tian Ruojing. I wanted to help you...but I could do nothing...”

Lin Xun listened quietly. Memories of Qing Feng’s youth surged within him like rising tides, stirring his heart. After a long moment, he finally spoke, “Senior Brother, you’ve already done more for me than I deserve. I remember it all.”

He paused. “As for Tian Ruojing...one day, I will settle that matter myself.”

Qing Heng’s gaze suddenly sharpened. “Junior Brother...tell me honestly. The grievous damage to your dao foundation all those years ago...was it because of that woman?”

Lin Xun stiffened. For a brief moment, he did not answer. Then he said quietly, “Senior Brother...that’s all in the past.”

Qing Heng’s expression grew complicated. “As I suspected. Back then, you were already at the Cyclic Derivation Stage, while Tian Ruojing was only at the Heaven Ascension Stage. When you entered that secret realm together, it was you who emerged with a damaged dao foundation. How could that not be suspicious?”

He lifted the wine jar and took another long drink, then laughed softly at himself. “And now look at us. Both of our dao foundations have been wounded...all because of Tian Ruojing. We truly are brothers in misfortune...hahaha...”

The laughter echoed faintly through the hall, tinged with an indescribable desolation and bitterness.

“Senior Brother, don’t lose heart,” Lin Xun said gently. “In my view, your dao injuries can be healed and you will advance further on your path.”

Qing Heng let out a quiet chuckle. “A dao injury suffered at the hands of a supreme Emperor Ancestor is not so easily mended. Don’t trouble yourself over my affairs.”

Lin Xun fell silent for a moment before asking, “Senior Brother, what was the true purpose of this Hundred Sects Grand Assembly?”

In Qing Feng’s memory, there had been no mention of it at all.

Qing Heng replied casually, “First, the Immortal Pavilion intends to select individuals with the potential to attain immortality. Second, it is related to the hunt for Dao Derivers.”

Lin Xun’s eyes narrowed almost imperceptibly. “Dao Derivers...”

Qing Heng exhaled slowly. “Throughout history, many Dao Derivers have appeared in our Dao Derivation Zone. At the beginning, each of them was incomparably weak. But as time passed, their cultivation would undergo astonishing transformation, advancing by leaps and bounds. Most ultimately proved the dao and transcended into immortality. Each one became a legend without equal...”

He paused briefly before continuing, “This time, Zhu Cheng, the number one figure of the Immortal Pavilion, together with six other Heavenly Mandate Apostles, has ordered the extermination of a Dao Deriver named Lin Xun. At this Hundred Sects Grand Assembly, the Immortal Pavilion’s representative issued an even harsher decree: any sect found concealing information will face total annihilation.”

Hearing this, a faint curve touched Lin Xun’s lips. The harsher the threats, the more it indicated that Heavenly Mandate Apostles had uncovered nothing related to him so far!

After speaking for some time, Qing Heng’s fatigue became increasingly apparent. Seeing the weariness etched between his brows, Lin Xun rose and quietly took his leave. Back in his own residence, he

reclined alone in a rocking chair. Scenes from his conversation with Qing Heng replayed in his mind. A cold glint slowly surfaced in his eyes.

Tian Ruoling? The Immortal Pavilion? Heavenly Mandate Apostles? What are they to me, Lin Xun? If a bond of kindness is formed, it must be repaid. If bitter fruit grows, it must be severed at the root.

.....

News of Supreme Elder Qing Heng's injury quickly spread throughout the Tianwu Sect, sending shockwaves through the entire sect. Anger and resentment brewed in everyone's hearts.

That very day, Sect Leader Fu Yunzi issued a strict decree: no one was permitted to go to the Tianling Sect to provoke them without authorization. Anyone found doing so would be expelled from the sect.

The order only deepened the sense of grievance within the Tianwu Sect. Everyone understood what it meant. The sect intended to endure in silence, to swallow the humiliation and make concessions.

Chapter 3197 Tian Ruojing's Inner Obstruction

With no outlet for their anger, resentment within the Tianwu Sect increasingly turned toward Supreme Elder Qing Feng. Many believed he was the true culprit, the root cause of the calamity that had befallen Supreme Elder Qing Heng.

In private, criticism and condemnation spread quietly through the sect, most of it directly at Supreme Elder Qing Feng. Lin Xun paid it no mind. He did not care. Right now, his only priority was to keep a low profile, endure in silence and continue building his cultivation in the shadows.

However, just three days after Qing Heng returned wounded, something unexpected happened. Tian Ruojing, supreme elder of the Tianling Sect, arrived at the Tianwu Sect alone.

At the Hundred Sects Grand Assembly, it was Tian Ruojing who gravely injured Qing Heng, igniting fury throughout the Tianwu Sect.

Now, she had come to the sect in person? For what purpose? To flaunt her power? Or to press her advantage and exact further retaliation?

Whatever her intentions, her status was no longer what it once was. Even if resentment burned within him, Sect Leader Fu Yunzi had no choice but to personally step forward to receive her. However, when he learned the true reason for her visit, he was stunned for a moment. She had come to see Supreme Elder Qing Feng!

Scripture Pavilion.

When Lin Xun heard that Tian Ruojing was waiting for him in the reception hall, one of his brows lifted slightly. What does this woman want?

After a brief moment of thought, he rose and walked toward the hall without hesitation. He wanted to see for himself what exactly the woman who had nearly destroyed Qing Feng wanted.

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Reception Hall.

Tian Ruojing sat alone. She wore a snow-white gown, her dark hair cascading down her back like a waterfall of ink. Her features were exquisite, and her skin was luminous as jade. Beneath slender brows, her eyes shone bright as stars. Even seated casually, she seemed like a fairy descended to the mortal world, radiating an air of elegance that set her apart from everyone else.

When Lin Xun stepped into the hall and laid eyes on her for the first time, a strange turbulence rose in his chest. An inexplicable surge of longing and bitterness welled up within him. Then, for a fleeting instant, his gaze shifted. Those emotions did not belong to him. They were Qing Feng's lingering instincts!

The next second, Lin Xun suppressed them completely and strode into the hall. Tian Ruojing's eyes fell upon him at once. They were utterly indifferent and not the slightest ripple disturbed their surface. It was the look of someone gazing down upon something insignificant. Like a sovereign glancing at an ant crawling at her feet.

Lin Xun sat down opposite her. "Why did you come to see me?"

Seeing the faint arrogance and superiority etched between her brows, he could not help but laugh inwardly. In the Eternal True Realm, even Immortals had lowered their heads before him, let alone a supreme Emperor Ancestor.

He had fought his way across the Sea of Fate and stepped into the All-Wonder Dominion. There, even Immeasurable Dao Lords of the Eternal Path could only bow down before him. Now, a mere supreme Emperor Ancestor dared to put on airs in his presence. How utterly ridiculous!

Tian Ruojing's brows drew together faintly, a flicker of surprise passing through her eyes. She had not expected Qing Feng to speak to her in such a tone.

"Is it because I damaged your senior brother's dao foundation," she asked, "that you now bear hostility toward me?"

Lin Xun leaned back slightly. "You didn't come here today to rekindle old vows and become a couple with me, did you?"

A flicker of cold light passed through Tian Ruojing's eyes. "Become a couple?" She scoffed. "In this world, only you, Qing Feng, could cling to such foolish fantasies."

Her voice grew even colder. "From the moment your dao foundation was shattered, you and I ceased to belong to the same world. That much should have been obvious. Yet you refused to accept reality and all these years, you've clung stubbornly to illusions. I truly don't understand."

Lin Xun's brows slowly drew together. Before he could say anything, Tian Ruojing's eyes gleamed with open mockery. "The bright moon in heaven does not mingle with the dust upon earth. This is something everyone understands. Everyone...except you."

Her lips curved faintly. "Look at what you've accomplished all these years. Look at your reputation in the cultivation world. Tell me...how pitiful can one man be?"

Strangely, the calmer Qing Feng appeared, the more irritation welled up within Tian Ruojing. To her surprise, even such blatant ridicule failed to provoke him. He showed no sign of anger, remaining as composed as when he first entered the hall.

“Just as they all say,” Tian Ruojing continued coldly, “you don’t care how tarnished your name becomes. You have no sense of shame whatsoever. I truly cannot understand what meaning there is in the existence of someone like you.”

“Are you finished?” Lin Xun asked lightly. His calm, unruffled demeanor made something tighten in Tian Ruojing’s chest. At the same time, a flicker of confusion crossed her mind.

Hasn’t he loved me all these years? Why is he so detached now?

“Since you’re here,” Lin Xun continued evenly, “I have a few things I’d like to ask you as well.”

At this, Tian Ruojing’s expression turned cold. It was as if she had already guessed his intention. “If you intend to bring up that so-called promise of marriage back then, I advise you not to. Asking will only invite further humiliation.”

Lin Xun met her gaze calmly. “I only want to know one thing. Even if you no longer wished to honor it...why didn’t you give me a clear answer? Why let me cling to a sliver of hope and wait all these years?”

Tian Ruojing let out a faint, amused laugh. “Qing Feng, who else could be as foolish as you? Anyone with a shred of sense would have understood that my refusal to see you was already rejection.”

Lin Xun shook his head slowly. “No, you’re afraid.”

“Afraid? Of what?” Tian Ruojing’s expression flickered within surprise.

Lin Xun’s gaze sharpened. “You were afraid I would reveal the truth...that I saved your life in the secret realm...that you once promised to marry me. If that became known, it would deal a serious blow to your reputation. After all, my dao foundation was shattered because I saved you.”

Tian Ruojing's pupils contracted.

Lin Xun continued calmly, "So you didn't dare sever ties with me outright. You chose to drag it out for as long as possible to let time blur the truth. So that one day, if I ever spoke of what happened back then, the world would dismiss it as the bitter delusion of a disgraced man. After all, in their eyes, I am a laughingstock. And you, Tian Ruojing, are already a supreme elder of the Tianling Sect. Who would choose to believe me over you?"

Tian Ruojing stared at Lin Xun for a long moment, her gaze flickering with surprise. "It seems you're not entirely a fool after all. Then why have you acted like one all these years?"

Lin Xun's voice remained steady. "What you call foolishness, I once called devotion. I once called it love."

He paused. "But now...I see clearly."

A trace of anger surfaced in Tian Ruojing's beautiful eyes. "So what if you've come to your senses? With your current cultivation, do you truly think you can take revenge on me? As I said before, even if you awaken, you are still nothing but trash. In this lifetime, you will likely never advance beyond the Cyclic Derivation Stage."

Her chin lifted slightly. "But I am different. In ten years, I will enter the Immortal Pavilion and prepare to step onto the Immortal Path. When that day comes, you and I are destined to never cross paths again!"

Her tone was cold and detached, making no attempt to conceal her contempt for Qing Feng.

Lin Xun glanced at her. "Let's speak plainly."

Tian Ruojing nodded. "Very well, since you've finally come to understand your own inadequacy, I will be direct."

Her voice turned cold. "From this day forward, if I hear even a single rumor circulating outside that harms my reputation, then the Tianwu Sect will no longer have any reason to exist. I trust you understand the gravity of that consequence."

Lin Xun asked in response, “If you’re so concerned, why not simply kill me now?”

Tian Ruojing’s eyes swept over him, cold and sharp. “You saved my life once. How could I kill you? No, I won’t let you die. I want you alive. I want you to watch as I ascend the Immortal Path step by step and stand at the very pinnacle of the Dao Derivation Zone.”

Lin Xun let out a soft laugh and tapped his chest. “So that’s it. The fact that I saved your life back then has become a knot in your heart. In that case, all these years, you’ve become my inner demon, and I’ve been your inner obstruction.”

Seeing the calm smile on Qing Feng’s face, a sudden surge of killing intent rose within Tian Ruojing. In the end, she forcibly suppressed it.

“Qing Feng, I’ve said what I came to say.” Her voice turned cold. “Just look at your senior brother Qing Heng’s fate. You should understand that, if I wished for it, wiping out the entire Tianwu Sect would not be difficult.”

With that, she turned and walked away without another glance. Lin Xun watched her departing figure, then rose to leave as well.

Before he could step out of the hall, Sect Leader Fu Yunzi hurried forward. “Martial Uncle...what did she want?”

Lin Xun answered lightly, “She advised me to abandon any lingering fantasies and never have any improper thoughts toward her again.”

Fu Yunzi blinked. “That’s all?”

Lin Xun smiled faintly. “How could someone of her stature possibly marry a ‘disgrace to the sect’ like me?”

Fu Yunzi let out a low grunt, at a loss for words. After a moment's hesitation, he lowered his voice. "Martial Uncle, Tian Ruojing is no longer who she once was. In ten years, she will become an elder of the Immortal Pavilion. You...must not cling stubbornly to the past."

"Rest assured," Lin Xun said calmly, "I won't."

With that, he turned and left.

Fu Yunzi stood there, puzzled. For some reason his martial uncle had felt different today.

"Could it be...he has finally let go? If so, that would be a blessing..." Fu Yunzi murmured.

Tian Ruojing was someone the Tianwu Sect simply could not afford to offend now. Even though she had grievously damaged Qing Heng's dao foundation, they had no choice but to swallow the resentment. This was the cruelty of reality.

.....

The Tianling Sect.

Back in her own residence, Tian Ruojing found it impossible to calm her mind.

"How could Qing Feng possibly have seen through the knot in my heart?" Her brows furrowed.

You are my inner demon, and I am your inner obstruction. As those words echoed again and again in her mind, a surge of killing intent rose uncontrollably within her.

Yes. Qing Feng was the karmic obstruction in her heart. The reason was simple. He had once saved her life. In that moment of desperation, she had been deeply moved and so she promised to remain by his side for the rest of her life.

Later...she regretted it. She did not believe she had done anything wrong. After all, she had never asked him to save her!

As the years passed, as her cultivation advanced and her horizons broadened, her ambitions changed. She longed for a partner of towering strength, someone she could admire. Not a crippled cultivator whose dao foundation had been irreparably damaged.

For years, she deliberately pushed the matter aside, refusing to think about it. Unfortunately when she reached the pinnacle of the Supreme Emperor Ancestor Stage and began preparing to seek the Immortal Path, that long-forgotten 'life-saving grace' resurfaced.

Only then did she realize it had become a karmic obstruction in her heart. That was why she had gone to see him. She had intended to sever this karmic obstruction completely.

But now...

After meeting him, she realized that instead of resolving the issue, her state of mind had sunk deeper and deeper into that karmic obstruction.

"Qing Feng...you're truly a curse upon others!" An indescribable fury surged within her chest

Chapter 3198 No More Restraint

Tian Ruojing had never imagined that a mere Cyclic Derivation cultivator, a so-called piece of trash, could deepen the karmic obstruction in her heart! After a long silence, resolve hardened in her beautiful eyes.

When it is time to sever, hesitation only invites ruin!

"Sect Leader, there is something I require of you." One day later, Tian Ruojing went to find Wen Tuyang, the sect leader of the Tianling Sect.

"Please give your instruction, Martial Aunt," Wen Tuyang replied respectfully.

In ten years, Tian Ruojing would become an elder of the Immortal Pavilion. Wen Tuyang did not dare show even the slightest neglect.

“Take men to the Tianwu Sect,” she ordered calmly. “Bring back that good-for-nothing Qing Feng.”

Her tone did not waver. “If they refuse...use force.”

Wen Tuyang stiffened. Though questions flooded his mind, he did not dare voice them. He bowed and departed at once.

“I will keep this karmic obstruction by my side,” she murmured. “I refuse to believe I cannot sever it!”

Ruthlessness flickered within her gaze.

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“Sect Leader, something terrible has happened!” A panicked voice echoed through the sect. “The sect leader of the Tianling Sect has arrived with his men. They demand we hand over Martial Granduncle Qing Feng or face the consequences!”

The entire Tianwu Sect was thrown into turmoil. Fu Yunzi’s expression changed immediately. Supreme Elders Qing Heng and Qing Geng arrived at once, followed by numerous elders.

Shock and confusion spread among them. Just yesterday, Tian Ruojing had come to see Qing Feng alone. Now, today, the Tianling Sect arrived in force?

“In the past, Martial Uncle Qing Feng was always turned away when he went to Tianling Sect,” someone muttered. “Now they’ve come personally to take him away. Something is off.”

“Did Martial Uncle Qing Feng offend Tian Ruojing yesterday?” another speculated.

“Those who come uninvited seldom bring good intentions,” someone else said grimly. “With Wen Tuyang leading such a formation...this will not end peacefully.”

Qing Heng ordered, “Send someone to summon Qing Feng. Tell him to come at once. We’ll head to the mountain gate first.”

At the mountain gate of the Tianwu Sect, Wen Tuyang, sect leader of the Tianling Sect, stood at the forefront, clad in a python-embroidered robe, dignified and imposing. Behind him, a host of cultivators formed a formidable formation.

Within this lineup were two supreme elders at the Supreme Emperor Ancestor Stage, along with numerous elders possessing peak supreme Emperor cultivation. It could be said that, aside from Tian Ruojing herself, the Tianling Sect had dispatched nearly all of its strongest forces.

When Qing Heng, Qing Geng, Fu Yunzi and the others arrived and saw the scene before them, their expressions grew solemn.

“Wen Tuyang, what is the meaning of this?” Fu Yunzi said in a deep voice.

Wen Tuyang replied calmly, “By order of Supreme Elder Tian Ruojing, we request that your sect’s Supreme Elder Qing Feng come with us.”

He was clad in a python-embroidered robe, and his bearing was tall and imposing. He was an eighth realm supreme Emperor.

“On what grounds?” Fu Yunzi pressed.

“Grounds?” Wen Tuyang let out a faint laugh. “Fu Yunzi, is the command of Supreme Elder Tian Ruojing not reason enough?” There was undisguised arrogance in his voice.

In the entire eastern territory, what sect did not know that Tian Ruojing was about to soar into heavens and become an elder of the Immortal Pavilion? Anyone with sense should know better than to resist!

Fu Yunzi and the others fell silent, their expressions dark and heavy.

Wen Tuyang spoke leisurely, “Let us speak frankly. To you, Qing Feng is nothing more than a disgrace. Surely you would not make an enemy of the Tianling Sect over someone like him?”

“Absurd!” Qing Heng snapped coldly. “If we were to hand over one of our own elders under threat, then that would truly prove the Tianwu Sect incompetent!”

Wen Tuyang sneered coldly. “Qing Heng, your dao foundation has already been damaged, and I doubt your injuries have even healed. If you are willing to gamble the lives of everyone in the Tianwu Sect to protect him, then by all means, choose war with the Tianling Sect.”

Those words caused Fu Yunzi and the others’ expressions to shift uneasily. Was it worth going to war with the Tianling Sect for the sake of Qing Feng alone? Moreover, doing so would be tantamount to completely offending Tian Ruojing!

“Senior Martial Uncle, about this matter...” One of the Tianwu Sect elders began hesitantly.

Before he finished, Qing Heng’s expression darkened. “You want me to abandon Qing Feng?”

His voice was cold enough to freeze the air. The elder who spoke felt his heart tremble under that gaze. He hurriedly lowered his head. “I wouldn’t dare...I wouldn’t dare.”

Wen Tuyang seized the moment. “Qing Heng, you may be determined to protect Qing Feng, but is the entire Tianwu Sect willing to follow you?”

His eyes swept over the gathered elders. “Are you certain you wish to drag the whole sect into disaster for the sake of a useless waste like Qing Feng?”

Silence fell. The atmosphere was heavy and suffocating. The leading figures of the Tianwu Sect exchanged uncertain glances. Sacrifice one Qing Feng in exchange for the safety of the entire sect...

For most of them, that was not a difficult calculation. After all, for years, Qing Feng had been a source of humiliation. Had it not been for Qing Heng shielding him, he would have long ago been expelled.

“Sect Leader, what is your view?”

Qing Heng turned his gaze toward Fu Yunzi, a trace of sorrow flickering in his eyes. How could he not know how the others in the sect truly viewed Qing Feng? At a moment that concerned the life and death of the sect, they would naturally choose to sacrifice Qing Feng in exchange for temporary peace!

All eyes shifted to Fu Yunzi. He remained silent for a long moment before finally speaking, “Senior Martial Uncle...in my view, we must not hand him over!”

His voice grew firmer with each word. “To do so would be like adding firewood to a blaze, the fuel will not run out, and the flames will never die. If we retreat today, the Tianling Sect will only press further tomorrow. And when that time comes, will we hand over even more people?”

By the time he finished speaking, his expression had become utterly resolute. Many felt their hearts sink. Qing Heng, however, revealed a trace of relief. There’s still backbone in Fu Yunzi!

Unfortunately, at that moment, Qing Geng flared up, his voice sharp. “Nonsense! As sect leader, would you truly sacrifice the rest of the sect for the sake of a useless waste like Qing Feng? Do you have any idea what devastating price we would pay for this?”

Qing Heng frowned. Fu Yunzi’s expression changed. Around them, the atmosphere subtly shifted. Several elders seemed to have found their pillar of support, and began aligning themselves openly behind Qing Geng.

Qing Geng turned directly toward Qing Heng. “Senior Brother, you may choose to protect that useless Qing Feng if you wish, but do not drag the entire Tianwu Sect down with you!”

His voice hardened. “As for this matter, I agree to hand Qing Feng over!”

“I also support Senior Martial Uncle Qing Geng’s decision.”

Some elders hesitated briefly, but in the end, they gritted their teeth and declared their support for Qing Geng.

The remaining elders said nothing. The situation suddenly grew complicated.

From a distance, Wen Tuyang and the others took in the entire scene, cold smiles flickering across their faces. Who could not see that the Tianwu Sect was already in turmoil?

“You think I’m protecting Qing Feng,” Qing Heng said, his voice heavy, “but have you considered what will happen if we bow today? From this day forward, the Tianwu Sect will be devoured piece by piece, until it falls into decline!”

Then he let out a long sigh. “So be it. Qing Feng and I will leave the sect together. That way, you will be spared this immediate calamity!”

“Senior Martial Uncle, I will go with you!” Fu Yunzi declared fiercely.

Everything unfolding before him was unbearable. He had never imagined that when faced with a true crisis, a great sect like the Tianwu Sect would expose so many flaws and appear so pitifully weak.

The decisions of Qing Geng and the other elders had sent a chill through his heart. When no danger loomed, everyone could stand beneath the same banner. However, when peril struck, many revealed their true faces!

As the saying went, those who walked different paths cannot make plans together. Fu Yunzi understood clearly that after this incident, the Tianwu Sect was destined to decline and drift toward ruin. As for himself, he would rather die in battle today than live on in humiliation!

“Good! Good! Good!” Qing Heng laughed, pride flashing in his eyes. “In this vast Tianwu Sect, you, Fu Yunzi...you have not disappointed me.”

Then, he turned his gaze toward the mountain path. “Junior Brother Qing Feng, come.”

Lin Xun had already arrived at the mountain gate and had witnessed everything. Yet not a ripple stirred in his heart. He had seen scenes like this far too many times. It was often in the face of great calamity that one's true character was revealed and the true bearing of a sect laid bare.

The leading figures of the Tianwu Sect indeed lacked depth. They cared only for immediate gains and losses, blind to the fact that once they bowed today, they would inevitably become prey to the Tianling Sect tomorrow.

"Senior Brother, there is no need for us to leave today." Lin Xun spoke softly, "The Tianwu Sect stands where it does now largely because of you. And Fu Yunzi has poured his heart and soul into its growth. This is your foundation, how can we allow others to trample it so easily?"

The entire crowd was stunned. No one had expected the sect's so-called disgrace to dare speak so brazenly at such a moment.

"Qing Feng, if not for you, would the sect be facing this crisis today?" Qing Geng's face darkened as he barked the words.

The other elders glared at Lin Xun, fury blazing in their eyes.

"Junior Brother, don't argue with them," Qing Heng said with a heavy sigh.

"I have no interest in wasting my breath on them." As Lin Xun spoke, he turned his gaze toward Wen Tuyang and the others in the distance. "Since today's matter began because of me, then let me be the one to settle it."

His eyes were utterly calm. He had already made up his mind. He had kept a low profile and endured in silence for over a year. Now that they were faced with such a crisis, if he continued to suppress himself, he would feel he had betrayed Qing Heng's unwavering protection.

"You?" In the distance, Wen Tuyang stared in astonishment, then burst into loud laughter. "You, the disgrace of the Tianwu Sect, dare utter such grand words? Have you gone mad?"

The other Tianling Sect experts around him also broke into laughter, thoroughly amused. For nine hundred years, in their eyes, Qing Feng had been nothing but a joke, a lump of useless clay that could never be shaped, a man who had brought endless humiliation upon the Tianwu Sect.

To hear such a person speak so brazenly at this moment was simply absurd. Behind him, Qing Geng and the other elders felt their faces burn with humiliation. Qing Feng...had utterly disgraced them!

At that moment, from within the Tianling Sect's ranks, a man stepped forward. His hair and beard were white as snow, yet his face retained the youthfulness of a young man. He let out a soft, amused chuckle.

"Qing Feng, didn't you say you would resolve today's matter on your own? Then come. Surrender obediently and spare us the trouble of taking action."

"Very well." Lin Xun smiled. In the depths of his eyes, a trace of icy light flickered and vanished. He stepped forward.

Qing Heng instinctively reached out to stop him, but an invisible force gently restrained his arm. At the same instant, a voice sounded directly in his mind. "Senior Brother, there is something I never told you. In a moment...you will understand."

The voice had not yet faded, when Lin Xun's figure had already disappeared into thin air.

Chapter 3199 Kill with a Flick of the Finger

Watching Lin Xun walk alone toward the enemy ranks, Qing Geng and the others stood frozen. His so-called way of settling things is to walk straight into the tiger's jaws?

Their expressions grew strange.

"Senior Martial Uncle, why didn't you stop him?" Fu Yunzi asked anxiously. He could hardly believe that Qing Heng, who had protected Qing Feng for years, would now allow him to walk to his death.

"Just watch," Qing Heng said quietly. His expression was complicated, but somewhere in his heart, he seemed to understand.

Seeing Lin Xun approach alone, Wen Tuyang and the others burst into laughter once more.

“Qing Heng, I never expected you would abandon your useless junior brother...” Wen Tuyang sneered.

Beside him, the white-haired elder stepped forward in a flash. “I’ll capture him first. Best not let this grow troublesome—”

He never finished the sentence. In the blink of an eye, Lin Xun’s hand was already around his throat. He lifted him effortlessly like he was lifting a chicken by the neck.

“Trouble?” Lin Xun smiled faintly. “Sometimes trouble is a good thing. At least then...you might survive.” His eyes were deep and unfathomable.

The white-haired man’s pupils contracted violently. His face darkened to a purplish hue as he struggled with all his might, but it was useless. He could not summon even the slightest trace of strength.

Silence fell. The Tialing Sect experts who had been laughing moments before now stood frozen, their smiles stiffening on their faces and their eyes wide with disbelief. Some even wondered if their vision was playing tricks on them.

A so-called waste at the Cyclic Derivation Stage had, with a single casual motion, seized a seventh realm Emperor Stage cultivator.

At the distant mountain gate, Qing Geng’s face went rigid. “He...” his voice cracked in disbelief.

The others were no better, their minds blank and utterly stunned.

“Martial Uncle...” Fu Yunzi stood rooted to the spot, dazed beyond words.

Bang!

The white-haired man's body crumbled into ash, scattering into the wind, like an ant being

crushed. Then Lin Xun turned his gaze to Wen Tuyang and the others. "Why have you stopped laughing? Please, continue."

Wen Tuyang's expression shifted violently.

"Who are you?" A black-robed figure stepped forward.

It was She Yunleng, a supreme elder of the Tianling Sect, a peak supreme Emperor Ancestor! As he advanced, a terrifying aura swept outward, causing the air to tremble under its pressure.

In the Dao Derivation Zone, supreme Emperor Ancestors were regarded as the strongest beings beneath the Immortal Stage. They could look down upon the vast majority of cultivators in the world.

In contrast, to Lin Xun, such a person was nothing more than a minor character. He took a single step. In the next instant, he appeared before She Yunleng as if teleporting and casually reached out with one hand. The speed was astonishing, too fast even for the eye to follow.

Startled, She Yunleng instinctively swung both arms up to block in front of him. Crack! Crack!

Both arms shattered instantly, bone fragments bursting through flesh, blood spraying into the air. Before the pain could even register, Lin Xun's hands had already closed around his throat. He lifted him effortlessly. A supreme Emperor Ancestor was unable to withstand even a single move!

The sight made everyone's scalps prickle. Minds went blank. No one could comprehend how Qing Feng, who was mocked by countless sects and branded a disgrace even within his own, would suddenly become so terrifying?

"Stop!"

Wen Tuyang roared, eyes bloodshot with rage. However, She Yunleng hung helplessly in Lin Xun's grasp, so none of them dared make a reckless move.

They thought he was using She Yunleng as a hostage, but they were wrong. Lin Xun had never intended to take him hostage at all.

Bang!

With a casual flick of his fingers, She Yunleng disintegrated into ash and scattered into the wind. Just like that, a supreme elder of the Tianling Sect was erased from existence!

The sight struck Qing Heng and Fu Yunzi like a blow to the chest, their hearts trembling. Wen Tuyang and the others froze in terror. Their scalps tingled and their minds went blank, as if their souls had fled their bodies.

Then instinct took over. They turned and fled. If even She Yunleng had fallen in a single move, what hope did they have? Unfortunately for them, they still did not understand just how terrifying the opponent before them truly was.

Lin Xun flicked his fingers lightly through the air, as casual and natural as placing a stone upon a chessboard. In the next instant, sword qi erupted from the void. One strand after another roared forth, their blazing sharpness illuminating the mountains and rivers in a flash. The brilliance was so intense that many were forced to squeeze their eyes shut.

PU! PU! PU! PU!

A succession of dull explosions rang out. In different corners of the battlefield, arcs of blood burst forth, one after another. Nineteen people, including Wen Tuyang, sect leader of the Tianling Sect, were pierced through by the sword qi. Their flesh, body and primordial spirit were obliterated at the same instant.

They fell where they stood. As the sword qi dissipated, only the thick scent of blood lingered in the air. Their enemies were gone, as though they had never existed.

At the distant mountain gate, the onlookers stood frozen. Moments earlier, Wen Tuyang and his group, acting under Tian Ruojing's orders, had seemed like an overwhelming calamity, a crisis that threatened the survival of the Tianwu Sect.

Now, in the span of a breath, Qing Feng had slaughtered them all.

"Martial Uncle...he..." Fu Yunzi was so shaken he could barely speak. The others were no better. Not one of them could remain composed.

Qing Heng's expression grew increasingly complex. Almost in a whisper, he said, "Do you still not understand? He is a Dao Deriver..."

Dao Deriver!

The two words crashed down like a bolt from a clear sky. Qing Geng and the others felt as if thunder had exploded inside their minds. The color drained from their faces and their hearts sank to the depths. Only moments ago, they had firmly declared their intention to hand Qing Feng over. If Qing Feng chose to settle accounts now, who among them could possibly withstand him?

In the distance, Lin Xun walked back unhurriedly. When he reached Qing Heng, he cupped his fists in salute. "My apologies, I should have told you sooner. I am not your junior brother, Qing Feng. I have merely borrowed his body and inherited his memories. Before I leave this world...I will repay him."

Qing Heng drew in a slow, steady breath. Then he returned the salute. "Thank you."

His heart was a tangled mess of conflicting emotions.

"Could it be...you are Lin Xun, the Dao Deriver being hunted by the four great dao lineages across the world?" Qing Geng's voice rang out, sharp with sudden realization.

Lin Xun inclined his head. "That's correct."

Lin Xun!

The name alone made everyone's hearts tremble. Over the past year, the four great dao lineages had mobilized countless forces, sweeping across the Dao Derivation Zone in search of Dao Deriver Lin Xun. Who would have thought that he had been hiding within their Tianwu Sect all along?

Lin Xun's gaze shifted to Qing Geng. "Do you have anything else you wish to say?"

Under that calm, indifferent stare, Qing Geng's body went rigid and his voice trembled. "What...what do you intend to do?"

Lin Xun's expression did not change. "In the face of a crisis, you were willing to abandon your own fellow sect members."

He raised a hand. "What use are you?"

A streak of sword qi flashed. In the next instant, Qing Geng was slain where he stood. That bloody scene sent a chill through everyone present. Those elders who had stood beside Qing Geng moments earlier felt especially cold. Their faces drained of color and their hearts sank as if plunged into an icy abyss.

Lin Xun's gaze swept toward them.

At that moment, Qing Heng stepped forward. "Fellow Daoist, please stop. They are...after all, members of my Tianwu Sect. Allow me to deal with them."

Even he had been shaken by Lin Xun's ruthless decisiveness.

"Very well." Lin Xun agreed without hesitation.

Qing Heng breathed a sigh of relief. "Thank you, Fellow Daoist."

“There is no need to thank me.” Lin Xun spoke calmly. “And you need not worry that, because of me, the Tianwu Sect will become the target of the four great dao lineages.”

He paused slightly. “Before long, I will personally pay a visit to those four great dao lineages and settle the enmity between myself and the Heavenly Mandate Apostles once and for all.”

Qing Heng froze. He...intends to confront the four great dao lineages?!

The others felt as though they were trapped in a dream. To them, the four great dao lineages were the supreme ruling powers of the Dao Derivation Zone, forces that stood at the very pinnacle of the world.

As for the Heavenly Mandate Apostles who had already stepped onto the Immortal Path, there was no need to mention them. They were beings whom they could only revere from afar for their entire lives. Now, Lin Xun spoke of personally paying them a visit. How could they not be shaken?

Lin Xun did not explain further. Instead, he changed the topic. “There is no time to delay. I will first make a trip to the Tianling Sect to see Tian Ruojing. You may return to your positions and wait.”

With that, he turned and strode away. Only after his figure disappeared into the distance did Qing Heng, Fu Yunzi, and the others gradually regained their composure.

Fu Yunzi’s face was etched with concern, “Senior Martial Uncle, once word of today spreads, our Tianwu Sect will become the center of the storm. What should we do?”

Instead of answering directly, Qing Heng suddenly asked, “Do you know how the four great dao lineages rose to stand at the pinnacle of the Dao Derivation Zone?”

The question caught Fu Yunzi off guard. He shook his head.

“It is because each of them possesses a Dao Deriver!”

Qing Heng drew a slow breath before continuing, his voice low and solemn. “Dao Derivers wield vast divine powers and command supreme means beyond our imagination. Throughout history, whenever a Dao Deriver departs this world, they leave behind a heaven-reaching great dao within the Dao Derivation Zone. The four great dao lineages have preserved these complete great daos. That is why they have stood at the pinnacle of the world for countless ages!”

Fu Yunzi frowned slightly. “Senior Martial Uncle, what do you mean by this?”

Qing Heng’s expression turned resolute. “If the Tianwu Sect wishes to survive this storm, there is only one path left for us. We must place our complete trust in Lin Xun!”

“Trust him?” Fu Yunzi echoed, recalling Lin Xun’s earlier words. A tremor ran through his heart. “Senior Martial Uncle, do you truly believe Lin Xun has a chance to sweep away the enemies within four great dao lineages?”

Qing Heng replied calmly, “It is not a matter of what I believe. A clash between them is inevitable. And when that day comes, I would rather believe Lin Xun will be the one left standing.”

“What if he loses?” someone asked, unable to restrain themselves.

“Then the Tianwu Sect will be doomed as well.” Qing Heng’s expression did not change.

Silence fell. For a long moment, no one spoke. Their hearts churned like a stormy sea.

“Why be so tense? If Lin Xun wins, our Tianwu Sect...may well usher in a transformation unlike anything in its history!” Qing Heng’s eyes burned with fervor as he continued, “In this world, fortune and calamity are intertwined. From what I have seen, Lin Xun still deeply values the kindness of my junior brother, Qing Feng. And that is enough.”

As he spoke, excitement quietly welled within him. According to what he knew, when a Dao Deriver eventually departed, the body they had borrowed would retain their Immortal-level cultivation and comprehension of the great dao.

In other words, when Lin Xun left this world, Qing Feng would undergo a transformation beyond imagination!

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In the void, Lin Xun walked unhurriedly.

“In merely half a year, the five dao bodies have jointly derived a supreme dao perfectly suited to Qing Feng’s cultivation...Not bad.”

As he sensed the vast and surging power of the Supreme Emperor Ancestor Stage flowing through him, he exhaled a breath of relief. Compared to the Immeasurable Stage cultivation he once possessed, his current strength was still lacking. However, at the very least, it was enough to protect himself.

This was precisely why he had dared to reveal his identity today.

“Once I settle matters with Tian Ruojing, I will leave this region and find a secluded place to cultivate. Only by stepping onto the Immortal Path will I truly have the qualifications to contend with those Heavenly Mandate Apostles. ” He made his decision.

Chapter 3200 The Enemy Arrives

Moonlit Mountain, the seat of the Tianling Sect.

In less than a quarter of an hour, Lin Xun drifted through the void and appeared above the mountain range. He did not trouble the disciples guarding the mountain gate. With a single step, he silently bypassed layer after layer of restriction arrays, entering the sect as though strolling through open air. Before long, he arrived at a secluded cave dwelling deep within Moonlit Mountain.

“Not a bad place to cultivate.” Hands clasped behind his back, Lin Xun surveyed the surroundings. Then he casually lifted a finger and tapped the air.

Buzz!

The restriction formations around the cave rippled violently. However,Yet no one emerged. After a long moment of silence, Lin Xun raised an eyebrow and stepped forward. The restriction forces shattered like fragile glass, collapsing soundlessly as he entered.

He glanced around. “That woman is cautious...she fled in advance.”

His gaze fell on a teacup resting on a stone table. He lifted it lightly and found the tea inside was still faintly warm. “She left only minutes ago.

“When I slaughtered Wen Tuyang and the others at the Tianwu Sect’s mountain gate, she must have sensed their deaths and escaped immediately.”

Realizing this, he furrowed his brows slightly. He had not expected Tian Ruojing to be so vigilant.

“It makes no difference. Let’s see what you can do.”

He turned to leave. However,But just as he was about to depart the Tianling Sect, his spirit sense caught sight of a familiar figure.

Wei Xian! He was theThe Tianling Sect disciple who had once beaten Qing Feng into unconsciousness.

Wei Xian stood in flowing white robes, his handsome features highlighted by a confident smile as he chatted leisurely with a delicate, charming young woman. Suddenly, his expression stiffened. His gaze locked onto the distance, then shock flashed across his face.

“Qing Ffeng!? How dare you come to my Tianling Sect?”

Lin Xun gave a faint smile before his eyes shifted to the woman beside Wei Xian. “If Wei Xian’s cultivation was crippled, would you still remain by his side for the rest of your life?”

The young woman froze, clearly caught off guard.

“You’re courting death!”

Wei Xian’s expression darkened. With a furious shout, he lunged forward, launching a palm strike at Lin Xun. But before he had even crossed half the distance, his body trembled violently. In the next instant, his qi burst outward like air escaping from a punctured vessel.

In the blink of an eye, his cultivation vanished completely. He seemed to age years, his entire figure exuding an indescribable fatigue.

The young woman shrieked, “Ahh—!”

By the time her cry faded, Lin Xun was nowhere to be seen.

“No...no... my cultivation? What happened to my cultivation?!” Wei Xian collapsed onto the ground, trembling uncontrollably. Panic contorted his face, and his eyes were unfocused and wild, as though his mind was on the verge of breaking. In a single instant, he had been reduced from a lofty cultivator to a powerless mortal, how could he possibly accept such a fall?

“Senior Brother, I’ll go find Master!” Her voice trembled as she turned to leave.

Wei Xian clawed at the ground, desperation flooding his eyes. “Junior Sister! You mustn’t leave me! Please! I beg you! Don’t abandon me!”

The young woman forced a strained smile. “Senior Brother, I won’t. Just wait here, I’ll go bring Master.”

WAnd with that, she turned and hurried away without looking back. Before long, a group of figures rushed over. Wei Xian’s master was among them, along with several important elders of the sect.

Wei Xian lifted his head frantically, searching through the crowd. Unfortunately,But he did not see the young woman anywhere. In that instant, the final sliver of hope in his heart shattered. He thought of Qing Feng, and of the humiliation and ridicule that trash had endured all these years...

“Qing Feng still has his senior brother, Qing Heng, to protect him. He still has his Cyclic Derivation cultivation. What about me? I have no cultivation anymore...I have nothing...nothing at all...”

At thatIn that moment, something inside Wei Xian finally snapped. He broke down completely.

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Tianwu Sect.

The great hall.

When Lin Xun returned, Qing Heng, Fu Yunzi, and the others were already waiting.

Qing Heng rose at once. “Did your trip go smoothly, Fellow Daoist?”

Lin Xun replied, “Tian Ruojing fled in advance. If my guess is correct, she has gone either to the Crimson Serpent Immortal Sect or to the Immortal Pavilion,”

His gaze swept across the hall, and he found that Qing Heng, Fu Yunzi, and the elders were all very calm when facing him. They had clearly accepted the truth that Qing Feng was no longer Qing Feng. He was a Dao Deriver.

“That’s troublesome,” Qing Heng said, brows knitting tightly. “With Tian Ruojing’s cunning, she must have sensed something. Given her standing, both the Crimson Serpent Immortal Sect and the Immortal Pavilion will likely dispatch people to investigate. If they begin to suspect your identity...”

He did not finish the sentence, but the meaning was already clear. Fu Yunzi and the others’ expressions changed at once. No matter how events unfolded, the Tianwu Sect was destined to be drawn into the storm.

Lin Xun spoke calmly, “If you trust me, then gather everyone in the Tianwu Sect and leave this place with me.”

Fu Yunzi and the others exchanged uneasy glances.

“Very well!” Qing Heng answered without hesitation.

He had already considered this path. Following Lin Xun was their only chance at survival. Otherwise, the Tianwu Sect would have no hope of enduring what was to come. Seeing Qing Heng agreeing with that suggestionagreed, the others nodded as well.

Lin Xun wasted no time. Moments later...Boom!

A thunderous roar shook Maple Cloud Spirit Mountain, the very foundation of the Tianwu Sect. The entire mountain trembled violently, then tore free from the earth. Not far away, Lin Xun formed a series of hand seals. Under his control, the massive Maple Cloud Spirit Mountain began to shrink, compressing again and again until it was no larger than a fist. With a casual gesture, he drew it through the air and handed it to Qing Heng.

Qing Heng carefully received the miniature Maple Cloud Divine Mountain and stored it within his sleeve. Then he asked, “Fellow Daoist, where do we go next?”

Lin Xun replied without hesitation, “Even if our enemies are already on their way, it will take time for them to arrive. We will use this opportunity to leave this territory first. Once I step onto the Immortal Path, I will settle accounts with them, one by one.”

In the past, his cultivation had been so weak that he could only lie low within the Tianwu Sect and bide his time. Now things were different.

His cultivation had already reached the pinnacle of the Emperor Ancestor Stage, and he now possessed the strength to protect himself. If he chose to conceal himself, even Immortals would find it difficult to track him down.

“Very well!” Qing Heng nodded.

“Fellow Daoist, do not worry. I have experienced countless life-and-death trials in my lifetime. Compared to those, the present situation is nothing.” Lin Xun smiled faintly. He could tell that though Qing Heng appeared calm on the surface, beneath that composure lay tightly restrained anxiety.

After a brief pause, Lin Xun continued, “And you need not worry about the damage to your dao foundation. I will resolve it for you.”

Qing Heng trembled slightly. He forcibly suppressed the surge of emotion rising in his chest and cupped his fists deeply. “Thank you, Fellow Daoist!”

Lin Xun only smiled and said no more. In the next instant, he drifted into the void, Qing Heng following at his side.

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Two days later, beneath the vast heavens, a group of terrifying figures tore through the sky like falling stars before finally coming to a halt above the former grounds of the Tianwu Sect.

At their head stood Yuan Zhong, supreme elder of the Immortal Pavilion, a pinnacle Transcendence Immortal and one of the seven Heavenly Mandate Apostles of the Gen Department stationed in the Dao Derivation Zone.

Beside him were several Immortal figures from the Immortal Pavilion, along with ancient monsters from the Crimson Serpent Immortal Sect. Each possessed Immortal cultivation. Among them stood Tian Ruojing. However, before so many true Immortals, her sSupreme Emperor Ancestor cultivation seemed insignificant.

“Maple Cloud Spirit Mountain...is gone.” Tiang Rouling’s pupils contracted slightly.

“So,” Yuan Zhong murmured, brows faintly furrowed,. “they sensed danger and fled in advance?”

He wore wide-sleeved robes and his long hair was bound high in a topknot. A perfectly round, translucent Immortal Halo shimmered behind him, making him appear like a celestial descended into the mortal world.

“That must be the case,” Tian Ruojing replied, drawing a steady breath. “But in my view, the more they fled in haste, the more it proves that Qing Feng’s identity is suspicious. He is very likely the Dao Deriver Lin Xun you seniors have been searching for this past year!”

A cold gaze swept over her. “That is only speculation. Do you have proof?”

Tian Ruojing’s heart trembled, but she did not falter. After a brief silence, she said solemnly, “I have no concrete evidence, but I am willing to stake my life on this. Qing Feng is undoubtedly a Dao Deriver.”

Several days earlier, she had met Qing Feng personally at the Tianwu Sect. At the time, she had already sensed something amiss. His composure, his tone, and even his gaze were unlike before.

In addition,And after returning to her residence, that unease only deepened. How could a mere Cyclic Derivation cultivator casually perceive the karmic obstruction within her heart after only a few exchanges?

Then after she ordered Wen Tuyang of the Tianling Sect to lead a group of experts to the Tianwu Sect, the events that followed made her draw a firm conclusion: there was something deeply wrong with Qing Feng! Otherwise, how could Wen Tuyang and the others have been wiped out?

The Tianwu Sect was merely a second tier faction. Even its strongest member, Qing Heng, was already burdened with severe dao injuries. Under such circumstances, they simply did not possess the strength to eliminate Wen Tuyang and the others.

There was only one explanation. Qing Feng was the anomaly. This was Tian Ruoling’s conclusion.

“What you say is reasonable. If Qing Feng’s identity were not suspicious, the Tianwu Sect would have had no need to abandon their grounds and flee in advance.”

Yuan Zhong's eyes flickered with thought. "If the Dao Deriver who borrowed Qing Feng's body and identity is truly Lin Xun, then we can infer that he chose to retreat the moment he realized the news might leak."

An Immortal nearby frowned. "This is troublesome. The Dao Derivation Zone is vast beyond measure. If he chooses to hide, where are we supposed to begin our search?"

Yuan Zhong could not help but let out a long sigh. A shadow passed across his brows. "Indeed. He will not be easy to find."

At that moment, Tian Ruojing suddenly spoke. "Seniors, in my humble view, the very fact that Lin Xun chose to flee proves that he has not yet acquired the strength to contend with you. He may not even have stepped onto the Immortal Path."

Yuan Zhong cast her another measured glance. "Your reasoning is not without merit. But on what grounds do you conclude that he has not yet entered the Immortal Stage?"

Tian Ruojing's heart trembled with excitement. She knew she had successfully drawn Yuan Zhong's attention. Suppressing the surge of elation within her, she composed herself and replied calmly, "It's simple. Lin Xun has only been in the Dao Derivation Zone for little more than a year. As far as I know, throughout history, almost no Dao Deriver has ever stepped onto the Immortal Path in so short a time."

She paused deliberately, sensing every gaze fixed on her. A confident smile bloomed across her exquisite features. "As I mentioned earlier, Lin Xun chose to flee rather than fight. That alone is proof enough that his strength has not yet reached a level capable of contending with the Immortal level!"