

STARLIT PATH OF THE MYSTIC FORGE

Chapter 11: The Preaching Platform

“[Preaching Platform] activated, automatically deducting 1 soul strength.”

“[Preaching Platform] Attributes: Host’s current Qi Refinement Level is 1, enabling random consciousness pull of 3 individuals within a 10,000-mile radius. Initiating consciousness pull...”

The system’s text prompt appeared. As it faded, a wave of dizziness and weakness hit Lu, his mind fogged by the loss of soul strength. Then, a faint light pierced the haze, growing blindingly intense, its irresistible pull swallowing his consciousness.

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Great Zhou Dynasty, Imperial Capital.

Purple Gold Palace, Side Hall, Royal Study.

The room was grand yet somber, lined with orderly bookshelves stacked with heavy bamboo scrolls and aged paper tomes. Eunuchs stood silently beneath, heads bowed, ready to retrieve any text their master requested with pinpoint precision.

At the center, a flickering oil lamp cast dim light. A youthful figure in loose black robes sat cross-legged on a cushion before a dragon-carved desk, a bamboo scroll unfurled before him. The boy, holding a brush dipped in fragrant ink, paused thoughtfully, writing with care.

Suddenly, his brush trembled, a blob of ink splattering the scroll. His eyes glazed, ears ringing with a sound like morning bells and evening drums, shaking his mind. Sensing danger, he opened his mouth to shout “Guards!” but before the words formed, darkness claimed him.

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Lu's eyes snapped open. He bolted upright, drenched in cold sweat, fearing another transmigration. But his surroundings—swirling with faint blue spiritual energy, like a celestial realm—reassured him. A prompt appeared: *“First entry to [Preaching Platform]. Please establish a preaching title.”*

Relieved to be in the platform, Lu relaxed. A title? To maintain mystery, perhaps? As a former programmer who ruled the internet with a keyboard, picking a pseudonym was as easy as breathing. “How about ‘Twenty-Four Bridges Under Moonlight’? Sounds immortal enough,” he mused, stroking his chin.

“*Title rejected.*” The system’s cold response flashed.

Lu’s face stiffened. *Not immortal enough?* He tried again, more serious. “Then, ‘Where Does the Jade Maiden Teach the Flute?’”

“*Title rejected. Host, please behave properly.*”

Lu gaped. *What?!* A rare chance to express himself, and the system kept shutting him down. Resigned, he opted for simplicity. A title should cloak his identity, and as a man destined to reshape the world with immortal-like means, he considered “Lu the Great Immortal.” Too direct. “Lu” could mean “six,” so perhaps “Six-Six Immortal” or “Six Paths Immortal”?

The system approved *Six Paths Immortal* without protest. Lu’s lips twitched—*it dropped the “Great” part?* Before he could object, his vision cleared.

A hum resonated. Thick spiritual energy churned around a massive floating array platform, where Lu stood at the center. Beyond its edges, darkness and void stretched endlessly. Spiritual energy cascaded like a waterfall, a breathtaking sight. “This is the [Preaching Platform]?” Lu marveled, awestruck. The sheer volume of spiritual energy could make one an immortal—if only he could absorb it.

He tried, but the energy was untouchable, mere scenery. *I burned a soul strength point just to gawk at unusable energy? What a rip-off.* A prompt clarified: “[Preaching Platform] enables the host to construct secret realms, create or fuse cultivation techniques, and forge magical treasures.”

Lu’s eyes narrowed. “Construct realms? Create techniques? Sounds like a powerful coding tool.” Transforming a low-martial world into a mystical one required more than spreading spiritual energy. People needed to feel the world’s shift and grow stronger. *Where there are people, there’s a martial world. For a mystical world, you need people too.* Changing individuals could change the environment—a clear path forward.

Inspecting the platform, Lu noticed its eight-trigram design, with him at the center. “Qian, Dui, Li, Zhen, Xun, Kan, Gen, Kun...” he muttered, recognizing the symbols for heaven, marsh, fire, thunder, wind, water, mountain, and earth. “This is an eight-trigram array.”

Rooted in the *Book of Changes*, attributed to Fuxi, the trigrams carried mystical weight. Modified with spiritual energy, they formed this [Preaching Platform]. Lu, though no expert in metaphysics, felt a thrill seeing familiar elements from his past life. Seated at the yin-yang center, he sensed shifting runes dancing like sprites as his thoughts stirred.

“Twenty-seven runes total,” he murmured. The eight trigrams, plus yin and yang, made eighteen. Nine numerical runes—one to nine—added the rest. With a thought, he found he could arrange them freely, like coding. Their combinations could form programs to create secret realms. *This is programming!* His old trade, rekindled.

But the soul strength cost stung. Attribute points were precious. As he pondered, the platform shifted. Prompts flashed:

“*Yuwén Xiù (Identity: Great Zhou Emperor) enters Preaching Platform.*”

“*Xiāng Shāoyún (Identity: Western Prefecture Governor) enters Preaching Platform.*”

“*Niè Chāngqīng (Identity: Beiluo City Butcher Shop Owner) enters Preaching Platform.*”

Lu blinked. The platform pulling three random consciousnesses wasn't surprising, but their identities were. The emperor and a governor—impressive. But... *a Beiluo butcher shop owner? What's that about?*