

Yuan Lin Zhen - The Original Forest Village

Situated on the edge of a cliff eternally shrouded in clouds, Yuan Lin Zhen, the Original Forest Village, is a haven and strategic point in the vast River and Sea Autonomous Region. This modest-looking village serves as the last stop for travelers and pilgrims who follow the perilous trail to the distant Hei Shan Si Monastery, hidden deep in the Black Mountains.

The village is surrounded by an ancient forest known as Lin Yuan, whose ancient trees reach colossal heights and whose roots penetrate deep into the cliff. The forest is a vital source of income for the villagers, who collect rare herbs and precious woods, such as Hei Mu, a red and hardy wood used in sacred buildings and ritual weapons, as well as having great commercial value. The villagers believe that each tree possesses a spirit, and cutting them down without the proper permission of the local spirits can bring terrible curses.

Importance to the Region

Yuan Lin Zhen is a spiritual and commercial center. The locals offer shelter, supplies, and knowledgeable guides to those who make their way to the monastery. The village's markets are known for selling rare forest products such as Fei Ying oil and Hei Mu resin. Dark Lotus Powder, extracted from flowers that grow in hidden forest pools, is used in rituals and alchemical concoctions to induce prophetic dreams, and is a coveted item throughout the region.

Dangers and Legends

The forest surrounding the village is not only rich in resources, but also in dangers. Dark creatures such as the Fei Ying, giant crows with flaming eyes, patrol the skies at dusk, attacking the unwary. There are also the Gui Mu, trees that come to life at night, luring travelers with melodic sounds and devouring them as they approach.

One of the oldest legends is that of the Guardian of the Cliff, a misty entity that appears as a hooded warrior. It is said to protect the innocent and punish those who dare disregard the sacred rules of Lin Yuan. Some believe that he is the spirit of a monk who attempted to reach Hei Shan Si but succumbed to the trials of the path.

The Journey to the Monastery

For pilgrims, Yuan Lin Zhen represents the last chance to rest before tackling the treacherous trail to Hei Shan Si. The path is steep, passing over swaying rope bridges and cliffs that disappear into the mist. Despite the dangers, many consider the journey a spiritual test, believing that only the worthy can reach the monastery and receive its blessings.