

Chapter 161 - Forcing Back the West Gate Granny

The West Gate Granny waved her hand. "Miss Hua, I'll show some respect to your Hua family, but don't try biting off more than you can chew. This is an important matter of our Sect of Clouds and Rain. You best not interfere. Take these people and get out of here!"

Hua Chenglu refused to oblige. "Since he's a Hawkwolf guard, then he's under my elder brother's command. I can't just turn a blind eye to all of this. If you have the skill, why don't you kill me as well? Then there'll be no one to report you. Otherwise, you're a kidnapper of children and a murderer of a Hawkwolf guard."

The West Gate Granny's face became even more frigid. She had thought of this several times already. If she were just a regular member of the Hua family, she would have done it a long time ago. Nothing would happen as long as she left behind no evidence.

However, Hua Chenglu was the little princess of the Hua family. Even if there was no direct evidence, the Hua family would never spare her as long as they found out she had passed by Lakeside city. Even the Sect of Clouds and Rain would not be able to protect her.

As a result, the West Gate Granny could only change up her attitude. She said to Li Qingshan earnestly, "Children really know nothing. A girly with the Aspect of Heavenly Fragrance and Beauty will only serve as the source of a colossal disaster to you. If you hand her to me, you'll be able to end your grievance with the Sect of Clouds and Rain. Moreover, I have everything you want, whether it be pills or spiritual artifacts. I can let you pick whatever you want."

Xiao An grabbed the corner of Li Qingshan's clothes, while Li Qingshan only said two words to the West Gate Granny, "Piss off!"

The West Gate Granny was completely angered now. She raised her hand that was no different from a chicken's claw and true qi surged out violently. Just from a few feet away, it pierced Li Qingshan to a point where his face twisted in pain.

Hua Chenglu stamped her foot and called out, "How dare you!"

The West Gate Granny hesitated for quite a while before viciously pulling back. Clearly, she was not bold enough to do that. "This girly will definitely end up with the Sect of Clouds and Rain. I would like to see whether you can keep hiding behind a girl." With that, she climbed into her carriage and took off into the fog.

Hua Chenglu let out a deep sigh, and Li Qingshan eased up as well. He turned around and said, "Thank you for upholding justice and providing assistance." If it were not for Hua Chenglu, he was confident that while the West Gate Granny would not have been able to catch them so easily, his daemon form and Xiao An's ability would have been exposed, leading to endless trouble. As for killing the West Gate Granny, that was basically impossible for him right now.

Hua Chenglu nodded in a rather generous fashion. "It's no problem." Afterwards, she waved her small hand. "Let's talk on the ship."

Li Qingshan nodded and boarded the Wave Breaker with Xiao An and Hua Chenglu. The group of orthodox masters still ended up searching through the ruins of the island as they refused to believe that this was all a scheme. However, they obviously found nothing.

Someone said in wonder, "Why aren't there any corpses?"

"Don't tell me they were all blasted apart by the cannons?"

"But they couldn't have been blasted to a point where they vanished."

Li Qingshan became wary. Devouring flesh and blood on a large scale for the sake of training would definitely lead to suspicion. If he attracted the attention of someone sharp-witted, he would become suspicious sooner or later. He needed to become even more careful. Fortunately, Xiao An had already reconstructed his body, so they were in no hurry to gather more corpses. They could hold off with the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty for now.

As he rubbed Xiao An's head, he thought about how a child like her was involved in killing and fighting every single day after she followed him. Now that she had finally recovered her body, it was time for her to enjoy the happinesses of ordinary children. Seeking greater power to protect her was his responsibility.

Xiao An raised her head to look at Li Qingshan. Li Qingshan smiled at her, and Xiao An's lips twitched as well, smiling rather unnaturally in response.

Li Qingshan pinched her cheek and smiled. "You need quite a lot more practise. As a person, you'll be better off if you smile more."

Xiao An lowered her head in embarrassment as her face blushed.

Although Li Qingshan had no idea what the Aspect of Heavenly Fragrance and Beauty was, he did find her to be extremely cute. He thought back to when Xiao An was still a spirit. Her face was completely pale. She did not seem to possess the same charm as right now.

Little did he know that a body reconstructed using the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty could be described as the most perfect body in the world. The White Bone Bodhisattva might not have been described as possessing heavenly fragrance and beauty. He only pursued the limits of forms and appearances in the world, and the core secrets hidden within could not just be passed off as 'heavenly fragrance and beauty'.

Hua Chenglu yelled at the shore, "If you don't board now, I'm leaving!" The orthodox masters quickly gave up on their search and returned to the ship.

The pitch-black night descended as rain drizzled. Masters stood to the sides.

"Please!" Hua Chenglu invited Li Qingshan into the cabin. They passed through a corridor lit by lanterns and arrived in an extremely fancy dining hall.

There was not a single lantern in the dining hall, but it was fully lit. Half-transparent crystals were embedded in the walls, producing gentle, white light. The atmosphere was pleasant, neither too dry nor too humid, neither too cold nor too hot. It fully exhibited the luxury that Qi Practitioner clans could enjoy.

Hua Chenglu and Li Qingshan sat in the seats of honours as the orthodox masters sat to the two sides. They chatted happily as they were in extremely good moods. While they had failed to find any pills, knowing that their greatest enemies had been blown to a pulp was a very delightful matter.

Great hero Yu even bellowed out, "Bring the alcohol! We killed those bastards, so we need to properly celebrate!"

Everyone responded loudly. There were also envious people among them, who thought about how his appearance was vicious and looked even more villainous than a villain, yet he somehow had such a charming daughter who managed to befriend someone from the Hua family. They sneered inside over how his wife must have been unfaithful, or there was no other explanation.

Hua Chenglu glanced at him before ordering people to prepare some tea and snacks for guests in an extremely old-fashioned manner.

Great hero Yu shut up in a hurry and smiled apologetically. "Let's drink tea. Tea is no different."

If a grown man behaved like Hua Chenglu, Li Qingshan might have found it perfectly normal, but she was only thirteen or fourteen. She still had a hint of childishness to her, making her look like a child trying to act like an adult. It was rather funny.

And, there was no need for any orders at all. She just had to wave her banner, and a few mechanical puppets would emerge from beneath the cabin, clinking and clanking, delivering her tea and snacks. It made her actions seem even more childish instead.

This was the first time Li Qingshan had seen puppets like this, so he became extremely curious. He was amazed by the wonders of this world once again. These puppets seemed to be made out of wood. A face was carved on their heads, and their joints were clearly defined on their arms and feet. They were extremely nimble as well, without any stiffness in their actions. It was possible to imagine them moving as swiftly as the wind when the need arose.

Xiao An's gaze became even more fixed than his. Only when the puppets walked away did she withdraw her gaze reluctantly.

Li Qingshan thought of something and took note of that.

Hua Chenglu sipped some tea and asked sternly, "Just how did you offend that old hag?"

As a result, Li Qingshan told her the entire story regarding the Parlour of Clouds and Rain, but he hid the fact that Zhuo Zhibo was trying to screw him over. Hua Chenglu would definitely be much more familiar with Zhuo Zhibo than himself. Lodging a complaint over the heads of his superiors would never end up well, let alone through a young girl like Hua Chenglu.

When Hua Chenglu heard about how the Parlour of Clouds and Rain had been forcing people into prostitution, she became bright red from fury. However, when she heard how Li Qingshan had killed the procuress and executed a search warrant against them, she praised, "You've done well. The Hawkwolf Guard needs good men who defy brutal suppression like you. I really haven't saved the wrong person."

Li Qingshan grinned, but he forced back his smile and said sternly too, "That's my responsibility!"

Hua Chenglu asked out of curiosity, "What other missions have you undertaken before?"

“I’ve only just joined the Hawkwolf Guard recently, so I haven’t undertaken many missions.” Then Li Qingshan told her about his mission in Ancient Wind city and his plan with the Island of Cherishing Flowers this time.

Hua Chenglu was utterly engrossed by it all. She would chime in from time to time. She led an extravagant life, yet for some reason, she had such a great thirst for blood. When she heard about the destruction of an entire clan, she became overwhelmed by excitement, forcing Li Qingshan to go into much detail.

In the end, she said in quite some pity, “It’s just a pity that my big brother won’t let me join the Hawkwolf Guard so soon. Otherwise, I’ll be able to carry out missions together with you, Qingshan.”

Li Qingshan thought, With the Hua family’s strength, you can literally eat pills whenever you want, so why would you have to busy yourself with these missions? If I were you, I would eat my way to Daemon General before leaving the clan.

However, he said, “That is because commander Hua cares for you. Only when you’re powerful can you carry out missions. I believe there’ll be a day when you become a Hawkwolf guard who even surpasses me.”

Hua Chenglu said, “Exactly. That’s basically what my big brother said to me.”

Li Qingshan thought, So your elder brother coaxes you like this too!

If the entire scene was presented as a new report, it would have been, “The leader of our country, Hua Chenglu, received Li Qingshan in a cordial manner and engaged in a deep conversation, affirming and supporting Li Qingshan’s job. Our leader has also encouraged him to continue with his hard work so that he can strive for the better.”

The orthodox martial arts practitioners watched all of this unfold as bystanders. They felt rather mixed inside. After all, aside from Xiao An, the two of them were the youngest out of everyone present. Most of them were first-rate masters and were only a step away from the first layer of Qi Practitioner, but it was this exact obstacle before the innate realm that separated their statuses.

Yet, they just had to admit that no matter how many times they heard of Li Qingshan’s actions, they felt astounded. Then they thought of the unorthodox masters who prided themselves in making it onto the blacklist and called them idiots inside. Afterwards, they made up their minds to never make it onto the blacklist no matter what. Otherwise, who knows when they would be cut down in one fell swoop from attending a gathering.

After what happened on the Island of Cherishing Flowers, the orthodox martial arts society within several hundred kilometers of Jiaping city experienced great prosperity. The ethos of the jianghu became extremely positive as well. Young and great heroes emerged one after another, every single one of them following the law, respecting the old, and cherishing the young. Even if they became involved in some dirty deeds, they would do it secretly and with great care. They would never do it openly. Li Qingshan had truly done well.

In just a short while, the ship arrived on the shore and everyone disembarked. Hua Chenglu extended her hand and waved it. The huge ship rapidly shrank before landing in her hand. Then she stowed it

away in her hundred treasures pouch. She lamented, "The lake is too small. We can't go speeding around."

Li Qingshan and Xiao An's eyes lit up once more with this sight.

Before they could set off, the orthodox masters had already prepared a celebration banquet in the Lake Viewing restaurant of Lakeside city.

Li Qingshan sighed gently. I have to continue this act. She helped me so much this time, so I need to make her happy at the very least.

And, while he could not see, hear, or smell her, Li Qingshan could clearly sense that the West Gate Granny was still close. The ambiguous sense of hostility and killing intent enveloped him constantly. He was afraid that the West Gate Granny would immediately come for his life as soon as he left Hua Chenglu's side.

Putting on an act for a young girl was always better than risking his life against an old woman. Although he had become determined to kill the West Gate Granny, now was not the time. The West Gate Granny's age was already so advanced, so it was no longer possible for her to make anymore progress with her cultivation. Meanwhile, he was constantly becoming stronger. As long as he had some time, he would be able to kill her without injuring himself at all. What was the point in risking it all right now?

Chapter 162 - Birthday Present

Great hero Yu finally obtained his alcohol in the Lake Viewing restaurant. He drank to his heart's content. He even used his tipsiness to toast Li Qingshan. Afterwards, other people came to toast him as well. They all fawned over him.

"Sir Li, do you have another nickname called the Black Tiger?" There were even some people who recognised Li Qingshan, recalling his extremely distant nickname.

Li Qingshan quickly dealt with their praises and questions and helped Xiao An to another piece of fish. "Try this. It's quite nice." Now that she had finally regained her sense of taste, she obviously had to make up for everything she had missed out over such a long period of time.

Xiao An lowered her head and ate obediently. Although she was expressionless, she remained bright red the entire time; it was like she was drunk.

An old monk made his way over and studied Xiao An. "Sir Li, your little friend gives off a very strong buddhist aura!" He was a diligent monk who had some cultivation about him, so he could sense the impact of the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty on Xiao An.

Li Qingshan laughed. "My Xiao An will become a bodhisattva in the future!"

The old monk was taken aback. He placed his palms together in a prayer. "That's sinful, that's sinful. Sir, you mustn't talk nonsense!"

Li Qingshan laughed. "How can common people understand the ambitions of the great? Right, Xiao An?"

Hua Chenglu was still the person that everyone crowded around. When she heard that, she glanced at Li Qingshan and shook her head. She had no idea whether this kid was audacious or simply foolish. Didn't

he know that a ninth layer Qi Practitioner was looking for him now? If it were not for her, he would have been torn to pieces a long time ago. He would not be able to go on about common people and great people here.

At this moment, a handsome young man arrived before her gracefully and whispered. He seemed to say something with deep affection.

Hua Chenglu's smile vanished. She replied to him with a question, "Do you think you're worthy?"

She was not particularly loud, but everyone present had sharp ears. They all looked over. Everyone knew what the young man was trying. In particular, the other young heroes present all sneered inside. You want to get involved with the Hua family? Why don't you check yourself in the mirror first? Afterwards, they felt glad that they had not attempted the same thing.

Li Qingshan thought, Bastard, aren't you a little too bestial? You won't even spare a thirteen-year-old girl. If you were in my previous life, you would've been shot! However, this girl sure was realistic. She was unlike those young misses from the stories, who would be touched by true love and end up eloping with scholars.

The young man's face became bright red. He covered his face and left in embarrassment.

Yu Zijian asked, "You just had to turn him down. You didn't have to be so cruel to him."

Hua Chenglu said, "He never had any sincere intentions in the first place, so why am I supposed to be all polite to him? Moreover, he didn't even have the courage to say that he was worthy. He lacks confidence and has an inferiority complex. That's just annoying." Towards the end, she seemed to remember something, and her face became rather resentful.

The small incident failed to influence the atmosphere of the celebratory banquet.

After the banquet, the masters all bid farewell. They said they would be returning to eliminate the remaining unorthodox forces. In reality, they were just taking advantage of the situation so that they could claim a piece of the territory and wealth left behind by these unorthodox masters. There were a few young men on par with young heroes who were reluctant to part with Hua Chenglu.

Just when it was as noisy as it could get, Li Qingshan approached Hua Chenglu and whispered something into her ear.

Hua Chenglu had received a few toasts from people as well, so her face was slightly flushed. When she saw him approach her, she was rather displeased in the beginning, but when she heard his words, she was surprised. She glanced at Xiao An before smiling and nodded.

The young heroes were all envious of him. This kid sure knew how to climb upwards. If he became the son-in-law of the Hua family, he would basically experience a meteoric rise in status, wealth and everything else. In the past few days, a few of them had attempted similar things as well, but Hua Chenglu had shut them all down in a haughty manner. It was rare for her to smile after hearing something like that.

Just as Li Qingshan wanted to give something to Hua Chenglu, she waved her hand and turned it down. Li Qingshan did not insist either. He only gazed at her deeply, which embarrassed Hua Chenglu instead,

making her shift her gaze. In the end, she placed something in his hundred treasures pouch and glanced at him in concern. She mentioned something again, but Li Qingshan only smiled and shook his head. With that, they finally stopped talking.

It was impossible for the Hua family to stand up for him over something as small as this. Zhuo Zhibo of the Hawkwolf Guard seemed to hate this kid very much as well, while the Sect of Clouds and Rain could endure the price that came with eliminating him. When the banquet ended, everyone left the restaurant and boarded their own carriages or horses.

Hua Chenglu emerged from the restaurant. Yu Zijian asked curiously, "What were you talking about with him earlier?" She thought that he was the same as the young heroes. Did she understand what would happen between man and woman at such a young age?

Hua Chenglu said in thought, "It's nothing."

Yu Zijian said, "What nothing? You two got along so well earlier. He might not be bad, but he's far too vicious. He doesn't suit you."

Hua Chenglu finally understood what she was asking about. She smacked her forehead. "You're so young, so what are you thinking about these random things for? He doesn't suit me, so he's supposed to suit you? You're the one who's interested, so don't say that I am. He only wanted to buy a gift for that child. Afterwards, he bid farewell to me. I was afraid he would end up being caught by that old woman, so I tried to persuade him to travel with me, but he refused."

Yu Zijian clutched her head and gazed at the restaurant in concern. "He'll be fine, right?"

Under the rain and darkness of the night, the West Gate Granny parked her carriage in a dark alleyway. She firmly locked onto Li Qingshan's aura in the restaurant. She refused to believe that the little princess of the Hua family would actually spend every moment of her time around this man. As long as she had the smallest opportunity, she would be able to strike. Taking away a single child and even accepting the child as a disciple would not exactly be a crime.

She watched the people scatter, but the West Gate Granny suddenly sensed that she had completely lost track of Li Qingshan's aura. It was like he had simply vanished into thin air. She could not help but rush out of the carriage. She tore through the curtain of rain like a red ghost, basically treading on air. She circled around the restaurant a few times, but she failed to sense Li Qingshan's aura at all.

Landing on the eaves, she screeched, "This is impossible!" How could a mere second layer Qi Practitioner hide his aura so well, enough to avoid her senses? "Li Qingshan, get out here!"

Her voice rolled through the entire city. It was unknown how many families she had alarmed, but Li Qingshan obviously would not answer her.

Instead, Hua Chenglu grinned and yelled at the eaves, "How's that, old woman? You can't find him now, can you?"

Yu Zijian let out a sigh of relief. She shot a glance at Hua Chenglu. "How can you just hit me like that?"

The West Gate Granny glared at Hua Chenglu viciously before flying away again. She expanded her search range, but in the dark rain, the streets were as complicated as a maze. Li Qingshan was like a fish that had been released back into the water. He had swum away, vanishing completely.

Hua Chenglu rolled her eyes at Yu Zijian. "Slow-witted!" She took out a small, delicate carriage from her hundred treasures pouch and tossed it on the ground. Just like the ship earlier, the carriage rapidly expanded, but it was drawn by two wooden horses.

The wheels rolled, and the carriage took off into the rainy night.

In the carriage, Yu Zijian managed to last until midnight, but without the support of true qi, she was just mentally weaker. As such, she laid down on the soft, golden, silken pillows and fell asleep.

Hua Chengzu leaned on the window sill and thought about everything that had happened tonight. From blasting the Island of Cherishing Flowers to hosting the celebratory banquet, no one has been bold enough to call me useless! I've done two significant things as well! Afterwards, she smiled complacently. She seemed just like a child.

Then she thought of what Li Qingshan had said to her earlier in the restaurant.

"Can you sell me one of your humanoid puppets?"

"I don't have a lot of things that I can offer. I only have a few spiritual stones and a few dozen talismans. Would that be enough?"

When this utterly reckless and foolish young man who would remain almost insanely stubborn before the pressure of a ninth layer Qi Practitioner said this, he was extremely stern. He even seemed like he was begging her.

He made her think of someone. He would also lower his proud head for the sake of a girl, doing all that he could to make her happy. Melancholy unbecoming of her age appeared on her face. She no longer tried to act mature anymore either. She only sighed. "Big brother Chengzan."

At this moment, her eyes lit up. Outside the window, Li Qingshan stood in a dark alleyway in a straw rain cloak with Xiao An beside him. She was also wearing a small rain cloak. He clasped his hands at her with a smile, and Hua Chenglu straightened herself and returned the greeting. The carriage had already passed him now. All that was left before her were rain-soaked walls, but the sight still lingered in her mind.

The young man stood in the dark wind and rain, but he seemed to give off a powerful and positive light. He was like a hard piece of rock, unable to be affected by anything. He was still very weak, but he possessed a certain sense of strength that was no less than her elder brother's or even surpassed his in certain aspects.

She was infected by him. She made up her mind. I'll definitely help you, big brother.

Li Qingshan lowered his large, bamboo hat and held Xiao An's hand. "Let's go. Do you want me to carry you on my back?"

Xiao An shook her head.

Holding hands, they vanished into the pitch-black curtain of rain.

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Five kilometers from Lakeside city, two rain cloaks, one large and one small, hung in front of a ruined temple.

Fire blazed in the temple, purging the moisture and darkness. Two shadows, also one large and one small, were projected onto the earthen walls.

Li Qingshan said with a mysterious smile, "Close your eyes."

Xiao An just closed her eyes obediently.

"You can open them now. Tada! Look what this is!"

Xiao An opened her eyes and saw Li Qingshan holding a small, wooden person in his arms. It was the same humanoid puppet she had seen on the ship. Her eyes shone with surprise and joy.

Li Qingshan placed the puppet onto the ground, and it immediately expanded to the size of an adult. Under his command, it clinked and clanked as it moved around.

"This is a birthday gift for you! Yep, today is the birth of your new life. The eighth of the eighth. That's a good number. I got this from miss Hua. Although miss Hua is a little childish, she's not a bad person. I'll definitely return this favour to her in the future. So what do you think about it?"

Xiao An blinked her eyes as her long eyelashes moved rapidly. Her eyes were rather moist. She opened her mouth in an attempt to say something, but she halted. She was still unable to speak.

"You still can't speak?" Li Qingshan found this to be quite the pity. He hated the witch even more now.

Xiao An shook her head sadly.

Li Qingshan rubbed her head and encouraged her with a smile. "There's no need to force yourself. You can go slowly. I know what you're trying to say even when you can't talk."

Xiao An stood up and began fiddling around with the puppet. She controlled the puppet and made it move around, and before long, she became happy again. She forgot about all of her worries, even though she would always forget to move her face and smile.

Author's Postscript: Ruthlessness does not make a hero, and taking pity does not make you any less of a real man. Fierce-browed, I coolly defy a thousand pointing fingers; head-bowed, like a willing ox I serve the people. Yep, this is the feeling. If you like this feeling, please give me the monthly tickets in your hands!

Chapter 163 - For Scaring Children

Li Qingshan smiled on the side. His mind was at peace. Although he was unable to put their exact relationship into words, the conclusion he could reach was as clear as day. She was family to him, family that brought him warmth.

As a lonely transmigrator, he had lost his parents at a young age and was even oppressed by his only family. After settling their debts, he no longer seemed to possess any more ties. However, her arrival changed everything. To him, she had only been a pitiful creature that required his care in the very beginning, but afterwards, he would often receive care and assistance from her instead.

She was the one who found the spiritual ginseng and paved his path of cultivation. Back then, he was still contemplating about how he was supposed to return the favour multiple times over, but now, he had completely dismissed that thought. If she brought him a hundred spiritual ginseng right now, he would eat all of them without holding back at all. After all, as family, there was no need to put any further thought into matters like that.

Sometimes, he wondered whether the black ox had already calculated this. If it were not for her existence, he would probably be ten times as vicious as now. With the ability from the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression, it might have even been possible for him to run around killing Qi Practitioners for their pills. He might have even done whatever he wanted to fulfil his own desires, becoming a daemon through and through.

He had no confidence in the bottom line of his morality. No one was born a hero, a genuinely good person. He believed circumstances could change people. With absolute power and loneliness, it would definitely lead to absolute freedom and indulgence. But right now, he needed to take care of her safety, so he could not take too many risks. He needed to serve as a role model to her. He could not do whatever he wanted.

It was exactly because of her existence that he could live like a human and not fight purely for the sake of his desires. As the head of the family, he had to bear some responsibilities and seriously consider for the present and the future.

He no longer had many regular Qi Gathering pills left, and for the sake of breaking through to the fifth layer of the Innate Method of Practising Qi, he had used up a bottle of Hundred Grasses pills as well. He was in desperate need for more pills so that he could maintain his cultivation speed and deal with the great, hidden threat of the Sect of Clouds and Rain.

The simplest and most direct method was obviously to redeem them from the Hawkwolf Guard. Out of his twenty-seven missions, he had only completed twenty-one of them, as some people did not come to the Island of Cherishing Flowers. The remuneration for each mission was pitiful as well, but due to the quantity of missions, it still amounted to over three hundred points of contribution in total. He could exchange for a single Qi Gathering pill with five points of contribution. If it was combined with his original two hundred and fifty points of contribution, he could have exchanged for over a hundred Qi Gathering pills.

However, Zhuo Zhibo opposed him, which made things extremely difficult for Li Qingshan. No matter how many missions he completed, that fellow would never permit him to exchange for anything.

Originally, he was wholeheartedly focused on helping Xiao An to recover his body, so he had no interest in dealing with Zhuo Zhibo's provocations. Now that this goal was achieved, it was time for him to kick aside this obstacle in his way.

When he thought of that, killing intent arose in his heart. Zhuo Zhibo, you better just die obediently! I might not be able to deal with ninth layer Qi Practitioners, but I'm more than enough to deal with you!

Xiao An immediately sensed Li Qingshan's changes. She looked back at him.

Li Qingshan smiled. "Let's spend some more time outside, just in case that old woman blocks our way. After this, we'll go back and butcher Zhuo Zhibo."

Xiao An nodded happily.

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The next day, the rain showed no signs of stopping.

Li Qingshan set off with Xiao An. Because there were no particular places he wanted to go to, he would stop and rest whenever he came across a place that seemed fun or offered good food. They stopped and went as if they were on holiday.

One day when he was near a tea stall on the side of the road, he suddenly heard people on the neighbouring table mention his name. He could not help but listen in closely.

"This Tiger Butcher, Li Qingshan, is the reincarnation of a god of slaughter. As soon as he was born, he began killing. He began killing people when he was nine. Ever since he joined the Hawkwolf Guard, he became even more hopeless. First, he destroyed the Qian family, slaughtering all of them, over a thousand people. He killed them mercilessly, regardless of their age or gender. He even laughed aloud as he killed them. There were so many corpses that even the pit could not fit them all..."

As it turned out, these were some people of the jianghu who had come here to shelter from the rain. That was what a sallow, skinny man said in great detail as he sipped some crude alcohol.

Li Qingshan had no idea how to react. His nickname seemed to have changed again. Though, the Tiger Butcher did sound much better than the Descended Tiger and the Black Tiger. However, since when did he slaughter the entire Qian family? He clearly only killed three people. The rest was all due to Qian Rongzhi. She was the one who laughed aloud as she killed them, so why did they describe him like a mass murderer? However, becoming the main character of the rumours of the jianghu was a rather interesting experience at the same time. He listened closely.

"If you bunch of cowards saw that many corpses, you would have wet yourself in fright. However, Li Qingshan is no ordinary person. After killing over a thousand people, he still did not feel satisfied, so he set up a great scheme on the Island of Cherishing Flowers. The Island Lord of Cherishing Flowers, Shen Xihua, the Soaring Godrat, Zhao Ruyong, the Iron Palms of Mountain-splitting, Tian Zhonghao... You've all heard of these people, right?"

After receiving everyone's affirmation, the sallow, skinny man continued, "He tricked them all onto the Island of Cherishing Flowers and wiped them out in one stroke. He even laughed aloud as he killed them."

However, someone objected, "I heard that the Island of Cherishing Flowers was flattened using cannonfire."

“What would you know? He killed them all before blasting the place down. My uncle’s friend’s master was on the ship back then.” The sallow, skinny man said proudly. Then he added, “Did you know that the pit outside Ancient Wind city was later exhumed, and they failed to find a single corpse at all? It was the same with the Island of Cherishing Flowers. Do you know why?”

“Why?”

The sallow, skinny man suddenly stifled his voice. Only after enough suspense did he say, “Cannibalism!” It led to a great gasp of fright.

Cannibalism! Li Qingshan’s eye twitched, while Xiao An’s lips curled up. She found it hilarious.

Li Qingshan pinched her cheeks. “Eat your food!” Although these rumours had many absurdities about them, they were surprisingly accurate from a certain aspect.

Xiao An stuck out her tongue.

Someone on the table beside him questioned, “That is over a thousand people, so how could he have eaten them all?”

The sallow, skinny man faltered. He was unable to answer that question.

Li Qingshan shrugged. As it seemed, it was true. Rumours would stop with the wise!

Afterwards, Li Qingshan understood very soon just what wishful thinking meant inside a restaurant.

“It’s said that the Tiger Butcher stands twenty feet tall and has a girth of twenty feet as well. He has a green face and curved teeth, with a head made of metal! He can move as swiftly as the wind, and he’s as loud as thunder! He loves to eat human flesh, and he needs four or five people to fill him for each meal!”

“That’s a daemon, right?”

In a corner of the restaurant, Li Qingshan slapped his forehead. He felt like if these rumours continued to spread, his true form would become exposed.

Xiao An could now smile in a very natural manner.

In the dead of night, a child cried constantly within a certain household. He threw a tantrum for some candy, or he would refuse to go to sleep.

His mother said, “You can’t eat candy at night! It’s bad for your teeth!”

The child refused to relent.

The mother finally lost her temper. “If you keep crying, if you keep crying, the Tiger Butcher is going to eat you!”

The child immediately stopped crying. He fell completely silent. A long while later, he said softly, “Mummy, I don’t want candy. Just don’t let the Tiger Butcher eat me.”

The mother smiled in satisfaction.

On the streets outside, Li Qingshan finally understood what daemonification meant! His nickname was now extremely effective at scaring children and could make them stop crying. It firmly took root within the hearts of the common people. It assisted countless households in disciplining their children.

The Hawkwolf Guard possessed many powerful people, but they mainly targeted Qi Practitioners, which was rather distant from the lives of ordinary people. Moreover, he had just killed a few people at most in the mission this time.

However, from just the two times that Li Qingshan was involved, he had caused over a thousand deaths with countless witnesses. As a result, his nickname spread extremely rapidly, leading to great fame. The situation soon became completely out of control.

In the Iron Fist school within Qingyang city, the first disciple, Wang Lei, asked, "Is this all true?"

Liu Hong said, "Aside from the part about cannibalism, the other parts probably aren't just baseless rumours. I could tell a long time ago that nothing good could come out of this kid, that he would disturb the jianghu. However, I never thought he would be so vicious such that he would directly destroy half of it. Don't be jealous of your junior brother. There's nothing good about roaming through the jianghu."

"Wise be master. To think that I had almost attacked him," Wang Lei said in lingering fear. He had never thought that a bumpkin from a village would become such a terrifying figure. From then on, his envy of Li Long vanished. The jianghu was just far too dangerous. He was better off remaining in Qingyang city obediently and waiting to take over his master!

"That is nothing. I even punched him a hundred times!" Liu Hong said proudly. This matter that had humiliated him before now became a great honour for him. He would mention it to whoever he saw from then on.

Many masters would pass through Qingyang city. When they heard he had punched the Tiger Butcher Li Qingshan a hundred times and that he was still standing there in one piece, they admired him deeply. Even those stronger than him developed some respect for him.

Afterwards, on his deathbed, Liu Hong even specially ordered his disciples to engrave a great sentence on his gravestone. "Here lies the person who once punched the Tiger Butcher a hundred times," so that later generations would look at it in reverence.

Soon afterwards, a great sculpture was erected at the entrance of Crouching Ox village. It depicted a young man. He was able-bodied and wielded a blade; his gaze was vicious. The sculpture seemed life-like. It was Li Qingshan.

It was Half-village Liu, caretaker Liu, who had paid a hefty price to invite the most renowned sculptor within the local region to create it. On the day the sculpture was completed and put in place, the deafening sounds of gongs, drums, and firecrackers rang out. Village head Li organised everyone in the village to pay their respects to it.

Many years later, mountain bandits appeared once again in the region of Qingyang. They pillaged and plundered many villages, but Crouching Ox village was the only one they were afraid to approach due to this statue, bringing them peace. Out of deep gratitude, the villagers erected a temple. They would all

come to pay their respects right before the beginning of winter every year. It became a great festival, called 'Respecting the Tiger Butcher', but this was a story for another time.

Zhuo Zhibo frowned heavily in the office of the Hawkwolf Guard within Jiaping city. Recently, Li Qingshan had caused him just far too much trouble. He wanted to kill him with a borrowed blade, to lead him to his doom. When the West Gate Granny came to investigate in Jiaping, he was confident that Li Qingshan was deeply involved in the entire matter. He even provided a portrait and information regarding his missions to her, but he never expected it all to fail.

He had never imagined that the kid would be lucky enough to befriend the daughter of the Hua family, such that even the West Gate Granny was helpless against him. He had brought renown upon Li Qingshan instead.

However, he was not particularly worried. Sitting right in front of him right now was the West Gate Granny. Just as Li Qingshan had suspected, the West Gate Granny was unable to find Li Qingshan anywhere, so she just waited for him to come to her here. She was determined to obtain the girl with the Aspect of Heavenly Fragrance and Beauty.

Author's Postscript: Push, everybody! We remained around the forties last month with the ranking. The target this month was originally to make it within the thirties, but you've given me twenty-third instead, so Dream Teller thanks you all! I will work even harder with my writing. The setup is almost complete. What I actually want to write will gradually unfold. I don't just want to bring you hot-bloodedness and satisfaction, but also warmth, smiles, and sentiment. Speaking of which, I paced around a few hundred times in the living room yesterday. I thought of what I would be writing soon and was utterly overjoyed. Just you watch as the good stuff comes!

Chapter 164 - The Moving Undercurrent

"Granny, there's no need to worry. You are welcome to wait here. I refuse to believe the kid won't return to Jiaping for the rest of his life! If he really doesn't return, then he's a deserter who's betrayed the Hawkwolf Guard. I've worked with the Sect of Clouds and Rain for all these years, so I'll definitely give your esteemed sect a satisfying conclusion to the matter of the Parlour of Clouds and Rain. I've already taken back the Parlour of Clouds and Rain that Zhou Wenbin closed down. Your esteemed sect only needs to send people here again and you'll probably be open for business once again very soon."

Zhuo Zhibo said rather enthusiastically, both for the sake of dealing with Li Qingshan and for the many benefits that the Sect of Clouds and Rain could offer.

The West Gate Granny said indifferently, "Thank you for your kind intentions, commander. The Sect of Clouds and Rain will be sending people over very soon. I definitely must request the commander to take good care of them. However, I'll have to leave Jiaping city very soon." At the end of the day, a world of cultivators was still all about strength. Although she needed Zhuo Zhibo, she was still extremely haughty.

Zhuo Zhibo was surprised, "Why's that?"

The West Gate Granny said, "It's the sect master's order. I can't disobey it."

"Why did you esteemed sect master... Was it because?"

A sliver of sunkennes flashed across the West Gate Granny's eyes, "That's right. It's all because of the girly from the Hua family. Our Sect of Clouds and Rain can't just shrug off any pressure from your vice commander Hua."

"I see!" Zhuo Zhibo was filled with regret. He could not kill with a borrowed blade then. However, he would never be bold enough to grumble about Hua Chengzan.

The West Gate Granny said, "Though, the kid's only a second layer Qi Practitioner. There's no need for me to do anything. Just you would be enough, commander Zhuo! Our sect master has already promised that as long as you can hand the girl beside the kid to the Sect of Clouds and Rain, our sect will give you a bottle of Pills of Spring Breeze and Rain to you as remuneration."

Zhuo Zhibo was interested. The Sect of Cloud and Rain's Pills of Spring Breeze and Rain were unique to them. They required extremely rare spiritual herbs and a special secret method to refine. Although they could not strengthen true qi, they could purge the impurities within true qi, saving a tremendous amount of time on purifying true qi. They were so valuable that just one of them was worth several hundred Qi Gathering pills. The Sect of Clouds and Rain was really paying the price this time. He had no idea just what was so special about the girl that she could raise so much attention from the Sect of Clouds and Rain.

However, he appeared unfazed on the surface, "How can you say that, granny? How can I attack my own subordinate? I will bear the girl you spoke of in mind. I won't disappoint your esteemed sect master."

The West Gate Granny said, "There's one more thing. I want to take this disciple of mine to pay a visit to the Clear River city."

"Disciple?" Zhuo Zhibo was confused, but he saw Qian Rongzhi who had been attending to them silently the entire time speak sweetly, "Thank you, granny."

Zhuo Zhibo's face immediately sank, "Rongzhi, what's this all about?"

During the few days the West Gate Granny spent in Jiaping city, Qian Rongzhi had been the one receiving her. In just a few days, she managed to establish a tie with her and convince the eccentric West Gate Granny to accept her as a disciple. However, Zhuo Zhibo had only just heard of the news, as if he had served as a springboard to her.

Qian Rongzhi smiled, "Granny knew I had never joined a sect before, so she agreed to accept me as her disciple. I want to go to the Sect of Clouds and Rain to cultivate for a while, so I hope the commander can give approval."

Her cultivation talent was acceptable and she had some beauty about her. She possessed an ordinary aspect of beauty. Although it was nowhere close to the level of the Aspect of Heavenly Fragrance and Beauty, it was still enough to catch the West Gate Granny's attention. At the same time, she was extremely skilled at manipulating people, such that all of her actions and words suited the West Gate Granny's strange tastes. As a result, she was chosen to become her disciple. None of this was a coincidence.

She was like a poisonous vine, extending and reaching towards all opportunities and climbing upwards no matter what the cost was, just for more sunlight and due. In her eyes, Qian Yannian was nothing. Zhuo Zhibo was nothing. Even the West Gate Granny was nothing. They were all just tools to be used by her.

The West Gate Granny was a ninth layer Qi Practitioner, while Zhuo Zhibo was only at the sixth layer. She did not even need to compare them to know which tool would be better. With the protective umbrella of the Sect of Clouds and Rain, she no longer needed to bend over backwards to fawn up to Zhuo Zhibo. As a result, her attitude towards him just changed.

The Hawkwolf Guard was only a job. It did not forbid its members from joining sects, just like Diao Fei who came from a sect. Obviously, if Zhuo Zhibo wanted to obstruct her, he had many ways to make things difficult for Qian Rongzhi. However, right in front of him was the sunken-faced West Gate Granny, so how would he be bold enough to do that? The West Gate Granny only mentioned it to him before leaving with Qian Rongzhi. She was not asking for his opinion or permission.

Qian Rongzhi smiled. She was confident. The reason why she had only told Zhuo Zhibo about this right now was to remove all of his opportunities to get in her way. If the opportunity arose, Zhuo Zhibo definitely would have taken it. There was not a single man who would be willing to let go of a docile, obedient woman that they could toy with however they wished.

Zhuo Zhibo squinted his eyes, "Rongzhi, you've managed to get yourself into a good place. As your commander, I'm obviously happy for you. Only if you learn some skills from the Sect of Clouds and Rain can you complete your Hawkwolf Guard missions better. I'll permit you to take a few months' leave, but there won't be any pills. At the same time, I need to take you three newcomers to Clear River city to see the two commanders, so you can just go ahead for now."

He made his decision very quickly. If he insisted on getting in her way, he would derive no benefit at all. As a result, he could only agree to it reluctantly. Although he knew that Qian Rongzhi's sugar-coated words were mostly insincere, his pride as a man was still hurt from being abandoned so easily. He developed resentment towards Qian Rongzhi. She was as shameless as they came.

Before Qian Rongzhi boarded the carriage, she bowed gracefully, "Thank you, commander. In the coming days, Rongzhi will serve the commander again, in return for your great kindness." She added inside, "If you're still alive, that is."

Even if she had managed to join the Sect of Clouds and Rain, her status as a Hawkwolf Guard remained the same, so before she had obtained strength that surpassed Zhuo Zhibo, she would have never been so disrespectful to Zhuo Zhibo. However, she had a feeling that Zhuo Zhibo would definitely die under Li Qingshan's hands. This was a woman's intuition, and it was mostly based on her instincts from all the calculations she made. There was obviously no reason for her to be polite to a dead person.

Zhuo Zhibo said, "No problem!" He watched the carriage leave. He felt how there was nowhere to vent the urge in his crotch, so he shattered the stone table in front of him with a slam.

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In Clear River city within a small garden in the Hua estate, Hua Chengzan said to Hua Chenglu, "Alright. The West Gate Granny has been summoned back from Jiaping city for questioning. She won't be able to cause any problems to the kid for now."

Hua Chenglu nodded, "Good."

Hua Chengzan said, "It's rare of you to request something from me for the sake of others."

"What for the sake of others? This has to do with your Hawkwolf Guard. I'm not requesting you either. I'm helping you. Don't you know him?"

Hua Chengzan said helplessly, "Alright, alright, you're helping me. We don't actually know each other. We just met each other once. Though, I never thought that kid would actually emerge from there alive. He probably has it tough under Zhuo Zhibo's command!"

Hua Chengzan seemed to be in thought. Almost a year had passed since then and Hua Chengzan's memory of Li Qingshan had already become mostly blurred. Only when Hua Chenglu mentioned him did he recall it all. He felt rather amazed. He had never thought he would actually be able to emerge from the mountains and actually be bold enough to become a Hawkwolf guard under Zhuo Zhibo, even making so much trouble for Zhuo Zhibo.

Hua Chenglu asked, "Why would he have it tough?"

"Even if I tell you, you won't understand the matters of adults."

Hua Chenglu utterly hated that, "What matters of adults? That Li Qingshan's just a few years older than me, and he's only a second layer Qi Practitioner. His cultivation's no different from me." Her cultivation had already reached the peak of the second layer. She was basically only a step away from the third layer now.

"Then why don't you go kill a fifth layer Qi Practitioner?"

"Why would I go kill a fifth layer Qi Practitioner?!"

"The kid's not just a Qi Practitioner, but a Body Practitioner as well. A month ago, he destroyed a Qi Practitioner clan during his first mission and killed a fifth Layer Qi Practitioner. The master of the parlour from the Sect of Clouds and Rain is also a fifth layer Qi Practitioner, so it's very likely that he was behind his death as well. Moreover, he was only a first layer Qi Practitioner back then."

This information did not just come out of his strength as a cultivator, but from the might of his authority as well. The Hawkwolf Guard had eyes and ears littered across the world. However, Hua Chengzan never paid much attention to this usually. There were several dozen black iron Hawkwolf Guard offices under his control, so why would he pay attention to one in measly Jiaping city? Only when Hua Chenglu mentioned it did he order people to investigate it and very soon, a very detailed report was placed on his desk. The information he received surprised him quite a bit."

Hua Chenglu was surprised. It was no wonder the West Gate Granny would be looking for him. He was actually so powerful. It was no wonder why he could resist the West Gate Granny's aura and pressure as well, as well as why he was able to escape from the West Gate Granny so easily.

“Don’t think too much about it. You best prepare yourself for the admission examination at the start of spring. I’ve checked the girl you brought back already. Her temperament isn’t bad, much better than you. Here’s an Innate pill for her. She should be able to directly practise qi after ingesting it.” Hua Chengzan handed a pill to Hua Chenglu. This was the power that actual Qi Practitioner clans possessed. They could use pills and medicines to overcome the restriction of innate talent.

As for Li Qingshan, he was just an interesting subordinate to Hua Chengzan. He did not deserve too much attention. As long as Li Qingshan managed to stay alive, he believed he would see him very soon again.

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Li Qingshan looked at the full moon in the crowd of people within a small city near Jiaping. He thought, It’s Mid-Autumn again! Although he had budgeted as hard as he could, he still ended up polishing off all of the Qi Gathering pills on him. With several hundred Qi Gathering pills now in his belly, the effects were evident.

In a remote place, he had transformed back into daemon form and he had already reached twenty-seven feet. His strength increased once again. He was close to the second layer of the Ox Demon’s Fist of Great Strength now.

However, as soon as he stopped ingesting pills, his cultivation speed immediately slowed to a halt, enough to make his hair stand on end. It was about time for him to return to Jiaping city. That old woman couldn’t be so patient!

He casually broke a mooncake in half and handed a piece to Xiao An, before carrying her through the sea of people. He emerged from the celebrating people and made his way towards Jiaping city.

After returning to Jiaping city, Li Qingshan and Xiao An erased all of their auras and snuck back onto the mountain. Li Qingshan twitched his nose and just as expected, he caught the whiff of a familiar smell. That was the unique and heavy fragrance that the West Gate Granny possessed. Just as expected, the West Gate Granny had been waiting for him here.

There were many different ways for cultivators to cover their tracks, but they would always forget about their odour. Li Qingshan followed the freshest trail in pursuit and only when he reached outside the city did he finally confirm that the West Gate Granny had already left Jiaping city.

Li Qingshan gazed at the mountain peak, at the black hawk forged from mental. He smiled. Zhuo Zhibo, the pills on you should be able to assist me in reaching the second layer of the Ox Demon’s Fist of Great Strength!

Chapter 165 - Clashing with Zhuo Zhibo

But how was he supposed to go about it?

Li Qingshan considered this question carefully. Climbing up the mountain and launching a sneak attack on Zhuo Zhibo was not a bad choice, but he needed to revert to his daemon form for sufficient strength.

However, his figure that approached thirty feet was even slightly taller than the two-storeyed buildings on the mountain. Probably even people below the mountain would be able to see him. It was far too

easy for him to be exposed. Moreover, if he failed to kill Zhuo Zhibo in a single strike, allowing Zhuo Zhibo to call out, everyone would know his identity. He had to find a way to lure Zhuo Zhibo out of Jiaping city, and only then could he strike. However, how was he supposed to lure him out?

“Xiao An, do you have any ideas?”

Xiao An wrote in the air as fire flowed from the tip of her finger. She produced a single word. “Wait.”

Li Qingshan came to a realisation. She was right. Zhuo Zhibo wanted him dead very much right now, but he probably would not do it in Jiaping city. He would probably find a way to draw him out of the city, and that would be the most optimal time for him to strike.

Li Qingshan rubbed Xiao An’s head. “You really are clever.” However, he refused to just wait like this. He had to do something while he waited. “Though, let’s still go back and properly trigger him so that this bastard can make up his mind sooner!” He smiled evilly. If I don’t show you what’s what, do you really think that I’m that easy to walk all over?

“Commander Zhuo, I’m back!” A thunderous bellow pierced through the silence on the pitch-black mountain.

All of the Hawkwolf guards were alarmed. They roused from their cultivation or sleep and rushed out.

Li Qingshan stood in front of the Zhuo Zhibo’s office and yelled loudly, “I’ve already completed twenty-one missions, but it goes without saying that the contribution will be halved, right? And after that, I won’t be able to exchange them for anything, so I might as well just give them all to you. I don’t mind.”

“Oh right. When I went out this time, I just happened to run into vice commander Hua’s younger sister. I have a big mouth, so I couldn’t help but mention everything you did in Jiaping city to her. Vice commander Hua definitely wouldn’t take it to heart, so please don’t mind me.”

“Why don’t you shut up!?” A figure rushed out of the office in a flash and suddenly appeared in front of Li Qingshan. It was Zhuo Zhibo. He lashed out in a fury. His right sleeve was filled with true qi as it swung towards Li Qingshan like a metal hammer.

“What are you doing, commander Zhuo? Are you trying to kill your subordinate?” As Li Qingshan said that, he lifted his shield to block. He was only fearful of Zhuo Zhibo’s flying sword, so there was no reason for him to care about heavy attacks like this.

Thud! The heavy sleeve slammed into his shield and produced an extremely deep sound. A sound wave expanded into the surroundings and made the nearby tree leaves rustle.

Li Qingshan experienced a tremendous force and took four steps back in a stagger. With each step, he would leave behind a deep pit in the tough, marble ground. The impressiveness of sixth layer Qi Practitioners amazed him, but he was completely unscathed. When he checked the shield, it was no different from him as well. It was only a low grade spiritual artifact, but it was one that purely focused on defence, so it was impossible to destroy it so easily.

Of course, the force of that attack would have been enough to shatter a second layer Qi Practitioner’s body, making them vomit blood and die on the spot. However, Li Qingshan’s body was nowhere near as fragile as that.

Zhuo Zhibo became even more furious. He formed a seal with his hands, and a flash of light appeared in his eyes. True qi began to burn vigorously like hydrogen, illuminating the entire square in front of the office.

Li Qingshan could feel a wave of heat from afar, so he leapt backwards in retreat. He saw a fire dragon wrap around Zhuo Zhibo, illuminating the latter completely. Zhuo Zhibo's clothes ruffled with a layer of scarlet light. He seemed like a god of fire. The marble below his feet showed signs of melting, which only demonstrated the terror of the heat that he emitted.

Sixth layer Qi Practitioners were not just powerful because of their artifact control, but also because of their techniques.

"Go!" Extending his finger like a sword, he pointed at Li Qingshan. The fire dragon rushed towards Li Qingshan with a roar. It was as fast as lightning. Regular people only saw a flash of light. They failed to make out the fire dragon.

"Hah!" Li Qingshan bellowed out and pushed his shield forward. The shield had already expanded to its limit as it collided with the fire dragon's head. At the same time, he had already shrunken closely behind the shield.

Boom! Firelight erupted in the surroundings and the fire dragon directly turned into a sea of fire.

This time, Li Qingshan allowed himself to be knocked away. Only when he collided against a large tree several dozen meters behind him did he come to a halt. Leaves fluttered down from the branches as he praised loudly, "Impressive moves, commander Zhuo!" Apart from his arm that ached slightly, he was unscathed.

This exchange demonstrated the importance of choosing a suitable spiritual artifact. After some verbal sneers, he needed a shield to soak up the damage.

However, he seemed to have gone a little too far with his provocation this time. From how determined Zhuo Zhibo was to finish him off once and for all, he did not seem to care about the circumstances anymore. It was far too irrational of him.

Zhuo Zhibo had commanded the Hawkwolf Guard of Jiaping city for all these years, but no one had ever provoked him in such an open manner. After Qian Rongzhi played him and Li Qingshan humiliated him like that, his fury had overcome any of his remaining rationality.

Zhuo Zhibo saw how his fire dragon had failed to kill Li Qingshan, so with a wave of his hand, a small blade seven inches in length began to circle around in his palm. It brushed against the air and thrummed as if it were bloodthirsty and eager to kill.

All of Li Qingshan's hairs pricked up. He felt an intense sensation of danger. The flying blade was over a dozen meters away from him, but he felt like someone was holding it against his neck already, prepared to behead him at any time.

The shield shrank, and he stowed it away in his hundred treasures pouch. At a time like this, a shield that could only block a single direction was useless. He gathered all of his attention on the flying blade in Zhuo Zhibo's palm.

If Zhuo Zhibo really did use the flying blade, Li Qingshan would only have a single option—fleeing.

He had already looked into the path of controlling artifacts. The range a sixth layer Qi Practitioner could reach was around thirty steps; this was not a particularly large range. It was not like the legends, where a sword immortal could behead someone from thousands of kilometers away.

However, if it were combined with the terrifying speed of a sixth layer Qi Practitioner, it would be a true killing machine. If Li Qingshan was capable of something like that, killing everyone that deserved death on the Island of Cherishing Flowers would not have required so much trouble.

However, it was not like Li Qingshan had not considered this. He had already prepared a Swift Breeze talisman. If it came to fleeing, then he would flee. He held great confidence in his own two feet.

Now, he had already retreated to a hundred steps away, just in case Zhuo Zhibo lost his mind and no longer cared about anything anymore. Even if Zhuo Zhibo tried to hunt him down, it did not matter as long as he was not killed. However, if that really did happen, he planned on reporting Zhuo Zhibo to Zhou Wenbin and escalating the entire matter.

The news that Zhuo Zhibo had deducted contribution from his subordinate and that he was trying to hunt down a meritorious officer would spread like wildfire. It was not like Li Qingshan would be the target of humiliation for the matter. This was called having nothing to lose. By then, probably the people in Clear River city would become displeased with Zhuo Zhibo, and he would be labeled as incompetent.

Ge Jian called out in a hurry, “Commander Zhuo, please calm down!” Though, he had not thought as deeply as Li Qingshan. He was just afraid that Zhuo Zhibo would kill Li Qingshan in the Hawkwolf Guard out of pure anger. That would lead to great trouble.

The Hawkwolf guards all gathered over, and Zhuo Zhibo forced himself to calm down. He stowed his flying blade away and glared at Li Qingshan viciously. “Li Qingshan, that’s impressive of you!”

Although he had remained in Jiaping city for many years now, it was impossible for him to make everyone acknowledge him and act like they saw nothing at all. If he killed someone here, any person, not just a Hawkwolf guard under his command, he would receive punishment if he lacked an appropriate reason.

As the representatives of legalism, the protectors of the law, the Hawkwolf Guard could do whatever they wanted in the dark, but on the surface, they had to protect the laws of Great Xia. Once they crossed the line, nothing good would await them.

Sixth layer Qi Practitioners were like gods within Jiaping city, but in the eyes of the people above, they were nothing. Not a single person would care if one died.

Seeing how Zhuo Zhibo behaved as he had expected, afraid to kill him here, Li Qingshan relaxed as well. He brushed off the leaves on his shoulder. “Thank you for your praise, commander Zhuo. I’m very impressive! I drank a little too much earlier, so I ran my mouth a little. I hope you can forget and forgive, commander!”

Zhuo Zhibo turned around furiously. He felt extremely unhappy. Never had he found the identity of Black Hawk commander to be so restricting like today.

They targeted each other right now. If they were two regular Qi Practitioners, they would have faced off against one another already, unleashing everything that they had at hand in a great battle. However, it was exactly because of their identities that they were both forced to consider the consequences. Both of them needed an appropriate place to settle this matter.

Li Qingshan returned to his dwelling and smiled brilliantly at Xiao An. "Now, we wait." Afterwards, he took out the bottle of Hundred Grasses pills. Originally, he wanted to save it for when he would break through, but in order to maintain his cultivation speed, he could no longer care too much now. He believed that there would be even better and even more pills in Zhuo Zhibo's hundred treasures pouch. There was no need for him to conserve his pills.

The next day, Li Qingshan went to the government office to find Zhou Wenbin. He wanted to exchange for some pills. Zhou Wenbin had already heard about his crazy actions last night, but he said, "This works as well. You've made your disagreements public, so now, he's actually afraid of casually moving against you."

Li Qingshan exclaimed, "Why would he be afraid of moving against me?" The reason why he did this was to hurry Zhuo Zhibo along. The sooner he came for him, the better. Then he could turn the tables and kill him off instead.

Zhou Wenbin said, "You've just fallen out with him, so if you die soon afterwards, basically everyone will know that he's responsible. He must be gritting his teeth right now, holding in his urge to kill you so that he can deal with you at an appropriate time."

Li Qingshan groaned inside. He hoped that this would not take too long. As he groaned here, he had no idea that Zhuo Zhibo was grinding his teeth so hard that his gums bled. On the mountain, the Black Hawk commander roared out, "I'll definitely kill him with my own hands! I'll definitely kill him with my own hands!"

Who knows when the two of them could escape from the gazes of the public and properly battle it out to their hearts' content.

With a flip of his hand, Li Qingshan took out all of his spiritual stones from his hundred treasures pouch. "I want to exchange for some more pills." Even without Zhuo Zhibo, he still had to continue with his usual business. He had polished off the remaining bottle of Hundred Grasses pills last night, so he no longer had a single pill that could be used for cultivation on him.

Zhou Wenbin asked, "Do you really want to exchange them? Spiritual stones are far more valuable than Qi Gathering pills."

Li Qingshan obviously knew that. He had almost gathered a thousand Qi Gathering pills by now, but he had not even obtained ten spiritual stones so far, and they were all spiritual stones of the worst, most inferior grades.

Chapter 166 - Finally

Spiritual stones were basically the item that possessed the most stable price among cultivators. Qi Gathering pills could not compare to it. Only low level Black Wolf guards like him would receive Qi Gathering pills as a salary. Zhuo Zhibo and Zhou Wenbin both earned spiritual stones. To stronger

cultivators, low level Qi Gathering pills provided no benefit at all. They could even lead to detriments. However, they could always keep using the pure spiritual qi contained within spiritual stones.

There were many uses to spiritual stones. They could be used in forging artifacts, formations, mechanisms, and so on. The puppet that Li Qingshan gave Xiao An was powered by spiritual stones as well. The most common use for spiritual stones was to constantly provide true qi during battle.

Right now, Li Qingshan mostly engaged in close combat, so he did not need it too much, but once he made it to the sixth layer and could wield artifacts, a few extra spiritual stones would be equivalent to an extra life.

Li Qingshan had only taken out these spiritual stones after considering his current needs. A bird in hand was worth two in the bush. Many times, short-term benefit would surpass long-term benefit.

Seeing how Li Qingshan had no objections, Zhou Wenbin was obviously willing to make the trade. In the end, he took out eight bottles of Qi Gathering pills. Each bottle held twelve pills, amounting to almost a hundred. He exchanged them for the spiritual stones in Li Qingshan's possession, basically relieving Li Qingshan's urgent needs.

For the next few days, Li Qingshan would stroll around randomly with Xiao An in the city aside from cultivating in his dwelling. He bought everything she liked for her.

However, his infamy as the Tiger Butcher had spread through Jiaping city as well. It was so significant that it could basically clean the streets. No matter how busy it was, as long as he walked over, someone would cry out, "The Tiger Butcher is here!" In the blink of an eye, the street would be cleaned out, leaving behind a single child in the middle of the street crying. When he walked past the kid, the child would even stop crying, becoming stunned from fright.

Whenever he entered a store to buy something, the shopkeeper would always firmly refuse to take any money from him.

Zhou Wenbin sent people to invite him over once again, telling him to not roam the streets so casually. Otherwise, he would not alarm the citizens of Jiaping.

Afterwards, all that was left in Li Qingshan's life was cultivation. He would meditate and train in his small residence every day. Fortunately, he was accompanied by Xiao An, so he was not lonely. However, he ate the Qi Gathering pills at a rapid pace. He would basically eat over a dozen, up to twenty, every single day, and that was when he was holding back. If he wanted to, he could have polished them all off in a single day. His body was basically like a bottomless hole.

As a result, he also became a regular visitor of the government office.

Li Qingshan said in a loud, clear voice, "Sir, look at this bottle of Pills of Calming. They're high grade pills that only the Sect of Clouds and Rain can refine. When you consume them while cultivating, it can calm your mind and bring you great benefit. And look at these Pills of Passion. When you use them in bed, it'll amplify the experience." He raised his eyebrows and made an expression that all men understood.

After some consideration, Zhou Wenbin used four bottles of Qi Gathering pills to exchange for them, which made Li Qingshan overjoyed.

Three days later, at noon, Zhou Wenbin sat in front of a pill cauldron to refine pills. Ever since he became the district magistrate, he had constantly made people gather medicinal herbs for him so he could refine pills. As a result, he ended up with many Qi Gathering pills. He was preparing to get rid of them in a cultivator's market when it was appropriate, but Li Qingshan's arrival had saved him some trouble. It put him in a good mood. He needed to work harder on refining pills.

A maidservant reported, "Sir, that sir Li has come to visit again. He's waiting for you in the guest room."

Zhou Wenbin found this to be rather strange. Why did Li Qingshan come to visit him again? When he arrived in the waiting room, he saw that the long table in the room was piled full with a wide assortment of items. It was like a small stall that sold miscellaneous items, and the stall owner was Li Qingshan behind the table.

"Please take a look, sir. These were all gifts to Qian Yannian when he was celebrating his birthday. You can tell with a single glance that these spiritual herbs are teeming with spiritual qi, so they must be wondrous for refining pills. And look at these jade statues. Aren't they life-like? If you like them, You can take them all. I'll give you a discount."

Under Li Qingshan's silver-tongued persuasion and the fact that their past dealing had always been rather pleasant, Zhou Wenbin took out a few more bottles of Qi Gathering pills and bought everything.

A few more days passed, and Zhou Wenbin sat in front of Li Qingshan once again.

Zhou Wenbin said, "We'll just be drinking tea and talking today. Don't even think about mentioning Qi Gathering pills."

Li Qingshan was taken aback. After a moment of hesitation, he stifled his voice and said, "Sir, do you want talismans?"

Zhou Wenbin finally could not help himself anymore. He asked, "What do you need so many Qi Gathering pills for? It's not like you can eat Qi Gathering pills like regular meals! The amount of Qi Gathering pills you have received from me is enough to last you for three years!"

Li Qingshan was unable to explain that he actually was able to eat Qi Gathering pills like regular meals. He could only say, "I just want to save up a reserve, to be on the safe side."

Zhou Wenbin said, "The path of cultivation mainly depends on yourself. At the end of the day, pills are just items external to you. They can only assist..."

Li Qingshan agreed to his words, but he thought inside that if it were not for all those pills Xuanyue had provided to him, how was he supposed to condense a daemon core so quickly? If he did not use these items external to him, it would take him a century at the very least to become a Daemon General.

After Zhou Wenbin finished talking, Li Qingshan asked again, "Do you really not want them?"

Zhou Wenbin sighed and shook his head firmly. As the district magistrate, it had been many years since he had fought against someone. He had no need for talismans at all.

Xiao An squatted by the wall outside the government office and played around with the ants using a twig.

Whenever Li Qingshan made deals with Zhou Wenbin, she would wait outside. Whenever other people tried to talk to her, she would just ignore them.

Under a great aspen tree, a nest of red ants and a nest of black ants engaged in an intense war. Who knows how many of them were inside the dense swarm. While the red ants were smaller, they were extremely fierce and possessed the upper hand.

Xiao An watched with great concentration. The warm sunlight of autumn landed on her face and seemed to penetrate her tender skin. As she saw how the black ant army was about to collapse, the twig in her hand suddenly turned into a blur.

“Little sister, what are you doing here all by yourself?” A smiling scoundrel squatted beside Xiao An and asked with malicious intent.

Xiao An did not even raise her head. The scoundrel saw how no one was around, so he suddenly lifted up Xiao An and carried her away on his shoulder.

Xiao An did not put up any resistance. Her hair and hands draped down as she continued to hold the twig in her hand. She stared at the ant nest nearby.

The scoundrel quickly boarded a carriage, and the carriage took off. He was overjoyed. He had earned three hundred taels of silver from doing this. The task that his boss gave him was as simple as it could get. Although it was possible for him to offend the Tiger Butcher, no one would know that he was responsible.

However, as he had placed all of his attention onto Xiao An, he failed to realise that the war between the ants under the great elm tree had suddenly ended. The outcome was that all of the red ants were dead.

At that moment, the twig had stabbed out thousands of times, stabbing all of the red ants to death, without even touching a single black ant. Not even an antennae.

The carriage sped down the street and made a sharp turn into a dwelling. The scoundrel carried Xiao An down the carriage. “Boss, I got her!”

Several men drank together with their chests bare. They all stood up. “So fast!”

“Whenever I, Speedy-hands Xiao Zhang, strike, how can I not be fast? Though, it sure was strange. This kid did not even cry or call out along the way.”

“She’s probably a mute!”

“I think she’s just a simpleton. Who knows where the Tiger Butcher got her from. Though, she sure is pretty. Don’t tell me that that bastard has a thing for children like this!”

The laughter suddenly stopped. They had not even sensed the arrival of death. Their expressions stiffened, and in the next moment, they turned into flames.

A while later, Ge Jian entered the small courtyard in casual wear and said in confusion, “Where’d they all go?”

By now, Xiao An had already returned to the entrance of the government office. She held the same twig as before as she squatted below the great elm tree. The dense swarm of black ants had still not dispersed. The twig blurred once more.

The small disturbance under the great elm tree was broken up. All of the black ants were dead as well.

Xiao An seemed to sense something, and she suddenly raised her head.

“That’s all not a problem!” Zhou Wenbin personally accompanied Li Qingshan to the entrance of the government office. After some thought, he took out another two bottles of Qi Gathering pills from his hundred treasures pouch and shoved them into Li Qingshan’s hands. He said sincerely, “Qingshan, I’m just giving them to you as a friend. If you don’t have anything to do, go for a stroll on the streets. Give me some peace!”

The autumn breeze swept up the fallen leaves, drifting past Li Qingshan. No one understood the pains of dual cultivation as a human and a daemon!

Xiao An tossed aside her twig, ran over, and grabbed him by his hand.

Li Qingshan smiled at her and shook what was in his hands. “Let’s go back. I got my hands on another two bottles!”

In the Hawkwolf Guard, Ge Jian reported, “Commander, the kid has been a frequent visitor of Zhou Wenbin lately. During noon earlier today, Zhou Wenbin personally accompanied him to the entrance of the government office. Everyone saw it. It’s just like what I said. If the kid had no one to rely on, he would never be so haughty.”

“And regarding the little girl he brought back, I’ve investigated her as well. We have no idea about her origins. She seems to have appeared out of nowhere. Her name is Xiao An, and she sticks to Li Qingshan like glue. I’ve already sent people to grab her, but for some reason, they failed to do so. If we don’t make a response and remain silent the entire time, people will probably look down on us!”

Zhuo Zhibo said, “Hmph, Zhou Wenbin, am I supposed to be afraid of you? Don’t worry, the kid will die soon. I would like to see how Zhou Wenbin will protect him. Go summon him over right now.”

Ge Jian’s face lit up. “Commander, you’ve come up with an idea?”

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In the residence, various items were scattered across the ground messily. Li Qingshan had emptied out his entire hundred treasures pouch and was now searching through everything carefully. “What else is there? What else is there that I can exchange?” He behaved like a gambler who had lost everything, flipping through his own house in search of any last objects that were worth money so that he could attempt a comeback.

Xiao An squatted beside him and leaned on his hand, looking at Li Qingshan in pity. She tried to think of ways that she could help him, and in a moment of inspiration, she patted Li Qingshan’s shoulder and pointed at her own chest.

“You have an idea?”

Xiao An nodded and smiled. As it turned out, the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty could also refine pills aside from forging artifacts. Of course, the materials for that were still the flesh and blood of people.

Li Qingshan said after careful consideration. "I just can't bring myself to practise cannibalism." And, if he held another massacre, it would definitely give them away. He saw how Xiao An became rather gloomy, so he pinched her cheek. "But thank you."

Suddenly, someone knocked on the door. Opening the door, he saw Ge Jian. "Commander Zhuo summons you." Although he seemed completely normal, he gave off a heavy sense of complacency.

"Alright." Li Qingshan frowned and lowered his head, answering him in a seemingly unwilling manner. However, joy flashed through his eyes. Finally!

Chapter 167 - A Trap in the Morgue

"Seventy-five kilometers east, there's a village called Cave town. Recently, many able-bodied men have been dying strangely. There were even people who saw corpses leaving the morgue on the side of the town in a single-file. I suspect that it's a Qi Practitioner's work, so investigate the matter," Zhuo Zhibo said coldly as he tossed some files in front of Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan glanced at it and raised his head. "Walking corpses? Does this have to do with the Zombie Daoist?" When it came to refining corpses, Li Qingshan could not help but think of this criminal at the top of the list for the Hawkwolf Guard in Jiaping city. He was able to run amuck while being hunted down by the Hawkwolf Guard for such a long time, which only demonstrated his strength.

Zhuo Zhibo said, "What? You have objections? This is just an investigation..."

Li Qingshan interrupted him. "Of course, I don't have any objections. This is just an investigation. It's not like there'll be any dangers. Don't worry at all, commander Zhuo. I will do a very good job investigating the matter. Even if I run into the Zombie Daoist, I have my ways of escaping alive." Now that an opportunity had presented itself after so much difficulty, how could he turn it down? However, he gave plenty of hints to Zhuo Zhibo. Commander Zhuo, if you don't do it personally, you won't be able to kill me.

Zhuo Zhibo finally found it to be rather odd. It seemed like Li Qingshan was not afraid it was a scheme from him at all. Zhou Zhibo was not an idiot. He had just always been overcome by rage. Now, he sensed that something was amiss. Did this kid really have some powerful trump card?

"The kid you brought back can't go on the mission with you. She can remain within the Hawkwolf Guard!" He had not forgotten about the bottle of Pills of Spring Breeze and Rain. If it were exchanged for actual gold and silver, it would truly be valuable enough to buy entire cities. Pills like that could not be purchased with gold and silver.

"She won't be separating from me. If there's nothing else, I'll set off right now." Li Qingshan grew solemn and left immediately.

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Seventy-five kilometers was not particularly distant for Li Qingshan. With Xiao An by his side, he had already arrived at Cave town before midnight.

Li Qingshan made his way down the empty streets until he exited the place. He arrived in front of a gloomy structure and raised his head to see the word 'morgue' written on the plaque above the entrance.

There would be many outsiders who would die in a foreign land due to accidents or illnesses, with no one to tend to them. The morgue was where they would be stored so that their family could come and find them and take their remains back to be buried in their homeland someday.

This was an act of pure generosity that people undertook. However, many corpses would be placed in the morgue without anyone to collect them for years. As a result, yin qi would gather and resentment would leak out, making it extremely easy for ghosts and ghouls to appear. As a result, they placed great emphasis on the environment and the fengshui, and they would often request priests to come and release these dead souls.

However, the morgue in this village was overgrown with grass, and the walls were close to collapsing. It was unkempt. Clearly, it had been abandoned for a very long time now. Probably no one tended to it anymore. If he wanted to investigate, this was the best place to start with.

In order to make Li Qingshan agree to the mission, Zhuo Zhibo had put forward quite a generous amount of contribution for this mission. It was not like it mattered how many points of contribution dead people possessed anyway. However, what Li Qingshan thought was that once he finished off Zhuo Zhibo, he could obviously use these points of contribution to exchange for pills.

Reaching the entrance of the morgue, Li Qingshan took out his Wind-entwining blade first. Then he took out his small shield, equipping it on his left hand. Afterwards, he placed over twenty talismans in a talisman pouch on his waist so that he could use them at any time.

Although he was confident in his own strength, he was not an idiot. It was very likely for this matter to be related to the sixth layer Qi Practitioner, the Zombie Daoist, and another sixth layer Qi Practitioner, Zhuo Zhibo, would probably arrive afterwards, spying on him in the darkness. As a result, he could not afford to be careless. He needed to raise his guard to a hundred and twenty percent, just in case he messed up something so simple.

Only after preparing everything did he step over the door sill and enter the morgue.

There were several dozen coffins in the morgue. Some were extremely old, but some were brand new. The ground was covered in joss paper that was blown about by the chilling breeze. The ruined, cloth curtains floated around like ghosts. It was very creepy.

This sight would leave ordinary people utterly frightened, but Li Qingshan was someone who had emerged through slaughter after all, so his own aura of murderousness was powerful.

Xiao An on his side had her eyes wide open, without any fear at all. Instead, there was some eagerness. Her feelings for corpses were probably the same as Li Qingshan's feelings for Qi Gathering pills.

Li Qingshan made his way over to a pitch-black coffin and drew his Wind-entwining blade. He stabbed it into the crevice between the lid and coffin. With a twist of his wrist, the lid was thrown high into the air,

falling to the ground. A middle-aged man laid in the coffin and was purple all over. He had been reduced to a corpse a long time ago.

As Li Qingshan walked away, he wondered just how this man had died.

He was not a diener, so he obviously had no idea how to conduct an autopsy. He had only opened the coffin out of boredom so that he could take a look. He was waiting here for Zhuo Zhibo to appear.

The morgue was located in the wilderness and was far away from the village, so it was a good place to battle it out against Zhuo Zhibo. He was even considering whether he should set up a trap or not.

As soon as Li Qingshan turned around, the man in the coffin suddenly opened his eyes, and a pair of fangs extended from his mouth. Just when he was about to attack Li Qingshan, he saw a little girl propping herself up on the side of the coffin, staring at him closely and placing her index finger on his forehead.

Li Qingshan turned around. "Don't just eat anything you find. Who knows how long it has been there."

Xiao An stuck out her tongue, and the coffin was already empty by the time she withdrew the fire. She suddenly sensed something. There seemed to be the auras of living people here. She closed her eyes, and as expected, she sensed living people hiding in a few of the coffins in the surroundings.

As soon as Li Qingshan made his way to the centre, inscriptions suddenly lit up below his feet, and he felt a tremendous suction force appear from below his feet. His body now felt like it weighed several tonnes, and his true qi immediately became sluggish.

At the same time, the lids of the new coffins all suddenly burst open. Four figures leapt out; they raised their hands, targeting Li Qingshan.

Springs were set off, and crossbow bolts were launched endlessly.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish...

There were only four of them, but the arrows made it seem like an entire army. Countless crossbow bolts shot over from all directions and all angles, without a single crevice to dodge into.

The shield on Li Qingshan's left hand suddenly expanded, guarding him completely. There were a series of thuds, followed by great explosions.

The moment the bolts struck the shield, they exploded with startling power. If someone had been hit by one of these bolts, they would have died for sure.

Booms rang out from behind Li Qingshan as well, but he did not look back at all. Xiao An had already drawn her hidden blade, producing a series of blurs with it and knocking down each crossbow bolt with great precision.

However, there were various, densely-packed inscriptions below their feet. Even more lit up, enveloping the two of them, and the pressure became even heavier.

The shield struck the ground loudly.

"Senior brother, we've got him!" A delighted cry rang out.

However, what answered the voice was the shiny edge of a blade!

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After Li Qingshan had left, Zhuo Zhibo sat back in his seat with his eyes closed, resting. Ge Jian stood to one side, afraid to ask anything about it.

After quite a while, Zhuo Zhibo snapped open his eyes. "Ge Jian, go gather everyone. We have to go provide reinforcements to Li Qingshan."

Ge Jian was delighted, but he was also puzzled. "Commander, do we really need everyone?" If they really were worried that Li Qingshan would survive, just having Zhuo Zhibo go by himself would have been enough. It would be easier for them to cover up the entire matter and distance themselves from his death as well.

"If I tell you to gather them, go gather them!" Zhuo Zhibo said in displeasure. He felt slightly uneasy. He also began to think that maybe Li Qingshan was not as easy of a target as he had imagined.

"Yes, commander."

Before long, Ge Jian had returned to Zhuo Zhibo with six Black Wolf guards. Li Qingshan had basically come into contact with all of them before. These were the same people who had obstructed Li Qingshan when he wanted to exchange his contribution for spiritual artifacts and pills. The people that Zhuo Zhibo told Ge Jian to gather were obviously not regular Black Wolf guards, but his actual trusted subordinates.

Looking at these people, Zhuo Zhibo's sliver of uneasiness gradually vanished, while his hatred towards Li Qingshan only intensified. They could no longer reconcile now. He had to kill Li Qingshan.

Zhuo Zhibo said, "Do you know why I've summoned you all here?"

"Is it because of Li Qingshan?"

Zhuo Zhibo said, "Exactly. That kid has gone overboard with me. If I don't kill him, I'll never be able to rest at ease!"

"Please excuse me for what I am about to say. Li Qingshan might have some skill, but he's only a second layer Qi Practitioner. He doesn't need all of us to be mobilised, right?" A balding Black Wolf guard in his sixties said.

His name was Xie Nande. He was both one of the most experienced members of the Jiaping Hawkwolf Guard, as well as the strongest among them, which was why he was bold enough to question Zhuo Zhibo's command.

The others felt the same.

Zhuo Zhibo understood that he needed to give them a satisfying reason. "Old Xie, I've already told the Zombie Daoist about Li Qingshan. I said to him that I'm sending him a great gift. The body of a Body Practitioner is fantastic for refining corpses. I refuse to believe that it won't interest him."

A mighty Black Hawk commander of the Hawkwolf Guard was actually working with their most wanted criminal. Moreover, he wanted to betray his own subordinate and sell him to the enemy.

However, none of the Black Wolf guards present found it to be anything strange. Xie Nande said, "Then there's even less of a need for us. The old daoist's skill with refining and nurturing corpses is simply startling. Even regular sixth layer Qi Practitioners aren't his opponent. Li Qingshan is dead for sure."

Zhuo Zhibo said, "The old daoist has remained hidden in the Zombie cave the entire time, so we could never even lay a finger on him. If we can lure him out and kill him this time, it'll be a service of great merit. The old daoist is hiding a lot of good things on him too. Killing Li Qingshan will just be secondary, simply because it's convenient."

Xie Nande clasped his hands. "Commander, your schemes run deep, much deeper than anything I can ever think of. I am willing to serve you to the end of my life!" The other Black Wolf guards agreed loudly as well. The Zombie Daoist's head was worth over ten thousand points of contribution, so if everyone obtained an equal share, they would receive over a thousand points at the very least. They would be able to exchange for quite a lot of good things.

As soon as dawn broke, a total of eight Hawkwolf guards left Jiaping with Zhuo Zhibo at the lead. They pursued Li Qingshan. This was an extremely terrifying force, enough to easily trample through many small sects and clans.

A few Hawkwolf guards watched them leave as they discussed amongst one another on the square below the giant hawk.

"Tsktsk, Li Qingshan is probably done for this time." The Hawkwolf Guard with the bulbous nose shook his head and sighed.

"Shh, be quiet. We shouldn't talk about it," said a Hawkwolf guard beside him in warning.

"What're you afraid of? All of those snitches have left with commander Zhuo." Bulbous nose was unfazed.

"What are you talking about?" A cold voice rang out from behind them.

Chapter 168 - Disciples of Mohism

Everyone turned around in surprise. When they saw who it was, they all bowed in a hurry. "Commander Lao, you've emerged from seclusion!" "Y- you've broken through to the sixth layer!"

This person happened to be the Black Wolf commander of the Hawkwolf Guard of Jiaping city, Lao Xishan. He seemed to be around forty years old and had a rectangular face. Seeing everyone's shock, he smiled slightly through his seriousness. All of his hard work for cultivation, the days he spent in seclusion, was all for the sake of today. He asked sternly, "Who did you say would be done for?"

No one dared to answer him. Lao Xishan actually did not need anyone to answer him either. As the vice commander, he had his own trusted subordinates in the Hawkwolf Guard, so he knew about the entire matter already.

"I'll go assist commander Zhuo." He shot off in Zhuo Zhibo's direction. He glided down the mountain like a great bird, disappearing into the thin mist of the morning very soon.

The remaining Hawkwolf guards all looked at one another. Li Qingshan had managed to make such a great disturbance despite only having just joined the Hawkwolf Guard three months ago. Commander

Zhuo and commander Lao had always opposed one another, so now that he had broken through to the sixth layer as well, Jiaping city would probably become noisy.

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Li Qingshan lowered his shield and swung his blade. With a flash, a wind blade directly slashed towards the closest assailant.

The person did not seem to think that Li Qingshan would still be able to swing his blade under such circumstances, nor did they expect him to be capable of swinging it so swiftly. He summoned a puppet soldier before him to block the attack.

With a bang, the puppet soldier was sliced open and components scattered all over the ground.

Everyone was surprised. They called out, "He can still move! Everyone be careful!"

Li Qingshan managed to make out the assailants' appearances. They were all young men in their twenties and dressed in similar, deep blue robes. They all wielded strange, shining crossbows. The storm of tiny bolts came from the five crossbows. They were far more powerful than the legendary repeating crossbows.

Li Qingshan took a step forward. Under the tremendous weight, the ground felt like mud. Consequently, his feet sank into the ground deeply, all the way up to his thighs. The glowing inscriptions were originally written on the ground, but they floated in the air after activation, so they were not destroyed with the ground.

"Let me!" With a bellow, a burly man with a full beard slammed through a wall loudly, appearing in the morgue. He held an extremely thick, bronze cannon in his arms. The cannon was covered in inscriptions as it shone with light. It was actually a mid grade spiritual artifact. The mouth of the cannon that was sculpted like a vicious dragon's head began to gather specks of light.

This was the first time Li Qingshan had felt so much danger. Even when he was on the Island of Cherishing Flower and under the barrage of the cannonfire, he did not feel so much danger. Most importantly, the presence that the cannon-wielding man gave off was at the sixth layer of Qi Practitioner.

"Who are you? Why are you ambushing me?" Li Qingshan originally thought this was the Zombie Daoist, who had set up a trap against him after receiving news from Zhuo Zhibo. However, no matter how he looked at him, he did not look like the Zombie Daoist. Moreover, the techniques he used were completely unrelated to what the Zombie Daoist was capable of, so he held back his urge to fight to ask those questions. If these people still would not stop, then he could only daemonify and massacre them all.

"Hmm? Why is the Zombie Daoist so young?" These young men in navy blue also saw Li Qingshan's appearance, and one of them asked in confusion.

"Stop, senior brother! That's the uniform of the Hawkwolf Guard!" Another person recognised Li Qingshan's Black Wolf uniform and called out to stop him in a hurry.

The light had finished gathering now. An utterly blinding stream of scorching white light blasted out from the cannon, piercing the ceiling and leaving behind a streak of light in the night sky.

Xiao An loosened his grip on the Skull Prayer Bead in his hand, and the red light in Li Qingshan's eyes faded away as well. He looked at the great hole above in amazement. Even if he had daemonified, he would still suffer from such a cannon blast.

He lowered his head again and asked them, "Who are you?" Afterwards, he stowed his Wind-entwining blade back into its scabbard.

His actions reduced the hostility of the young men. They also placed down their crossbows. The young man who had recognised Li Qingshan's uniform said, "We're disciples of mohism. We're here to carry out a mission. You must be a Hawkwolf guard."

"I am. I'm also carrying out a mission."

"Please let us see your tablet!"

Disciples of mohism! Li Qingshan understood now. He tossed his Black Wolf tablet to the people, and they glanced at it before easing up. They said loudly, "Alright, alright. It's all fine. Undo the formation. This was all a misunderstanding!"

"Sigh, what the hell!" "Didn't you say the Zombie Daoist would come? Why did a Hawkwolf guard come instead?" The mohist disciples grumbled. One of them stowed away a scroll. The scroll was covered with inscriptions that were exactly the same as the ones on the ground, without any differences at all.

Li Qingshan immediately felt his body lighten. He picked up the shield on the ground, but he discovered that the shield was all charred from the explosions prior. Just a few days ago, it had blocked Zhuo Zhibo's fire dragon, and now that it was struck by a barrage of explosions, a lot of its spiritual qi had dispersed.

Suddenly, there was a swift gale, and the burly man with the full beard stowed away his bronze cannon and charged over. Xiao An raised her hidden blade, but she stopped after a glance from Li Qingshan. The burly man was hostile, but he did not have any killing intent.

The man grabbed Li Qingshan by the collar and roared, "Kid, you've messed up my plans!" He wore the same navy blue robes as the other mohist disciples, but he was bare-chested. His right sleeve was tied around his waist, revealing his robust arms and chest. He seemed extremely tough.

Li Qingshan released his true qi to block the incoming attack of spittle. He looked at the man calmly, but before he could say anything, the other mohist disciples had already arrived. They pulled back the man and said in persuasion, "Please calm down, senior brother!"

The man stamped his foot and bellowed, "This formation scroll for the Painted Prison can only be used three times, and that's it! My Yellow Dragon's Cannon of Devouring Light costs a spiritual stone for each blast! All of that comes from me, so of course you lot wouldn't mind!"

"Our Fire Crow bolts don't grow on trees either."

Li Qingshan tidied up his clothes and said, "I think you should all think over what you just did, launching an attack at whoever comes through that door. If I wasn't strong enough, I would have been killed already."

The burly man glared at Li Qingshan angrily. He was basically on the brink of pulling out his Yellow Dragon's Cannon of Devouring Light again, but his junior brothers managed to stop him, "It's all a misunderstanding!" However, they thought inside, To think that he would be bold enough to say something like that to a sixth layer Qi Practitioner. They all say the Hawkwolf Guard is haughty. Looks like it's true.

"It's all a misunderstanding. If we've offended you in any way, please forgive us. I'm Zhang Lanqing. This is my senior brother, Hao Pingyang, and these are our three junior brothers, He Yishi, Jin Yuan, and Jin Bao," Zhang Lanqing introduced them one by one. Although he was only in his twenties, he had a darker complexion, and his voice was sluggish and level. He seemed to be extremely mature and level-headed. Amongst the group, he was second to the burly man, Hao Pingyang, in terms of strength. He was at the fifth layer of Qi Practitioner.

As for the three others, He Yishi was at the fourth layer. He was quite tall with a long face and slightly swollen eyelids. He answered his senior brother with a casual 'yep' before looking at Li Qingshan and answering him with a reluctant 'yep'. Afterwards, he lowered his head to fix the puppet that Li Qingshan had destroyed.

Jin Yuan and Jin Bao were brothers. The elder brother, Jin Yuan, was at the fourth layer, while Jin Bao was at the third layer. They saw how Li Qingshan was only at the second layer, and he had also destroyed their trap, so they were reluctant to pay any attention to him.

Jin Bao said to Hao Pingyang, "Senior brother, is your Painted Prison potentially fake? It can't even trap a second layer Qi Practitioner. If the Zombie Daoist really did come, wouldn't he break out of it in an instant?"

"Fuck off, cunt. I spent a huge price to buy this. It's the kid that's strange." Hao Pingyang calmed down and studied Li Qingshan in confusion. He had fallen into the Painted Prison and received attacks from the Thousand Mechanism crossbows under an encirclement of five Qi Practitioners even more powerful than him, yet he had actually managed to emerge unscathed. This was clearly abnormal.

The formation scroll of the Painted Prison had been prepared for sixth layer Qi Practitioners like the Zombie Daoist. If ordinary people fell into it, they would be crushed to a point where their organs ruptured. Qi Practitioners would become completely immobilised as well.

More strangely, the pretty child by his side clearly did not give off any signs of practising qi, but she was actually able to stand in the formation safely as well. If it were not for the fact that he had tried the formation once in the past, he really would have suspected it to be fake.

Li Qingshan's sense of pride that had developed from his landslide victory on the Island of Cherishing Flowers was crushed as well. There were still many powerful abilities and methods in the world that he had yet to learn about. The trap that these mohist disciples cast down was simple, but it was extremely dangerous.

They used joss paper to hide the inscriptions on the ground, and then they would use it to immobilise their opponent before launching a barrage of arrows, killing the enemy on the spot. If that was not enough, they could use the cannon to kill them off. It was all linked together and every part was lethal. If regular sixth layer Qi Practitioners faced this, they would probably end up dead. They would not even have the opportunity to fight back.

“Were you trying to ambush the Zombie Daoist here?”

Zhang Lanqing said, “Yeah. Were you thinking of the same thing?” Hao Pingyang glared at him. “Just by him? He wants to finish off the Zombie Daoist just by him?” He pointed at Li Qingshan’s nose. “Kid, this no longer has anything to do with you anymore, so I would advise you to scram!”

Li Qingshan pointed backwards with his thumb. “I’ve only come to investigate. The Zombie Daoist has nothing to do with me. However, isn’t he right outside?” Although he hid his aura extremely well, his faint stink of corpses was unable to escape Li Qingshan’s nose.

“What!” The five of them looked outside the door. Hao Pingyang gathered his concentration to sense the surroundings. As soon as he discovered an extremely hidden aura spying on them, he bellowed out, “Get out here!”

Click! Click! The five of them immediately removed their empty bolt magazines and reloaded their crossbows with new ones. A long box clipped onto the Thousand Mechanism crossbows. Every single magazine contained thirty-six extremely small Fire Crow bolts, which could be fired instantaneously. If they did not possess a spiritual artifact shield that specialised in defence like Li Qingshan, even powerful Qi Practitioners could be caught unprepared, losing their lives under the barrage of bolts.

“Jejeje!” A high-pitched laughter rang out from outside. A daoist priest in yellow daoist robes with a pale-white mask appeared at the entrance and said, “You’ve actually set up a trap against this granddaddy daoist of yours. You kiddos sure are bold.” He studied Li Qingshan. “You must be Li Qingshan. You really are good material for corpse refinement. Zhuo Zhibo, that old kiddo, hasn’t lied to me this time.”

Chapter 169 - The Zombie Daoist

Li Qingshan understood. As expected, Zhuo Zhibo had sold him out. Of course, this was not particularly surprising. It would have been surprising if he had not done that. Right now, he was only worried about whether Zhuo Zhibo trusted the Zombie Daoist’s strength or not. If he did, he might not personally come to kill him.

Then, the Zombie Daoist said to Zhang Lanqing’s group, “You lot might be lacking in comparison, but I’ll treat you all equally and turn you all into zombies...” He basically treated them like their heads were all on the chopping board already.

Before the Zombie Daoist had finished talking, the five mohist disciples had pulled the trigger on their Thousand Mechanism crossbows and unleashed a storm of Fire Crow bolts.

Li Qingshan stood to one side. All he saw were the completely scarlet, three-inches long Fire Crow bolts. They basically emerged from the crossbows in a stream, moving startlingly fast. They were also extremely densely-packed, making it almost impossible to dodge.

Before the Zombie Daoist could even respond, several dozen Fire Crow bolts struck him. The bolts heated up in his body before blowing apart.

There were a string of explosions and fire sprouted from various parts of the Zombie Daoist, blowing him to pieces.

Zhao Lanqing and the three others were delighted, but Li Qingshan drew his Wind-entwining blade once more. Hao Pingyang bellowed, "Be careful, it's all fake!"

Li Qingshan glanced at Hao Pingyang. He really was the strongest one after all. He was brawny on the outside and sharp-witted on the inside. If the Zombie Daoist could be finished off so easily, it would have been impossible for him to remain atop the Hawkwolf Guard's list for so long. Although he had used a broadcasting technique, it was possible to tell with careful listening that the voice did not come from the Zombie Daoist at the entrance at all. The mask was just to cover the face.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang...

The lids of several dozen coffins in the morgue flew off at the same time with zombies rising from them. Their eyes were wide open with their arms extended in front of them. Their sharp canines were clearly visible. They rushed towards the six people in the morgue.

In order to avoid raising any suspicion from the Zombie Daoist, Hao Pingyang's group did not clear away these zombies, so they immediately became surrounded.

Five zombies lunged towards Li Qingshan. He was already prepared. The Wind-entwining blade in his hand erupted with light, and blades of light shot towards the four directions.

The blade entered the bodies of the zombies and produced the muffled thump of a blunt blade hacking into wood. The five zombies only paused slightly. The ten, purpley-blue arms continued to extend towards Li Qingshan. Their long nails were like daggers, and from their black colour, Li Qingshan could tell with a single glance that they were poisonous.

Hao Pingyang bellowed at Li Qingshan, "You need to go for the head!" The highest number of zombies lunged towards him. There were a total of eight, but he was composed as ever. He raised the Yellow Dragon's Cannon of Devouring Light and smashed it towards the head of a zombie in front of him. Then he circulated his true qi and swept out horizontally. The seven zombies were all knocked away, landing heavily on the columns and coffins. As a matter of fact, two of them directly smashed through the walls and flew out.

He was on a rampage, seeming like a god of war.

However, aside from the one that had its head crushed and the two that had their bones completely shattered, the five others all sprang up from the ground again. They could not feel pain, nor were they afraid of death. They lunged over again.

After receiving Hao Pingyang's reminder, Li Qingshan thought, So much for being a transmigrator, I've forgotten such a common piece of knowledge!

He grabbed Xiao An and leapt up.

The ten arms and the fifty nails were like the mouth of a beast, closing down on his feet. The five zombies all raised their eyes together, looking at Li Qingshan in the air with their pupilless eyes. They leapt up at the same time. Their knees were unable to bend due to rigor mortis, so it seemed like they had springs beneath their feet.

Li Qingshan stomped down forcefully and crushed the head of a zombie, pushing off its shoulders and piercing the ceiling of the morgue.

Dust and shattered tiles fell down as a ray of moonlight landed on the morgue.

In the air, Li Qingshan held Xiao An with his left hand as he firmly gripped the Wind-entwining blade with his right, resting it on his shoulder. He glanced down cautiously, taking in the entire morgue.

The four zombies in the sky were unable to attain the same altitude as him, so they fell back to the ground.

However, Li Qingshan did not pay any attention to them. He had never been looking at the zombies in the first place. Although they were mostly invulnerable and possessed great physical strength, they lacked intelligence and techniques. Their reactions could not even be compared to regular wild beasts.

Whether it be his strength, speed, or reactions, he completely surpassed these zombies. As long as a few hundred or a thousand of them did not surround him, they could not touch him at all.

He was only cautious about a single person—the Zombie Daoist who had only spoken but never appeared. According to the files of the Hawkwolf Guard, he knew concealing techniques and possessed a Submerged Shadow sword. He was extremely skilled at sneak attacks.

The autumn wind rustled through the surroundings of the morgue, sweeping up dead grass and twigs, but there was not a single person at all.

In the end, he locked his aura onto Hao Pingyang. If Li Qingshan were the Zombie Daoist, there would be two choices he would consider if he wanted to win. One was killing the weakest first, to weaken his opponent's strength, while the other was directly killing the strongest and obtaining an absolute advantage.

However, he would definitely expose himself if he killed the weakest. It would cost him true qi, and it could even lead to openings, which could lead to his own death. As a result, the most optimal choice was to wait for an opportunity to heavily injure Hao Pingyang.

Hao Pingyang and Li Qingshan were already prepared and were stronger, so they did not fear these zombies. However, Zhao Lanqing and the others did not have it as easy. The zombies were right beside them. They had just emptied their magazines, and they had no time to reload their crossbows.

Several dozen zombies lunged over from all directions. They were clearly mindless creatures with no intelligence, but they seemed to have been rigorously trained, splitting up the five of them tactically.

Jin Bao was the weakest. He rolled on the ground in horrible shape as the ten nails of a zombie stabbed deeply into the ground where he was previously standing. If he had been a second slower, he would have been disemboweled. Before he could even get up, three zombies lunged over with their teeth and

claws, stunning him completely. He had no weapons, only his empty hands. How was he supposed to stop these zombies? He could only close his eyes and wait for death.

Jin Yuan called out, "Jin Bao!" He wanted to save his younger brother, but four zombies stopped him. He could barely hold his ground. He Yishi and Zhang Lanqing were no different.

"Use the puppet, you idiot!" Hao Pingyang saw how his junior brother was in danger, but he had no intentions of trying to save him. He was the same as Li Qingshan, currently focusing all of his efforts into looking for the Zombie Daoist. He did not dare to lose focus. He was the only sixth layer Qi Practitioner present. If he were injured in a sneak attack or even killed, none of the people here would be able to leave alive.

The claws and teeth fell, but there was no cry. Instead, there was the sound of striking wood. At the moment of danger, Jin Bao had summoned a puppet to block the zombies, allowing him to survive.

The three zombies pulled out their teeth and claws before plunging them back into the puppet emotionlessly. Bang! Bang! Bang! With three consecutive, heavy blows, splinters flew from the puppet as it became riddled with cracks. The claws of the zombies could even pierce steel. If it were not for the fact that the puppet had been specially made, it would have been destroyed in a single strike. However, even with that being the case, it could not last for too long.

At this moment, the four zombies that previously targeted Li Qingshan lunged towards Jin Bao under the influence of an invisible force. The greatest use of puppets was for attack, not for serving as a shield. As a result, it fell into pieces with a clatter.

Despair filled Jin Bao's eyes as he called out, "Save me!"

Hao Pingyang sighed inside. As he wielded the Yellow Dragon's Cannon of Devouring Light, he was about to charge up and assist him, disregarding the threat in the darkness.

A bolt of scorching, white lightning descended from the sky with the rumble of thunder. It charred several zombies by Jin Bao's side and stunned all the other zombies in the morgue.

As Li Qingshan descended from the ground, he threw out a Lightning Summoning talisman, but he did not even check the effect of it. He stared straight at Zhang Lanqing, and his Wind-entwining blade swept out as a streak of light.

"Nice!" Hao Pingyang praised loudly. He raised his Yellow Dragon's Cannon of Devouring Light, and it gathered specks of light. The dragon's head actually targeted Zhang Lanqing as well.

With everything happening around him, Zhang Lanqing was unable to save Jin Bao in time despite his superior strength at the fifth layer, as he was handling seven zombies. However, he was able to protect himself. However, facing the incoming blade and the charging Yellow Dragon's Cannon of Devouring Light, his breath immediately became stifled, revealing fear and disbelief.

Clang!

The Wind-entwining blade arrived a foot before Zhang Lanqing and produced a metallic sound that was no softer than the thunder earlier. A small sword appeared out of nowhere.

His blade immediately gained a huge nick, but the small sword was sent flying by Li Qingshan's great strength as well, spinning away uncontrollably.

Using the previous bolt of lightning, Li Qingshan had finally grasped the whereabouts of the Submerged Shadow sword.

At this moment, the Yellow Dragon's Cannon of Devouring Light unleashed a dazzling streak of light, striking the small sword in the air and directly reducing it to a piece of scrap metal. It fell from the sky.

A miserable wail resounded within the darkness of a corner, and a blurry figure appeared, drifting towards the door.

Li Qingshan and Hao Pingyang turned around at the same time and rushed in the direction of the miserable wail. They charged out of the morgue and saw a figure in the distance that was rushing off in a hurry.

"Come!" Hao Pingyang tossed aside the Yellow Dragon's Cannon of Devouring Light and extended a foot towards Li Qingshan behind him.

"Go!" Li Qingshan gained a proper footing on the ground, crushing the tiles beneath his feet. A shockwave spread through the surroundings as he drew strength from the ground. Unleashing his full strength, he punched the bottom of Hao Pingyang's foot.

Hao Pingyang shot off like a human cannonball, rushing past the bushes and rapidly approaching the figure. He smiled viciously as he spread his arms; true qi surged out, slamming against the temples of the figure's head. With a spurt, the head exploded.

Li Qingshan was instead disappointed. He thought about how the Zombie Daoist was truly crafty.

Hao Pingyang limped back while holding a headless corpse and tossed it to the ground. "Another fake!"

When his flying sword was destroyed and his mind was injured, the Zombie Daoist was actually still able to think about leaving behind a substitute to flee. He was well-prepared, and his reactions were fast.

Li Qingshan lifted up the Yellow Dragon's Cannon of Devouring Light and studied it. When he heard that, he spread his arms and shrugged, tossing the cannon back to Hao Pingyang.

Hao Pingyang caught the cannon and stowed it back into his hundred treasures pouch as he patted his foot with a frown. "Kid, that punch was too much!"

Li Qingshan said, "If it weren't enough, how were you supposed to catch up to him?"

Hao Pingyang suddenly said, "The Submerged Shadow sword has been destroyed, so that bastard has been greatly weakened. It's a good time to kill him."

Li Qingshan said, "His specialty lies in refining and controlling corpses, not controlling a sword. This is only one of the places he nurtures corpses. Don't tell me you plan on entering the Zombie Cave in search of a sixth layer Qi Practitioner who is skilled at concealing techniques? And, it's just like what you said, this has nothing to do with me."

The two of them conversed outside the morgue as the battle continued inside, but they had no intention of interfering.

Chapter 170 - The Zombie Cave

Although the zombies' attacks were vicious, they completely lacked order, so the four mohist disciples managed to gain their footing and regroup. Zhang Lanqing and He Yishi controlled five puppets to hold off the zombies for a while before suddenly dodging to one side, revealing the brothers behind them. They wielded a loaded Thousand Mechanism crossbow in each hand and pulled the triggers.

Sixty Fire Crow bolts scattered outwards. The hides of the zombies could not be penetrated with regular weapons, but they were unable to stop the Fire Crow arrows, which subsequently exploded in their bodies, easily tearing them to pieces. Just a single wave of bolts mowed down a large swathe of them. They no longer seemed so vicious or terrifying anymore.

The remaining seven or eight zombies could no longer pose a threat to them. The humanoid puppets charged up and sharp blades sprang out from their arms, slaughtering the zombies in a mechanical and precise manner.

The nails of the zombies would only leave behind white marks on the puppets, but the sharp blades from the puppets could pierce their heads in a single stroke. Now that they were evenly-matched in terms of numbers, the zombies were not the opponent of the puppets. They were all slain.

The four of them all let out breaths of relief and sat down. Within the Academy of the Hundred Schools, mohist disciples competed against one another using puppets as well, but their contests had never been so dangerous.

Seeing how he had managed to mow down the zombies that had almost claimed his life earlier so easily, Jin Bao was left in a state of disbelief.

Actually, their strength completely surpassed a few dozen zombies. If they were on open ground and standing in formation, all prepared with their Thousand Mechanism crossbows, these zombies would not even be able to reach them. They would be slain on the spot. Even the sixth layer Qi Practitioner, the Zombie Daoist, could not deal with five Thousand Mechanism crossbows so easily.

However, once everything happened so close to them and required them to adapt to the circumstances, they were completely useless.

Hao Pingyang pointed at them and cursed, "You're embarrassing. You're fucking embarrassing. To think that you were bold enough to look down on him as a second layer Qi Practitioner. If it weren't for him, would you all still be alive? With your pig brains, you can't even tell the difference between real and fakes. My formation scroll has gone to waste, just like you lot."

They all reddened with shame. Jin Bao grumbled, "Senior brother, I almost just died. Sure, you might not comfort me, but do you have to make it sound so bad?" Although his words were vicious, the mohist disciples clearly were not particularly afraid of their senior brother.

Zhang Lanqing clasped his hands and bowed deeply at Li Qingshan. He said earnestly, "Thank you for your assistance earlier!" Even now, the danger he felt from the swing of the blade earlier still made him fearful. Originally, he was still rather unhappy about how Li Qingshan had destroyed their trap, but all

that remained now was gratitude. It was just like what Hao Pingyang had said. Even if Li Qingshan had not come, their trap probably would have failed to harm the actual Zombie Daoist.

Li Qingshan patted his shoulder. “It was very impressive of you to have managed to hold back your urge to fight back.”

Zhan Lanqing smiled awkwardly. “I was stupefied from fright.”

Li Qingshan could not help but laugh. Zhang Lanqing sure was honest.

The several hundred Qi Gathering pills he ate were not for nothing. Whether it be his strength as a Qi Practitioner or a Body Practitioner, it had all grown tremendously compared to when he faced off against Qian Yannian. Coupled with his fierce murderousness from taking the lives of over a thousand people, he was like a god of slaughter when he descended from the sky. He truly did possess the aura to make people succumb to him.

If he fought against Qian Yannian again in a fair battle now, the battle would no longer be as hopeless as before. In other words, he possessed the strength to threaten fifth layer Qi Practitioners.

However, Hao Pingyang’s Yellow Dragon’s Cannon of Devouring Light was even mightier than Li Qingshan. Zhang Lanqing felt like prey that had caught the attention of two predators when these two attacks locked onto him. He had been utterly stupefied, unable to react at all.

Jin Yuan pulled Jin Bao over. “Thank you for saving my younger brother!” Then he said to the ashamed Jin Bao, “Why don’t you say something?!”

“That... Thank you too, but are you really just at the second layer? How can you be so powerful?” Jin Bao’s age was the closest to Li Qingshan out of everyone present, but he was still a few years older than Li Qingshan. However, he still seemed childish, so he instead appeared younger than the weathered Li Qingshan. There was now some admiration in his gaze towards Li Qingshan. No matter where the powerful went, they would earn respect.

Before Li Qingshan could even answer him, Hao Pingyang smacked Jin Bao’s head. “That’s called a Body Practitioner, you idiot. Haven’t you seen those brainless muscleheads from the school of the Military? Do you live under a rock?”

Li Qingshan thought, To think that you can still bring yourself to call me a musclehead.

Jin Bao flew into a rage from embarrassment and frustration. “If you hit me again, I’m going to turn against you!”

Hao Pingyang raised his hand before placing it back down. “You want to act up? Why don’t you give it a try!?”

Jin Bao leapt up. “Hao Pingyang, fuck your granny!” Afterwards, he was stopped by Zhang Lanqing and the three others who dissuaded him.

“Originally, the Zombie Daoist wanted to use the Submerged Shadow sword to assassinate your senior brother Hao, but he presented no openings, so the Zombie Daoist was afraid to act rashly, which was why he summoned the zombies to surround you.” Li Qingshan smiled. These disciples of mohism sure were straightforward. They seemed a little like the university students from his former life. While they

were not young, they were still rather naive. Even the short-tempered Hao Pingyang did not possess a condescending sense of superiority even though he smacked and cursed his junior brothers without holding back. They were different from the Qi Practitioners that Li Qingshan usually saw.

Jin Bao was stunned. Only then did he understand why Hao Pingyang did not immediately assist him.

Li Qingshan continued, "But earlier, when you fell into danger, your senior brother Hao wanted to save you even if it meant risking his life."

"Senior brother..." Only now did Jin Bao understand that he had almost been used by the Zombie Daoist as a trap to kill Hao Pingyang.

Zhang Lanqing, He Yishi, and Jin Yuan all looked at Hao Pingyang. None of them could think much about it during the chaos earlier, but now that they thought about it, not only had they failed to offer any assistance at all, but they had even almost dragged Hao Pingyang down with them.

"Bullsh*t. Why would I save him? If an idiot like him dies, it'll save the school of Mohism from feeding him instead." Hao Pingyang's bushy face reddened slightly.

He Yishi said in thought, "The Zombie Daoist was unable to find any openings with senior brother Hao, which was why he then tried to kill senior brother Zhang." They all thanked Li Qingshan once again.

At that moment of danger, Li Qingshan had used the flash from the Lightning Summoning talisman to immediately locate the Submerged Shadow sword, which was why he was able to deal that attack. Not only had he saved Zhang Lanqing's life, but he had also given Hao Pingyang the opportunity to fire his cannon. He had basically turned the tables around. He had been far more useful than the four of them.

Li Qingshan said, "We're all in one boat. Though, you don't seem like you've practised any martial arts before, have you?" When they engaged the zombies in close combat earlier, they basically fought based on their instincts, reactions, and true qi alone. Their moves could not even match a third-rate master of the jianghu, which was why they suffered so much.

Zhang Lanqing smiled bitterly. "We're disciples of the school of Mohism. Over all these years, all we've learnt is engineering, creating puppets, and building cities and structures. Although we did attend a few classes in the school of the Military's exhibition hall, how can we actually match disciples of the school of the Military? If I go back, I'll definitely make up for my lack of martial arts." The others all expressed their agreement.

Only then did Li Qingshan learn that they were engineers and fighting did not fall into their studies. Not all Qi Practitioners had the ability to kill and plunder. There were Qi Practitioners who specialised in professions as well.

"What do you plan on doing next?"

Hao Pingyang said, "Obviously to press forward into the enemy's lair!"

Li Qingshan said, "The Zombie Cave is not a place you can simply barge into. The morgue is only one of his places for nurturing corpses. After he's done nurturing them, he'll take them into the Zombie Cave. Who knows how many zombies have accumulated in the cave over all these years. It'll be extremely dangerous."

The reason why the Zombie Daoist was able to remain alive while being hunted down by the Hawkwolf Guard was closely related to his cave. He usually hid himself underground, staying in the complicated caverns that were as confusing as a maze. No one knew where his dwelling actually was, and if they tried searching for it, they would face an endless attack of zombies. If anything happened to them, they would die in there and become part of the zombies.

When Zhang Lanqing and the other three heard that they would be entering a pitch-black cavern after the danger earlier, they all began considering retreat. "Senior brother, why don't we return to the academy first and get a few powerful helpers before we go looking for the Zombie Daoist?"

Hao Pingyang glared at all of them. "Return to the academy? What about the mission? We've managed to get out after so much difficulty. You all know how long it takes to travel to and from here. By then, who knows whether the Zombie Daoist would have moved his hiding location. You might not mind embarrassing yourselves, but I do!"

The four of them looked at one another. Before they left, their master had said that they were to listen to all of Hao Pingyang's orders during the mission.

"His flying sword has been destroyed, and his mind was shaken up. He won't be able to refine another flying sword in time. Killing him now is the best opportunity we will ever have." That was how Hao Pingyang put it, but he looked at Li Qingshan. He was not confident that the five of them could kill the Zombie Daoist. However, he had developed a very high opinion of Li Qingshan with his performance in the battle earlier. If Li Qingshan were willing to join them, their chances at success would increase significantly.

Li Qingshan began to hesitate. He wanted to wait for Zhuo Zhibo, but he had no idea whether Zhuo Zhibo would actually come. If Zhuo Zhibo were not coming, he would definitely treat the Zombie Daoist as his target. A sixth layer Qi Practitioner must have many pills. It could resolve his current shortage. However, the issue right now was whether to work with these disciples of mohism or not. Together with Xiao An, the two of them alone should be enough to kill the Zombie Daoist.

"If you join us, Qingshan, I'll give you my share of the rewards." Seeing how he was unable to change Hao Pingyang's mind, Zhang Lanqing wanted to make this journey into the cave safer by recruiting Li Qingshan. He also wanted to pay back Li Qingshan for saving his life.

Jin Yuan and Jin Bao added, "We'll do the same."

He Yishi hesitated, "Me too." As long as they could complete this mission, not only would they still have their pride intact, but the Academy of the Hundred Schools would give them a reward as well, so it was not like he would get nothing out of this.

Hao Pingyang said, "Kid, you're a second layer Qi Practitioner, yet you have a share that is even greater than mine, so let's not talk about any compensation for earlier anymore. We'll split the things on the Zombie Daoist seventy-thirty, alright?"

In order to avoid any disputes, they agreed on the share that they would be receiving before they set off. They would compensate everyone for their losses with what they received before splitting up the remaining items, with Hao Pingyang claiming thirty percent and the other four claiming seventy percent.

As the main powerhouse of this mission, Hao Pingyang was rather generous with how everything would be split up.