

### Chapter 171 - With Generosity comes Ties of Friendship

Li Qingshan raised his head. "Alright, I'll do it!"

He could kill the Zombie Daoist together with Xiao An. However, even back when he killed the fifth layer Qi Practitioner, Qian Yannian, it had been passed off as purely a coincidence. As such, if he killed a sixth layer Qi Practitioner now, anyone would know that he had a hidden trump card. Who knows how much attention he would attract, and this happened to be a secret that he could not afford for anyone to probe into.

And, he was not fixated on the items within the Zombie Daoist's hundred treasures pouch. The bounty that the Hawkwolf Guard had placed on the Zombie Daoist's head amounted to over ten thousand points of contribution. Five points could exchange for a Qi Gathering pill so that was over two thousand Qi Gathering pills. Now that was the largest share. If he worked with these mohist disciples, he would be able to earn these points of contribution reasonably, without raising any suspicion.

Zhang Lanqing and the others were surprised and overjoyed by this. Hao Pingyang grinned as well.

However, Li Qingshan followed up with, "However, I'm not too satisfied with how everything is going to be split up."

Zhang Lanqing and the other looked at one another, while Hao Pingyang frowned as well. He was still dissatisfied after claiming a seventy percent share; wasn't that a little too greedy? What made everything worse was that if Li Qingshan wanted more, he could not afford to turn him down.

Li Qingshan smiled. "I'll just take thirty percent, the same as you, senior brother Hao, as I'm confident that I'll be about as useful as you when it comes to protecting everyone. As for the remaining forty percent, you should split it among yourselves!"

Everyone was taken aback by that. They had never thought that Li Qingshan would turn down these benefits in such a willing manner. Forty percent of the wealth of a sixth layer Qi Practitioner could interest all Qi Practitioners. None of them would give up on it so easily.

Zhang Lanqing felt rather ashamed over how poorly he had behaved earlier. "Qingshan, t- that wouldn't be right of us!"

"There's nothing wrong or right of you. If you want me to join you, then let's split it like that! If you were thinking about paying back the favour from earlier, you'd better save it. Your lives are worth far more than just a share of benefits." Li Qingshan was never a stingy person. He took a liking to these disciples of mohism, so he would not let them go empty-handed. This was just the way he handled matters.

As the saying went, generosity came with ties of friendship. Petty people who only focused on small gains could never achieve anything significant. A generous, confident person had no need to worry about going without friends.

Hao Pingyang laughed happily as he slapped Li Qingshan's shoulder. "Alright, I like you, kid!"

That stirred up the valiant spirit in He Yishi as well. He said proudly, "Our lives are precious, so let alone a certain cut of benefits, even the benefits from ten Zombie Daoists are worth less than our lives." He

was not boasting. They could reach the fourth or fifth layers at such a young age, so reaching the sixth layer was not beyond their reach. Their future development would definitely surpass the Zombie Daoist's.

Although they were not skilled in battle as disciples of mohism, the mechanisms and puppets that they could create were items that all Qi Practitioners desired. They would be worth even more than regular spiritual artifacts. Every single disciple of mohism was a respected existence wherever they went. The Zombie Daoist who hid underground and refined corpses could not rival their statuses.

The brothers, Jin Yuan and Jin Bao, were inspired as well. Jin Yuan said, "If we work together, what's there to fear about the Zombie Daoist? We'll earn our share fair and square!"

Jin Bao said, "I've embarrassed myself, so I need to redeem myself. I can't let others look down on us mohist disciples."

The gloomy morgue became filled with vigour from these young men. Originally, killing the Zombie Daoist was a rather fearful mission, but now, it was a task that required them to work hard together to complete. Their fear had already vanished.

Hao Pingyang extended his hand. "Then let's work together and get him!" Several hands stacked on top of him as everyone looked at one another with smiles. They all felt much closer with one another. They no longer treated Li Qingshan as an outsider anymore. It was as if they had not just met a moment ago, but were old acquaintances.

Xiao An leaned on her hand as she sat on the roof of the morgue. When Li Qingshan fell back down, he left her up there to keep an eye out. He also told her to avoid using her powers unless she had to, so she just watched as the Zombie Daoist fled from the morgue. Her eyes were not particularly special, but they could see through all illusions and truths. Concealing techniques were a form of illusions, so they were completely useless against her. She wanted to go down and warn Li Qingshan, but in the blink of an eye, the Zombie Daoist had fled already, so she could only give up on that idea.

If she had pursued earlier, there probably would have been a very great chance for her to taste fresh flesh and blood! However, as long as Li Qingshan told her to do something, she would always oblige obediently.

The desolate moonlight fell on her emotionless face as she listened in on the conversation below. She seemed rather cold.

As her cultivation of the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty deepened, her mind seemed to gradually return to when she was a spirit. However, that previous state was the numbness that came from losing a sense of individuality from all the torture, but now, it was indifference that came with clearly understanding everything.

When she controlled the fire and swallowed everyone one by one, it was not as simple as absorbing the essence within their flesh and blood. It was unlike what regular evil or demonic cultivators did, sacrificing living people to forge artifacts and treasures, who would then be denounced and hunted down by humanity.

Whether it be the blood flames or the pale flames, they were all a part of her. As she fused with the flesh and blood, especially when it came from living people or people who had just died, she could clearly sense their resentment, fury, pain, fear...

The barrage of all of these negative emotions was enough to make a regular person collapse in a single instant. Even cultivators with sturdy wills would be shaken up by that, developing doubt about their own actions and existences. They would be haunted by these dead souls for the rest of their lives. This was the most difficult psychological test of the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty.

However, she did not feel troubled at all. Just like reading a buddhist scripture, she read the wails of pain and anguish of the deceased, without any pity or sympathy at all, just like gods and buddhas who sat up high on the lotus throne, taking in the suffering of all life with a clear, indifferent mind. It was not that these emotions were suppressed, but rather they were unable to develop these emotions.

She could neither be moved by friendship and hot-bloodedness, nor would she be troubled by the curse of resentment. There was no difference between the red and black ants. All living creatures were equal. All of them could be killed, apart from him.

Within the morgue, they discussed the plan as the sky in the east gradually lit up.

Suddenly, Xiao An stood up and cast her gaze into the distance. Looking past the wilderness, she saw a group of people rapidly drawing closer. She leapt down from the roof and arrived beside Li Qingshan.

Just from making eye contact once, Li Qingshan understood that Zhuo Zhibo was finally here. He said to the mohist disciples, "Please go first. I have some personal matters to settle. I'll catch up to you later."

Hao Pingyang said, "Just what is there that is more important than hunting down the Zombie Daoist?"

Li Qingshan only smiled, while Hao Pingyang did not ask him any more questions. Seeing how determined he was, Hao Pingyang said, "Alright then. We'll set off first and wait for you at the entrance of the Zombie Cave."

The morgue emptied out and Li Qingshan pressed down on his blade as he waited. After a while, he suddenly called out, "Commander Zhuo, since you're here, please show yourself!"

## **Chapter 172 - Human Mentality in the Face of Danger**

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Black Wolf guards clothed in their dark uniforms directly pierced through the walls and entered the morgue.

Dust rose up in the surroundings, but none of it reached them. Their clothes fluttered with their true qi as they stared at Li Qingshan coldly.

A sharp killing intent gathered and wrapped firmly around Li Qingshan. Although the strongest was only the fifth layer Xie Nande, they were much more powerful than Zhang Lanqing and the others.

They were professional killers, a pack of wolves for hunting prey. Every single one of them had survived countless life-threatening battles. If Zhang Lanqing were pitted against Xie Nande, he would kill the latter in a single clash.

However, Li Qingshan sat down instead. He held the scabbard of the Wind-entwining blade in one hand without even looking at these Black Wolf guards. The rolling dust reached five steps away from Li Qingshan, but it was unable to advance another inch further. Xiao An stood beside him as her eyes that were like black pearls revealed yearning.

All of his paths, front, back, left and right, had been sealed. All that remained was the pitch-black, holey main entrance of the morgue with cold wind whistling into the structure. A black shadow stepped over the door sill. With the wind, an iron hawk arrived. The hawk's wings were highly raised, its eyes were circular, and its beak was curved like a hook. It stared straight at Li Qingshan as if it could come alive at any time and kill him.

The might he gave off alone surpassed the other Black Wolf guards combined.

Li Qingshan finally raised his head. "Commander Zhuo, what an impressive group!"

Zhuo Zhibo scanned the morgue filled with corpses and asked in doubt, "Did you do all of this? You repelled the Zombie Daoist?"

"It's as you can see." Li Qingshan spread out his left hand.

Zhuo Zhibo sneered. "He's just a piece of trash!"

If the wolves and the hawk had surrounded the Zombie Daoist, he would never have been as relaxed as when he faced the disciples of mohism. Even if he tried to flee with everything that he had, they would still end up killing him and ripping him to pieces.

Li Qingshan agreed, "He really is just a piece of trash."

They had fallen out already, so Zhuo Zhibo no longer tried to hide his blatant killing intent. "You're about to die, so do you have any last words?"

Li Qingshan shook his head with a smile. "I won't die."

Zhuo Zhibo said, "Yes, you won't die too soon. We have the most skillful interrogators here. We will cut you open bit by bit, but we won't let you die."

He wanted to take pleasure in Li Qingshan's expression of fear and despair, but he was disappointed. Li Qingshan only smiled. A pair of snowy-white canines that were slightly longer than usual protruded from his mouth, and even the child beside him remained unfazed.

Not a single Black Wolf guard in the surroundings butted in as Li Qingshan and Zhuo Zhibo spoke with one another. Even their expressions remained the same. Even the eyes of the weakest among them, Ge Jian, shone brightly. He firmly locked onto Li Qingshan's aura, unwilling to drop his guard even by the slightest.

Although they were enemies, Li Qingshan could not help but praise them. Now these were true warriors. As the most powerful system of violence within the Great Xia empire, even the weakest Black Wolf guards possessed such composure.

He possessed absolute confidence about defeating them. The only issue now was that he could not let any one of them escape!

Li Qingshan stood up. With a shing, he drew the Wind-entwining blade that was so damaged it seemed like a saw. He reached into his talisman pouch with his left hand and held a Lightning Summoning talisman. Xiao An held her blade in one hand and the Skull Prayer Bead in the other.

They did not even have to make eye contact, and they had already decided on a battle tactic. It would be the same as the tactic they had employed against the Zombie Daoist earlier. They would erupt with all of their strength and kill the strongest, Zhuo Zhibo, instantly. After that, the rest would just be lambs for slaughter. Even if they managed to escape, hunting them down would be easier.

Zhuo Zhibo nodded, and seven Wind-entwining blades were drawn from their scabbards.

The battle was about to erupt, but a bellow suddenly rang out from outside, "Li Qingshan, is there something wrong with your legs? How slow do you have to be?!"

Li Qingshan was slightly taken aback. "Why did you return?"

At this moment, Zhuo Zhibo looked back and saw a burly man with a full beard standing several dozen meters away. The aura he gave off and the bronze cannon in his arms made Zhuo Zhibo's eyes narrow.

Hao Pingyang said, "I'll come back here if I fucking want to. Since when do you care?" Zhang Lanqing and the others stood beside him, holding loaded Thousand Mechanism crossbows as they frowned.

Zhang Lanqing said, "Aren't you done with your matters? If you're done, then hurry up and come over!"

Zhuo Zhibo said frigidly, "I was wondering why you were so fearless. Looks like you're getting help from others. No wonder you thought you would live."

Li Qingshan completely ignored him. He yelled back at Hao Pingyang, "I can't go over right now, so you should go first! There's no need to wait for me!"

Hao Pingyang exclaimed, "If I want you to come over, then you come over. I would like to see who stops you! I'll blast them to pieces!"

Li Qingshan felt rather helpless, but also rather touched. He sheathed his blade and said to Zhuo Zhibo, "Commander Zhuo, looks like there just isn't enough time today!" With that, he made his way over to the main entrance of the morgue with Xiao An.

The moment he brushed past Zhuo Zhibo, both of them could sense the startling killing intent from the other, but neither did anything.

Ge Jian said, "Commander!"

Zhuo Zhibo raised his hand to signal for him to shut up.

Li Qingshan arrived beside Hao Pingyang. Hao Pingyang whispered, "What's going on?"

Li Qingshan laughed, "We just have some small disagreements."

"Small disagreements?!" Hao Pingyang exclaimed. A small disagreement was enough for a group of Black Wolf guards to surround him with their killing intent bare? Their leader was even a sixth layer Qi Practitioner, an Iron Hawk commander!

Jin Bao said with lingering fear. "Even from so far away, with his back towards me, that man feels so terrifying!"

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The reason behind Cave town's name was a huge cave that existed near the town.

One of the branches of the Clear river flowed into the caves, disappearing inside. Boats and people would suffer the same fate as the river. In the past, there would be curious villagers who wanted to investigate and explore the caves, but not a single one of them would return. As such, it basically turned it into a forbidden zone.

However, the name that the Hawkwolf Guard gave to this mission location was Zombie cave. It was the hiding location of their most wanted criminal, the Zombie Daoist. He was a terrifying existence even to the Hawkwolf Guard of Jiaping city.

Zhuo Zhibo had once personally led a squadron in an attempt to complete this mission, but he ended up losing four Black Wolf guards while failing to find the Zombie Daoist's exact hiding spot. As a result, the reward for completing the mission increased again and again, setting a record within the Hawkwolf Guard of Jiaping city.

Li Qingshan currently stood at the entrance to the Zombie cave. The cave was several dozen meters tall and extremely wide. It was like the gaping mouth of a beast, expelling a cold breeze. Li Qingshan could vaguely smell a stink in the breeze. It was the stink of corpses. He cast his gaze into the depths, but it only vanished into the darkness in the end. The stalactites drooping from the ceiling of the cave were like the teeth of a beast's mouth.

The rising sun in the east was unable to weaken the gloominess here.

Zhang Lanqing took out a small boat and tossed it into the water. The boat expanded rapidly to a size where it could hold eight people. There were many oars that extended from both sides, making it look like a centipede.

"You still should go first. Those people won't spare me. They'll definitely catch up to me." Li Qingshan had already given the rough story to them. They were all infuriated, but after they felt fury, fear followed. The Hawkwolf Guard was infamous among Qi Practitioners.

Jin Yuan and Jin Bao lowered their heads. They said nothing. From the clash earlier, they had already learned about the difference in strength that existed between them and the Hawkwolf Guard.

He Yishi was uncertain as he said hesitantly, "That works too. It's always easier when you flee alone."

Hao Pingyang was furious. "When there are benefits, we get along so well in harmony, but once there's danger, you scatter like chaff in the wind, only caring for yourself. Do you still have the slightest decency as a human being?"

Jin Yuan and Jin Bao were both ashamed, while He Yishi said, "I'm just saying!" However, he grumbled inside as he wondered whether Li Qingshan was purposefully using them to evade the danger waiting for him.

Zhang Lanqing said, "Yeah, Qingshan. You'll be safer if you stick with us. Once the mission ends, we can go to Clear River city together. You can file a complaint at the Hawkwolf Guard in Clear River city. We'll all serve as your witness!"

Hao Pingyang said, "That's not a bad idea. If that won't work, then you might as well just resign from the Hawkwolf Guard. Next spring, when the Academy of the Hundred Schools is taking in new students, you can come to our school of Mohism. I'll personally teach you engineering."

Li Qingshan took note of all of their responses. Hao Pingyang was truly a bold, straightforward man. Although his temper was not the best, and his mouth was foul at times, his virtues could not be dulled by these insignificant flaws. Zhang Lanqing was a loyal person as well, and he was prudent with his thinking. The other three were far worse in comparison. Their loyalty, hot-bloodedness, and enthusiasm could be roused, but it would never last for too long.

However, Li Qingshan did not resent them over this. There was nothing strange about their behaviour. Not all of his attempts at friendship would be reciprocated. Even if all five of them no longer wanted Li Qingshan around them, he would not find it strange at all. Instead, it was already extremely rare that there were two people who actually wanted to help him. Now they were people truly worthy of being friends with. The three others would just be acquaintances at most.

Li Qingshan said, "Alright, I'll accompany you for a little longer."

Hao Pingyang said, "That's more like it!" The seven of them boarded the boat, and under Zhang Lanqing's control, the wing-like oars on the two sides immediately began to move. The boat traveled with the flow, entering the cave.

Soon after they had left, Zhuo Zhibo's group reached the entrance of the cave as well.

Ge Jian asked, "Commander, what do we do?"

Zhuo Zhibo said, "Let them scout ahead and clear the obstacles. Once they've utterly exhausted themselves, we'll kill them all and push the blame onto the Zombie Daoist. Then we'll kill the Zombie Daoist." That determined everyone's fate; it demonstrated Zhuo Zhibo's cold-bloodedness.

"Yes, sir!" The Black Wolf guards obliged loudly, following his decision.

Zhuo Zhibo cracked a joke. "I sure am lucky. I didn't kill him at the very beginning, and he has brought me more benefits instead."

If a boss told a joke, how could the subordinates afford to keep a straight face? The Black Wolf guards all chimed in with smiles. "Those mohist disciples must be carrying a lot of good stuff."

The boat traveled with the flow, moving extremely quickly. It reached the depths of the cave very soon, which gradually narrowed. The surroundings were pitch-black, so a small lantern lit up at the front of the boat.

Although Qi Practitioners could all see at night, darkness still affected their vision. The person who truly remained unaffected was Xiao An, and Li Qingshan even found the darkness to be even clearer than daytime.

## **Chapter 173 - A Horde Springs Alive**

Li Qingshan said, "This boat's pretty good. Xiao An likes it very much as well!" Xiao An currently leaned against the edge, focusing all of her attention on the tiny, wing-like oars paddling in the water.

Zhang Lanqing smiled. "I made it myself. So she's called Xiao An. Won't it be dangerous for her if she comes with us?"

Li Qingshan rubbed Xiao An's head. "She can take care of herself. Why don't you use propellers?"

"What are propellers?"

Li Qingshan gave a slight explanation, and Zhang Lanqing understood the idea. He immediately sank into his thoughts. "What a special design. It seems like it'll be more..."

Li Qingshan said, "Be careful!"

Distracted, the boat immediately hurtled towards some rocks. Zhang Lanqing returned to his senses and steered the boat in a hurry. He patted his chest to calm himself down. "So close."

Hao Pingyang said, "Keep your head clear! Don't become distracted as soon as you think of new concepts!"

Zhang Lanqing said, "I'll try it out when I get back. Qingshan, if you join the school of Mohism, you'll definitely become quite accomplished."

Li Qingshan said, "Perhaps." Advice from others could be helpful at times.

On the side of the cave that the boat had just passed by, a pair of emerald eyes lit up in the pitch-black grooves that light was unable to reach. It was actually a preserved corpse. Its entire body seemed to have become part of the cavern wall, covered in moss. Who knows how long it had been there for already. It did not even give off any stink anymore. It did not give off any aura either. As such, even Li Qingshan failed to notice it.

As if it had received some kind of order, it broke free from the cave with a struggle, but its movements suddenly halted. A shiny, white prayer bead floated nearby.

Even though it only possessed a subservient consciousness and a desire for flesh and blood after being refined, it still experienced an instinctual fear towards the prayer bead. The Skull Prayer Bead pierced its head and red light emerged from its body, turning its flesh into fire and its bones into fluid. It became a part of the tiny prayer bead.

In the depths of the cave, an old man who was as thin as a stick opened his eyes. He had lost the connection to a corpse he had just awakened. Before the connection was lost, something very strange had happened. There was a ripple as if there was a sense of fear.

Such a matter was obviously absurd. How could corpses feel fear? Even if their souls were still restrained to their bodies, they had lost the ability to fear a long time ago. It must have been a false impression.

Afterwards, he thought of what he had discovered in the huge, open pit outside Ancient Wind city for some reason.



He was a cultivator who sought corpses. Even though he was infamous, holding the top spot on the blacklist, he was not bold enough to run amuck, killing people and turning them into zombies. Once he crossed a certain threshold, the Hawkwolf Guard would send even stronger people to hunt him down. This cave could not stop cultivators who were truly powerful.

As a result, he spent most of his time as a grave robber. As soon as he heard about the incident in Ancient Wind city, he took action. That was a thousand corpses, with quite a few Qi Practitioners among them. He would definitely be able to find fantastic corpses to refine. However, when he arrived, all he found was an empty pit. All he felt was shock and fear. He felt fortunate that he had come late.

It had been quite a few years since he last felt fear.

Then he thought about what had happened in the morgue. The body of a Body Practitioner was quite tempting, but he had never trusted Zhuo Zhibo before, so he was extremely careful. The trap cast down by the disciples of Mohism seemed like a joke in his eyes. While he did lose his Submerged Shadow sword out of carelessness, forcing him to flee which exasperated him, he did not feel fear. He had experienced dangers and setbacks that were far more severe than that in his life.

However, just as his substitute fooled his opponents, and he managed to escape from the morgue, he saw something strange. An extremely pretty child sat on the roof under the moonlight, looking at him quietly. It was as if she saw through his concealing technique completely. She did not give off a particularly powerful aura, but her dark, calm eyes made him shudder from the depths of his very soul. He felt as if he had encountered his natural enemy.

However, he managed to escape from her gaze very soon, and the shuddering feeling became an illusion. However, the sight became firmly embedded in his head without dispersing at all.

He felt like there was some sort of connection between all of this, but he failed to pinpoint what it was.

He shook his head. All he had lost was an insignificant corpse, so why was he thinking so much? He cast his thoughts aside and sneered. The intruders would die very soon, becoming a part of his zombie army.

He leaned against a stone coffin beside him. The coffin was engraved with glyphs that extended to the ground. It was locked up firmly by iron chains.

With this treasure, no one could kill him. Not even Zhuo Zhibo!

Xiao An leaned on the edge of the boat and gently played around with the water. She silently scooped up the Skull Prayer Bead, but when she turned around, all she saw was Li Qingshan staring straight at her. She stuck her tongue out at him.

The Skull Prayer Bead was no regular spiritual artifact. Instead, it was more like a part of her body, which was why it could fly very far away; it could even see and hear for her.

To be frank, she did not like the taste of zombies too much. Some of them were dry, and some of them were like a delicacy she had eaten a while back, a kind of pastry that was hard and tough. However, the good part was that they were combustible and not that noisy.

Hao Pingyang suddenly said, "Something is approaching!"

They all looked ahead. Zhang Lanqing pierced the lantern, and the light gathered together like a searchlight, piercing through the darkness. They could vaguely make out something floating on the surface of the water. It was clustered together and pale. It did not drift along with the flow of water, remaining stationary instead as if it were awaiting the arrival of the boat.

“They’re corpses!” He Yishi cried out.

The pale objects were all floating bodies that had swollen up in the water. They seemed like fatties floating on the water, covering the entire area. Who knows how many there were.

Hao Pingyang said, “Don’t let them get near!”

They fished out their Thousand Mechanism crossbows and aimed at the floating corpses, firing their Fire Crow bolts. With a series of swishes, the floating corpses exploded one by one.

Li Qingshan drew his Wind-entwining blade and channeled true qi into it in an attempt to launch a wind blade, but the blade did not respond at all. He hit it a few times and confirmed that the blade was completely destroyed now. A low grade spiritual artifact really could not endure the wear in his hands. Although he could achieve the same results through true qi alone, it would be far too wasteful of true qi. It was not worth it.

Zhang Lanqing passed a Thousand Mechanism crossbow and a few magazines of Fire Crow bolts to Li Qingshan. “I need to steer the boat! You use it!”

“Alrighty!” Li Qingshan accepted the Thousand Mechanism crossbow and aimed at the surface of the water, launching a barrage and blowing up seven or eight floating corpses. He had learned archery before, so he was more accurate than Jin Yuan and Jin Bao, earning him some praise.

Li Qingshan suddenly felt a gaze lock onto him. Looking back, all he found was Xiao An looking up eagerly at the Thousand Mechanism crossbow. She no longer looked at the oars anymore.

“You try!” Li Qingshan passed the Thousand Mechanism crossbow to her, and she accepted it happily.

Hao Pingyang tried to stop them in a hurry. “Don’t mess around!” He was frustrated with how Li Qingshan did not take everything seriously. How could he give such a dangerous weapon to a child? The Thousand Mechanism crossbow was powerful, so it would be bad if Xiao An was unable to wield it properly and fired them randomly on the boat.

He reached towards the crossbow in Xiao An’s hand, but he grabbed nothing. He was surprised. Looking back, he only found that Xiao An had already arrived at the nose of the boat, shooting at the corpses. Moreover, her accuracy was outstanding. She basically took out a corpse with each bolt.

Li Qingshan patted Hao Pingyang’s shoulder. “I told you that she could take care of herself. She’s taking care of you now as well!”

Hao Pingyang shot a glance at him; this kid was mysterious. Even the child by his side was so strange.

With Xiao An at the helm, the others all stopped shooting, saving some of their Fire Crow bolts as they watched on. They would praise from time to time, “Nicely done!”

Jin Bao smiled complacently. "Zombie Daoist, do you think you can handle us with these puny tricks? Looks like there's nothing impressive about you at all." However, as soon as he finished talking, he caught the whiff of a stink. The smell was so sharp that it basically made him dizzy.

Hao Pingyang said, "Hold your breaths! The foul smell is poisonous!"

The boat just happened to have reached where the floating corpses had first appeared. Li Qingshan could clearly see that while the corpses had been blown to shreds, doing so also released the gas within their bodies, which turned into a thick, pale green gas. It filled the entire cave and grew thicker the further they advanced. Even the lantern light was unable to pierce through it.

Everyone held their breaths in a hurry. As Qi Practitioners, the circulation of true qi in their bodies could replace their breathing. However, as the poisonous gas became thicker, their eyes began to sting and water. Even their skin gave off a burning smell. Even without Hao Pingyang's warning, they all released their true qi instinctively.

Just as everyone fended off the poisonous gas and was disoriented, something moved in the water. Li Qingshan noticed it first. "There's something in the water!"

Splash! Splash! Blue hands rotten to a point where their bones were visible extended out from the water, grabbing the oars and then the edge of the boat, climbing aboard. They revealed eyeless, noseless heads while producing terrifying groans.

Just when He Yishi had aimed his Thousand Mechanism crossbow, there was a gust of wind from above, and he raised his head in a hurry. He saw a shriveled corpse lunge towards him through the poisonous gas from the dark roof of the cavern.

"Above too!" Hao Pingyang bellowed. He swung his Yellow Dragon's Cannon of Devouring Light and smacked the corpse away.

Li Qingshan raised his head. On the ceiling of the cave, on those teeth-like stalactites, were dried corpses that lunged down one after another.

Specks of emerald light glimmered on the two sides of the cavern. Corpses broke free from the walls of the cave one by one, opening their shriveled mouths and lunging at the boat. The quiet cave suddenly seemed to spring alive, becoming a terrifying hell filled with vicious, horrifying corpses.

He Yishi and the others raised their crossbows as if they were confused as to where to shoot.

Although they had said that they wanted to redeem themselves, a mentality for battle could not be developed so easily. It required plenty of battle experience, or they had to be geniuses at fighting like Li Qingshan.

Clearly, they possessed neither of the qualities. Jin Bao pulled the trigger of his crossbow in a hurry, basically shooting at his own companions, but he failed to hit a single zombie.

The Wind-entwining blade sliced through the air in an arc and beheaded two shriveled corpses. Li Qingshan said, "Leave the ones above to me. You all get down and focus on the ones in the water." They all crouched down in a hurry. Without saying anything more, Hao Pingyang lifted his cannon and smacked away all the corpses lunging over from the two sides.

Before they could even get a footing in this chaotic situation, shrill screams rang out from the nose of the boat and rapidly drew closer.

Zhang Lanqing paled in shock.

### **Chapter 174 - Shooting Game**

The large corpses that floated on the surface of the water suddenly released poisonous gas and began moving at startling speeds. They sprang up from the surface of the water and flew towards the boat in the darkness.

He Yishi's mouth hung agape as his Thousand Mechanism crossbow drooped down. Terrifying corpses filled every single inch around him. He felt like he had been thrown into a terrifying nightmare, unable to wake up. Even for prodigies of the Academy of the Hundred Schools like them, the fate that awaited them after being pulled into the water was as clear as day.

Hao Pingyang roared out as he swung his Yellow Dragon's Cannon of Devouring Light around, smashing it into the floating corpses, but he failed to send them flying away. The corpses all exploded and released large amounts of poisonous gas. The black, murky fluids they sprayed out landed on the boat with a hiss and smoke rose up. It landed on Hao Pingyang's face as well. While it was stopped by his true qi, it did make him seem rather miserable.

Bang! Bang! Bang! The floating corpses exploded on the boat, and dense, poisonous gas enveloped the entire vessel. Their visibility was reduced to less than an inch away. All they could hear was the moans and groans of the corpses resounding through the cave.

Having lost his sense of sight, Jin Bao panicked inside. He yelled out, "Brother! Brother!" He felt like only he was left in this terrifying hell. He yelled out as he shot at the water. He also released his true qi instinctively, blocking out the gas and attacks from all directions. The boat was simply too small, so he was unable to use his puppets.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! He ran out of Fire Crow bolts in a single instant from how quickly he fired them, vanishing into the thick gas. Most of them landed in the water and produced even more violent waves. It made it seem like the tiny boat was traversing through stormy seas, yet it was unable to advance even an inch forward. Countless corpses jammed the oars as they climbed up, pulling the boat into the water.

"Oh no! The boat is going to sink!" Jin Bao called out frantically. At this moment, a moist yet shrivelled hand suddenly grabbed his hand through the gas!

"Argh!" Jin Bao screamed as he staggered back and ran into someone. Although he managed to knock the hand away with a spurt of true qi, he was still shaken up.

Jin Yuan heard his brother's scream in the gas and also called out, "Jin Bao, what's wrong?"

"I- I-" Jin Bao heaved. He crouched down with everything that he had. The Yellow Dragon's Cannon of Devouring Light whistled above his head, yet the fierce gale it kicked up failed to make the poisonous gas disperse. Instead, the gas only grew denser.

“Oh no, I’m running out of true qi!” He Yishi’s voice cracked. He no longer possessed the same valiance from before. Not only did he have to release his true qi to protect every inch of his body while within the poisonous gas, but he even had to repel the corpses from time to time as well, so he was running out fast.

The four others all fell quiet. Zhao Lanqing was dumbfounded, while Hao Pingyang wielded the Yellow Dragon’s Cannon of Devouring Light swiftly, attempting to repel all the zombies that climbed aboard.

Li Qingshan knitted a net of blades with his Wind-entwining blade, cutting all of the shriveled corpses that fell down from above to shreds. He felt helpless over how his companions responded. The water corpses were terrifying, but they were nowhere near as powerful as the zombies in the morgue. Even prepared masters of the jianghu could deal with them.

The Zombie Daoist had successfully made use of the geography available to him, unleashing his powers to his full ability to overwhelm them psychologically and waste away their true qi. Even though he was not exactly a strategist, he was a tactician. It was possible to imagine just how deadly it would be if the Submerged Shadow sword was present as well, launching sneak attacks from within the thick gas.

Li Qingshan reached towards his talisman pouch, but he smiled again and pulled his hand back. He said to Zhang Lanqing, “Prepare to set off!”

Zhang Lanqing answered with a question, “What?”

Xiao An seemed no different from before, but she moved with the agility of a monkey. She grabbed the Thousand Mechanism crossbow from Jin Bao’s hand, and with two clicks, she reloaded them. She spread her hands, and the crossbows sprayed out with bolts. She began to turn around on the spot. The Fire Crow bolts sprayed out violently in a circular fashion, brushing past everyone and landing on the water corpses climbing up the boat with great accuracy.

Boom! Boom! Boom! There were a string of explosions that occurred so closely to one another that it seemed like a single explosion. The waves of air and water it kicked up blasted the boat from the surface of the water.

Zhang Lanqing cried out as he channeled all of his true qi into the boat. A stream of air spurted out from the back, and it began to fly, rushing out of the poisonous gas. It left behind a layer of remains and countless hands that suddenly extended from the water.

As his vision cleared up, He Yishi could not help but celebrate. Looking at everyone else, he discovered that they were the same as him. Only Li Qingshan and Hao Pingyang remained calm.

The howl rose up once more as the huge, floating mass of corpses slammed towards the boat as they sprayed with poisonous gas.

Unknowingly, Xiao An had already arrived at the nose of the boat. Her clothes ruffled violently as the fierce wind blew her seaweed-like hair behind her, brushing against Zhang Lanqing’s face. His eyes widened. All he felt was that this quiet child seemed to be shining with blinding light.

Her expression remained the same as before. She held the two crossbows with her pure, small hands, standing firmly among the unrest. The floating corpses exploded in the air. None of them managed to get closer than ten steps from the boat.

Bang! The boat landed in the water once again and kicked up countless waves. It shot forward at full speed, throwing behind the dangerous region of water. A series of cheers rang out from the boat. Hao Pingyang could not help but let out a sigh of relief.

Li Qingshan placed his hand on Xiao An's shoulder and smiled in approval. Even he would not have been able to do all of that so flawlessly even if he managed to control his power. At the end of day, someone from his side would still be more reliable. My Xiao An is unlike your people who drag you down!

The corner of Xiao An's lips curled up as she smiled back at him. Then she blinked her eyes, which twinkled like stars.

Li Qingshan nodded slightly, and the Skull Prayer Bead was thrown into the water once again.

Hao Pingyang murmured, "Can you still call her a child?" Even a sixth layer Qi Practitioner like him was unable to do any better than Xiao An. Of course, his position in the team was not like those regular sixth layer Qi Practitioners who could control artifacts either. The explosive power of the Yellow Dragon's Cannon of Devouring Light was enough to kill any sixth layer Qi Practitioner, and it possessed a tremendous range. It was a weapon even more terrifying than regular flying swords, but it was not suited for the prior close combat.

Li Qingshan shrugged. Those people behind you are the children. Before he could even reply, Hao Pingyang had already begun cursing, raining them with spittle, "You bastards. So much for trying to redeem yourselves. Why don't you redeem my ass? Even a child is better than you. I think the three of us will instead be safer without you lot."

They looked at one another and lowered their heads, unable to talk back.

Xiao An returned the Thousand Mechanism crossbow to Jin Bao and passed the other one to Zhang Lanqing. She felt that this trip was very interesting. It was much more interesting than Jiaping city. At the very least, shooting zombies was more fun than stabbing ants.

If Hao Pingyang and the others knew that their difficult battle was only just an interesting shooting game to her, they would have been utterly stunned. However, compared to the dangers she had gone through with Li Qingshan, this was indeed like a game; there was no danger at all.

Zhang Lanqing said, "You can keep it. I have another one as a backup." Zhang Lanqing wanted to rub Xiao An's head, but she avoided his hand. He did not find it awkward. He rubbed his own head with a smile.

Jin Bao said reluctantly, "I'll give mine to you too." He was indebted to Li Qingshan and Xiao An for helping him out twice, yet he was unable to return the favour, and this feeling was further compounded by how generous Zhang Lanqing was. He was unable to swallow his pride over this given his young age. Moreover, the crossbow was completely different when it was in this child's hands compared to his. If Xiao An wielded it, he instead felt even safer than wielding it himself. His life seemed to be in better hands.

Afterwards, the two of them even gave her ten magazines of Fire Crow bolts each in an extremely generous manner. This was a cost they had to pay if they wanted to complete this mission. Compared to wasting it in their own hands, they would be better off giving them to this child.

Li Qingshan thanked them in Xiao An's place. These two crossbows were true lethal weapons. In the hands of a regular third or fourth layer Qi Practitioner, they were enough to threaten Qi Practitioners two or three layers higher, and it would not cost them much true qi at all. This was not something regular low grade spiritual artifacts could achieve. These crossbows would be worth several hundred Qi Gathering pills at the very least.

Xiao An lowered her head and played around with the Thousand Mechanism crossbows. Their design was extremely delicate. Who knows how many components went into making them. They were made out of wood, but they weighed heavily like metal.

Despite all that, Li Qingshan had actually still underestimated the value of these two crossbows. These disciples of mohism did not even bring a single talisman with them. All they brought were a few puppets, a crossbow, and as many Fire Crow arrows as possible. That was how much confidence they placed in this weapon.

If this item was sold on the free market, it could easily fetch over a thousand Qi Gathering pills. It was expensive due to the input from the disciples of mohism. However, as their creators, the materials did not cost so much, which was why they could afford to be so generous.

As soon as they had left the region of water, the Skull Prayer Bead transformed into a huge skull and spat out flames, cleaning up all the corpses there. Regardless of whether its prey could or could not move, it had a feast before leaving.

A while later, a series of black figures arrived quickly. They were the Hawkwolf Guard under Zhuo Zhibo's lead. They did not have to use a vessel. Their personal strength was sufficient.

Like monkeys, they extended their hands and grabbed the stalactites on the ceiling to propel themselves forward, or they kicked off the moist, slippery walls. Once their force was spent, they would easily kick off the air and arrive at the other wall. They kicked off both walls and moved no slower than the boat that went with the flow. Both their reactions and movements were the best of the best.

The most graceful was Zhuo Zhibo. He did not even have to move his legs. Instead, he simply stood above the surface of the water like he was on ground as he advanced rapidly. At a closer glance, there was a tiny blade below the tips of his feet.

They stopped scouting now. Xie Nande said, "That's strange. There were clearly sounds of battle earlier, so why isn't there a single corpse at all?"

"Who cares. Let's just catch up to them and slaughter them all. We don't have to worry about any of them escaping in this cave."

"Didn't you want to use them to kill the Zombie Daoist?"

"I don't think they'll even be able to reach the Zombie Daoist's den."

After a while of thought, Zhuo Zhibo suddenly waved his hand and made a gesture to kill. The cave constantly twisted and turned. In a place like this, Hao Pingyang would not be able to unleash the might of his cannon. There was nothing to fear.

The eyes of the Hawkwolf guards all lit up as they surged with murderousness. Some of them became excited and let out cries, while others licked their lips in a blood-thirsty manner. "It has been quite some time since we last hunted together."

### **Chapter 175 - I've Caught You**

That was indeed the problem that Li Qingshan's group was currently facing. With the boat docked in the water, the cave ahead of them was no longer a single, straight path. Instead, it split up into three. Every single path seemed roughly the same, pitch-black and leading to who knows where. Splitting up was obviously impossible. Who knows how many more forks there would be deeper in. It would definitely exceed the number of people that they had.

"What do we do?" Li Qingshan gained an even deeper understanding of why the Hawkwolf Guard had not killed off the Zombie Daoist yet. He even doubted whether he could achieve it himself. The most difficult part would not be the battle, but the search.

Hao Pingyang smiled complacently. "Why would I come down here without preparations? I knew I couldn't depend on you lot, so I prepared for the worst-case scenario." As he said that, he fished out a wooden spherical object that seemed like a rugby ball. Afterwards, he twisted the top, and with a series of clicks, several tiny, hexagonal holes appeared on the object. It seemed like a bee's nest.

With a buzz, a swarm of tiny insects emerged from the nest. They were not bees, but tiny bugs that flickered with light like fireflies.

Xiao An's eyes lit up again. She extended her hand and caught one. She discovered that they were not actual insects, but extremely delicate mechanical bugs. Their abdomens were embedded with some unknown, green crystal. Every single one of them was an exquisite piece of art.

Li Qingshan asked, "What's this?"

Hao Pingyang said, "Just watch and you'll know." Under his control, the swarm of insects split into three groups and flew down the three caves.

Hao Pingyang twisted the top of the nest again, and a green light shot out, forming a sphere in the air.

There was a large speck of light and countless smaller specks in the ball. The small specks of light divided into three groups and formed three twisted paths from the large speck of light. At a closer glance, those were three caves that differed in shape and size. It actually formed a three-dimensional map in the sphere of light.

Li Qingshan immediately understood its purpose. He praised the wonders of mohism once again. Afterwards, he saw the specks of light separate and leave behind even more paths, sculpting out a detailed map.

Hao Pingyang said, "I found it in the warehouse. It's a puppet for searching and building maps. Everyone rest up and catch your breaths. Once I find the Zombie Daoist's den, we can set off."

"Senior brother sure is prepared!" Jin Bao praised. They all sat down and consumed pills to regather their strength.



Hao Pingyang focused on controlling the puppet insects. Before long, one of them discovered a cave with signs of human excavation. Soon afterwards, the insect was destroyed by something, and the connection was lost.

“Damn insect!” A shriveled hand crushed an insect. The Zombie Daoist rubbed the stone coffin beside him like he was rubbing the face of his lover. “Don’t worry. There’ll be fresh blood very soon. It’ll be the blood of Qi Practitioners.”

Li Qingshan pointed at the sphere of light. “Seems like it’s there!”

Zhang Lanqing and everyone else was overjoyed. The target was right before them now.

Hao Pingyang said, “Once I recall all of the insects, we’ll set off!” When the last mechanical bug returned to the nest-like object, Hao Pingyang stood up and gave the order to set off. However, he suddenly frowned and looked at the cave behind him.

Li Qingshan said, “It looks like I’ll only be able to accompany you till here!” At the end of the day, he still needed to deal with his own matters in person. Zhuo Zhibo had already survived two clashes against him, but he could not allow that to happen again. It was time to put an end to it.

Zhang Lanqing said, “What!” Afterwards, he sensed a powerful aura from the cave and a sharp killing intent, which made his heart jump. He Yishi and the two brothers could feel the determination behind the killing intent, so their faces changed. They could not help but look at Li Qingshan.

They spent most of their time learning how to build things in the Academy of the Hundred Schools, but they were not naive. They understood what collateral damage was. If the Black Hawk commander was truly determined to kill Li Qingshan, he probably would not care about them. He would try to silence them with death instead.

Hao Pingyang said immediately, “We’ll set off right now! Lanqing, steer the boat!”

Li Qingshan shook his head. “No, the boat is not fast enough to shake them off. This has nothing to do with you in the first place, so you should go first. I’ll catch up and regroup very soon once I shake them off.”

“Qingshan is right. It’ll be more difficult for them to find him if he’s alone. The cave is as complicated as a maze, so they might not necessarily be able to find him. If we flee together, we’ll be caught in a pincer attack from in front and behind. Senior brother, you should make up your mind!” He Yishi could not help but say. He did not want to fall out with a Black Hawk commander over a single kid he had met recently. There was no benefit at all, and it would bring him life-threatening danger instead.

The Zombie Daoist had lost his Submerged Shadow sword, and his traps were destroyed as well. He was as weak as he could get. Even without Li Qingshan, they were confident that they could take him down. His thoughts even became darker. He even began to think about how there was no need to give up that thirty percent share if Li Qingshan was no longer with them.

Hao Pingyang said, “Let’s fight them!” However, aside from Zhang Lanqing, who stood up nervously, no one else said anything more.

The aura drew closer and closer. Jin Bao said, "Qingshan, you can leave Xiao An with us. We'll take good care of her." Xiao An possessed two Thousand Mechanism crossbows, so she was extremely powerful, and she would not be receiving a share. Of course, they would never admit that was what they were thinking.

"How can you do that? Didn't we say that we're all in the same boat? If it weren't for Qingshan, we would've all died in the morgue already," Zhang Lanqing could not help but say. Li Qingshan was his saviour. How could he turn his back on his saviour?

He Yishi grumbled, "He did not save my life previously." He was a noble disciple of mohism. A great future awaited him, so why would he risk his life over something like this?

"You!" Zhang Lanqing was left speechless as he pointed at He Yishi. No matter how he looked at it, He Yishi and the others would all be dead once those Hawkwolf guards killed Li Qingshan.

Jin Yuan lowered his head and grumbled slightly, "Senior brother Zhang, you're a fifth layer Qi Practitioner! We're not as powerful as you, so if we stay behind, we'll just make things more troublesome instead." You're strong, so of course you're confident. We're weak, so we'll be killed very easily.

"You three idiots!" Hao Pingyang was extremely disappointed in his three junior brothers. Not only was this traitorous behaviour, it was foolish as well. Once the Hawkwolf guards killed Li Qingshan, wouldn't they come to silence them as well? They were as foolish as they could get for not trying to pool their strength together, instead seeking temporary safety.

He raised his hand up high. This was no longer messing around with his junior brothers, but a heavy hand bearing his exasperation and disappointment in them. He wanted to smack them to their senses, but the hand was caught by Li Qingshan.

The hearts of people were not exactly dark, but they were not exactly bright either. A calculating aspect of personal interests would always exist in the mind of every single person, but everyone's choices would be different. In the face of true, life-threatening danger, just who could stick it out with you?

Li Qingshan wanted to scorn them with laughter, but he continued to smile. "They're right. You won't be able to help me much. You've witnessed my abilities as a Body Practitioner as well. It'll be easier if I flee by myself. However, Xiao An will be staying with me."

With that, Li Qingshan leapt off from the back of the boat with Xiao An gently before Hao Pingyang could try to persuade him any further. He said, "Take care! I'll see you later!" With that, he vanished into the dark cavern.

Zhang Lanqing was still stunned. He Yishi rushed over and took over control of the boat, steering it towards another cave that led to the Zombie Daoist's den. They parted there.

Actually, Li Qingshan did not have particularly high hopes for them. Although he had never seen the Zombie Daoist, he could tell just how cautious and crafty their opponent would be from the two times they had clashed. If the Zombie Daoist was not completely confident in achieving victory, he would definitely vanish into the caves that were as complicated as a spider's nest. If he chose to remain, that would be rather terrifying.

Only people who hid their strength like Li Qingshan could ignore this danger. However, the disciples of mohism had already demonstrated how strong they were on the way here.

Of course, he would not take pleasure in their misfortune, hoping that they would all die. He was not so narrow-minded. Moreover, Hao Pingyang and Zhang Lanqing had shown him plenty of gratitude and loyalty. He truly hoped they would be safe.

However, he was neither a babysitter, nor was he a saint. As long as he maintained a clear conscience and did whatever he could, he would leave the rest to fate. He would leave it up for them to choose!

Zhuo Zhibo sensed the two auras in the two caves as he arrived with his Black Wolf guards. Li Qingshan was not trying to hide himself.

Ge Jian asked, "Commander, which path do we take first?"

Zhuo Zhibo said, "Let's kill Li Qingshan first. We can deal with the disciples of mohism slowly." This was his main objective in the first place.

As the aura drew closer, Li Qingshan smiled. He used the ability to control water from the spirit turtle's daemon core to walk on the surface of the water, charging forwards. The walls around him rapidly receded, sometimes sinking and sometimes turning, like it went on forever. He constantly encountered new forks and chose between them without any hesitation at all.

Suddenly, the gurgling of water rang out from ahead. Li Qingshan felt like he had returned to the days he spent cultivating under the waterfall in the mountains, listening to this sound every day. The sound grew louder and louder until it became deafening. The area in front of him opened up as the rushing, underground water suddenly plummeted, forming an underground waterfall.

Li Qingshan leapt several dozen meters into the air and landed on an island in the water. He looked at his surroundings and the entire area was empty. It was a huge cavern, around half the size of a soccer pitch. It was enough for him to daemonify and move about freely.

This was not a coincidence. Instead, it was the battlefield he had chosen when the mechanical bugs had searched through the cave. Perhaps, it would be more apt for him to call this place the burial ground for these Hawkwolf guards. Looking at it in person, it seemed even more perfect than how it seemed on the map from the mechanical bugs. He breathed in deeply and shot a glance at Xiao An. Xiao An immediately submerged herself in the water.

Without waiting for too long, killing intent rushed into the cavern. Li Qingshan raised his head and saw Zhuo Zhibo and his Black Wolf guards fly down from the waterfall, landing in front of him. They scattered quickly and surrounded him.

Zhuo Zhibo said coldly, "I've finally caught you!"

Li Qingshan smiled, "No, I've caught you!"

### **Chapter 176 - Killing Zhuo Zhibo (One)**

The waterfall gurgled endlessly in the gloomy depths. The underground river plunged off the edge, falling into an underground lake in the large cavern. A tiny island protruded from the lake.

Zhuo Zhibo and the seven Black Wolf guards surrounded Li Qingshan. Every single one of them sneered. Ge Jian said, "Kid, don't tell me you've lost your mind from fear!"

"Don't waste any words on him. Just kill him!" said a Black Wolf guard impatiently.

Xie Nande added, "Yeah, commander. We still need to chase down those disciples of mohism."

"I have my plans!"

Zhuo Zhibo seemed to enjoy the current feeling very much. He raised his hand to silence the Black Wolf guards and said to Li Qingshan, "Do you regret becoming enemies with me now? If you knew how to conduct yourself and showed a little respect when you first arrived in Jiaping, I wouldn't have wanted to kill you so much. If you kneel and beg me right now, I might spare you." The feeling of absolute power over the weak would always bring him great pleasure.

Li Qingshan lowered his head to look at the embroidery on his Black Wolf uniform. "The uniform depicts a wolf, not a dog!" Seeing how he pissed off the seven Black Wolf guards, he raised his head. "Don't get mad. There's nothing wrong with being the powerful's dog, but I just happen to dislike that."

Cold light flashed through Zhuo Zhibo's eyes. With a wave of his hand, a small, shining blade appeared in his grasps. "Before I kill you, there are some things I want to ask you about. If you answer them honestly, I'll give you a quicker death..."

"Don't worry. No matter what you say, I'll give you all a quick death." Li Qingshan interrupted him with a sneer as the canines in his mouth seemed longer than usual.

Suddenly, Zhuo Zhibo felt a terrifyingly powerful daemon qi erupt from Li Qingshan's body, kicking up a violent gust of wind in the cavern. The Black Wolf guards all raised their hands in fright as they stared at Li Qingshan in disbelief.

Li Qingshan pulled off the Black Wolf uniform on him, revealing his sturdy chest. His bronze skin gradually darkened, gaining the lustre of steel. Two specks of light lit up in his eyes as his black hair turned scarlet, draping down. He rapidly grew taller—three feet, five feet, seven feet... However, he was unable to reach the ceiling. His aura rapidly rose as well, until it reached the very peak.

Li Qingshan looked down and muttered to himself, "I seem to have grown taller again!" The pills he had eaten in the past few days had not gone to waste. He was around twenty-seven feet now, close to thirty feet. Just by standing there, he was taller than a double-storeyed building. His body that seemed to be forged from black iron seemed immovable like a mountain.

Zhuo Zhibo's eyes widened as he said in disbelief, "You're a daemon! That's impossible!" Li Qingshan had met Wang Pushi and Gu Yanying before, which was why he had joined the Hawkwolf Guard in the first place. With their cultivation, it was impossible for them to have failed to notice Li Qingshan's true form.

Suddenly, he recalled that the major pillar of the Ruyi commandery possessed the bloodline of daemons as well. However, as her bloodline was just too sacred within Great Xia, even more noble than many members of royalty, many people would often forget about that. Was this a scheme of hers?

From a certain perspective, he was not wrong. However, this was not a scheme. It was just a misunderstanding. All of this resulted from a moment of interest and a sigh from her. If Gu Yanying was truly trying to set up some kind of scheme, even the current Li Qingshan would have no right to partake in it.

“Commander, what do we do!?” Ge Jian cried out frantically. He could clearly feel that Li Qingshan only needed to reach over, and he would be crushed. When he realised he had been constantly provoking such a terrifying thing in the past, he became shaken up.

“I understand now. You killed Zhao Liangqing and Qian Yannian like this,” said Zhuo Zhibo. He had already calmed himself down. Li Qingshan was not the Daemon General that he originally believed him to be. Although he could assume a human form, he only possessed the strength of the sixth or seventh layer. He was not undefeatable.

At this moment, Li Qingshan suddenly understood why those villains in those stories would always ramble a little, like Zhuo Zhibo had done earlier. This was because the feeling of being in complete control was delightful. He could understand it now.

However, with all the examples he had seen in the past, he had to hold back his emotions. He said with his deep, metallic voice, “You’re right...” He seemed to lift his left foot carelessly, or should you say his left hoof, before stamping down violently.

Innate ability, the Ox Demon Tramples!

“Jump!” Zhuo Zhibo noticed that something was off first and leapt into the air. Most of the other Black Wolf guards had been experienced members of the jianghu as well in the past, so their reactions were not slow either. With a spurt of true qi from the balls of their feet, they rushed into the air like rockets.

Only a third layer Qi Practitioner reacted a little slow. Just when he wanted to jump, the shockwave reached his foot and spread through his body. All of his bones shattered in a single instant, and even his skin cracked open. He exploded with a bang.

Zhuo Zhibo and the Black Wolf guards with him gazed down in fright. They did not look at the dead Black Wolf guard, but at the entire island. With a rumble, the tiny island shattered, becoming riddled with cracks and reduced to pieces. At the centre of it all was Li Qingshan’s left foot.

The lake water churned violently, swallowing the pieces of rock and soil. The island in the centre of the land had shattered and sunk from Li Qingshan’s stomp, forming several hundred vortices of various sizes. Li Qingshan stood above the shockwave, standing among the whirlpools as he gazed up with his fiery eyes.

Zhuo Zhibo tightened his grasp around his tiny blade. What terrifying power was that? That was not something a regular daemon possessed!

If Li Qingshan were no different from a regular daemon, what would be the point of practising the Ox Demon’s Fist of Great Strength? With his recent cultivation, he was close to breaking through to the second layer of the Ox Demon’s Fist of Great Strength. He felt that his strength had grown significantly once again. Although it would become more difficult with progress, requiring even more resources than before, the power it would bring would be even greater as well.

Xiao An hid within the water as her lips curled into a smile. She was in no hurry to interfere, as she could feel that Li Qingshan was in high spirits. He wanted to vent.

Li Qingshan said with some pity, "This move seems rather difficult to use, so let's try this instead!" He took in a deep breath and roared at the ceiling.

The Tiger Demon's Killing Roar!

The sound wave shook the surroundings as the wind swept out like blades and swords. It was countless times more powerful than the wind blades from the Wind-entwining blade.

Zhuo Zhibo's expression changed. "Oh no!"

The sound wave arrived before the gust of wind. The two Black Wolf guards who were struck first clutched their heads in pain as their true qi had basically been scattered away completely. Just when they were about to fall from the air, the following gust of wind reduced them to a bloody powder, blowing it everywhere.

The roar resounded through the cavern, echoing about for quite a while. The other Black Wolf guards barely managed to recover from the tremor of the sound wave. Their hearts completely sank with this sight.

The enemy before them could not be compared to anyone they had ever fought before. If just a single strike landed, even if it were a careless one, they would be crushed to pieces. They would be dead. Fleeing after they were injured was no longer possible.

Li Qingshan said, "That's not a bad move!" He should have said that it was not a bad following move. Having been forced into the air by the Ox Demon Tramples, even Qi Practitioners would struggle to maneuver themselves. They could not avoid the Tiger Demon's Killing Roar.

Li Qingshan basically massacred Zhuo Zhibo's subordinates like he was experimenting with them right in front of the latter, which both startled and angered Zhuo Zhibo. He even developed a sliver of fear. He had never thought that the prey that would definitely fall to him this time would actually manage to reverse their identities, turning himself into the predator instead. It descended into a one-sided slaughter for Li Qingshan.

This kid is even more dangerous than the Zombie Daoist. If I don't find a way to turn the situation around, even I will be in danger today.

Zhuo Zhibo chanted rapidly and parted his hands, producing a ball of fire. The fire surged into a scorching fire dragon, illuminating the entire cavern. It let out a great roar before charging towards Li Qingshan, swinging its claws and baring its fangs. He had channelled his full strength into this attack. It was no longer the same as the time at the Hawkwolf Guard. Even if he could not heavily injure Li Qingshan, he wanted to turn the situation around and gain the upper hand.

Li Qingshan completely ignored the incoming, scorching flames. He extended his sharp claws and grabbed the dragon by its neck.

The dragon's roar halted!

However, Zhuo Zhibo was delighted. He practised the Bing Fire Method of Burning Qi out of the methods of the five elements. He could ignite his true qi, turning it into scorching flames and amplifying all techniques that involved fire. It was a form of true qi that was extremely suited for battle, only paling in comparison to the Geng Metal Method of Sharpening Qi in terms of killing power. It even surpassed it in terms of large scale destruction.

The heat from the flames were even enough to melt steel in a single instant. Since he was bold enough to use his bare hands against it, he better leave a hand behind then! However, his smile immediately stiffened.

Under Zhuo Zhibo's control, the fire dragon struggled desperately in Li Qingshan's hand. Its flames burned more and more violently, almost to a point where they were golden. However, it remained firmly trapped in Li Qingshan's hand.

There was a flash of red light through Li Qingshan's eyes. He crushed down with his great strength; the fire dragon shattered into countless sparks, drifting through the air. "The same move is useless against me." There were not even signs of charring on his hand.

The five elements reinforced and neutralised one another. His daemon qi had always been of the water element, so it was perfect for neutralising fire. The daemon qi on daemons completely surpassed the true qi on humans of the same level, so extinguishing Zhuo Zhibo's flames posed no difficulty at all.

The four remaining Black Wolf guards used this opportunity to launch their strongest attacks. They knew that this was a matter of life or death, so they used everything that they had. Low grade or even mid grade talismans turned into fire, wind blades, and lightning as they darted towards Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan said, "The Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell!" A faint, blue screen of light encapsulated him. Not a single attack could pass through the shield and reach him.

The Black Wolf guards all sank into despair. How were they supposed to defeat an opponent they could not even touch?

Zhuo Zhibo was filled with regret. It was not like the grievances between him and Li Qingshan had reached the point of no return. If he had known earlier, he would have never antagonised this fellow over the slightest prejudice.

Ge Jian called out, "Let's retreat, commander!"

"This turtle shell is pretty good. I just wonder if it can block the attacks of mid grade spiritual artifacts," Li Qingshan mumbled to himself. He raised his head and looked at Zhuo Zhibo, waiting for him to continue. However, Zhuo Zhibo gave a decisive order, "Retreat!"

As if they had been spared, the remaining Black Wolf guards used everything that they had, sticking several acceleration talismans on themselves and fleeing in all directions.

### **Chapter 177 - Killing Zhuo Zhibo (Two)**

Zhuo Zhibo did not even try to use his flying blade. The range of his artifact was thirty steps. This was quite a distance to regular people, but with Li Qingshan's terrifying physique, he only needed to take a step and extend his hand. With just that, he would be able to reach Zhuo Zhibo easily.

Zhuo Zhibo was not crazy enough to engage in close combat against such an opponent. He would probably die in Li Qingshan's hands before his flying blade had even managed to pierce Li Qingshan's barrier. He could not afford to die here. As long as he could return and expose Li Qingshan's true form, powerful masters of the Hawkwolf Guard would come to deal with him themselves. How could the Hawkwolf Guard accept daemons into their ranks?!

Ge Jian looked back as he fled for his life. He discovered in fright that Li Qingshan had vanished from his previous location. His colossal body moved with unbelievable speed, appearing in front of him in a single moment. Before he could even react, all he felt was his body tighten and ache; then he lost all consciousness.

Li Qingshan grabbed Ge Jian and casually tossed him towards another Black Wolf guard.

The Black Wolf guard heard the whistling wind from the projectile. When he turned back to look, all he saw was Ge Jian bleeding from all of his orifices, only inches away.

With a bang, the two of them collided against a wall and were reduced to a pile of flesh of blood. They slid down from the wall slowly, stuck together forever.

Li Qingshan opened his mouth, and the spirit turtle's daemon core shot out, piercing the other fourth layer Qi Practitioner and reducing him to a corpse.

In the blink of an eye, only Zhuo Zhibo and Xie Nande remained. The unstoppable group of Hawkwolf guards had basically been annihilated. All of this took quite some time to explain, but there actually was not the slightest pause as the massacre unfolded.

Zhuo Zhibo fled the fastest. He had already arrived at the cave above the waterfall. Xie Nande also strode over the water and reached halfway up the waterfall, but he suddenly saw the daemon core turn around in the air and fly towards him. He cried out, "Save me, commander!"

Zhuo Zhibo would have never stopped for him. Xie Nande let out a crazy howl and used everything that he had. The true qi he had cultivated over all these years surged out like the tide, swinging towards the incoming daemon core.

However, any form of resistance was pointless before absolute strength. The daemon core only paused slightly before suddenly speeding up and piercing Xie Nande's head, leaving behind a tiny hole.

Whether they were at the fifth layer or the fourth layer, they seemed just as easy to kill as ordinary people to Li Qingshan now.

Zhuo Zhibo completely ignored what was going on behind him, rushing straight for the cave. The cave was quite spacious, but Li Qingshan was simply too large for it. As long as he could make it in there, he would be able to escape.

Suddenly, he felt great danger. He forcefully twisted his body in the air, and a white prayer bead emerged from the waterfall and brushed past him. It scraped his chest with lightning speed, taking away a chunk of him.



“It’s you!” Zhuo Zhibo saw the child who often followed Li Qingshan around blocking the entrance to the cave. She had no expression as she stood among the silent flames. Although she did not give off any aura, the sense of danger she emitted was no less than Li Qingshan’s.

And, she could control artifacts. This child was actually at the sixth layer or even higher than that, but how could she be so young? Zhuo Zhibo was unable to understand it.

Li Qingshan recalled his daemon core and saw how he was beginning to fall. With a thought, he used his daemon qi, and a pillar of water rose up from the centre of the lake, lifting him up towards Zhuo Zhibo.

There was a vicious beast in front and behind him, and they were each more terrifying than the next.

The suffocating killing intent basically made Zhuo Zhibo’s heart stop. At that moment, he was filled with regret. He never had any irreconcilable disagreements with Li Qingshan. If he had just ignored Li Qingshan from the beginning, he would still be the authoritative Black Hawk commander of Jiaping city. He would have both women and power. He never would have been reduced to such a state.

However, it was already too late for regret. In the face of life-threatening danger, Zhuo Zhibo no longer cared. He launched his flying blade at Xiao An. If she moved out of the way to dodge, then all would be well. If she did not, then he would drag her down with him even if it would cost him his life.

As expected, Xiao An remained exactly where she was. She formed a seal with her hands, and the Skull Prayer Bead flew towards Zhuo Zhibo as well.

Li Qingshan called out, “Xiao An!” He was helpless as he watched the flying blade pierce Xiao An’s chest.

At the same time, the Skull Prayer Bead landed on Zhuo Zhibo, but it was blocked by his protective true qi, so it failed to penetrate him. However, it managed to send him flying, falling down from the waterfall.

Li Qingshan extended his huge tiger claws towards Zhuo Zhibo with a gust of wind. Zhuo Zhibo had lost his balance, and his true qi was shaken up, so it was impossible for him to dodge. Li Qingshan immediately used his full power, his unstoppable physical strength and his tremendous daemon qi, to shatter the true qi around Zhuo Zhibo, before crushing down. There was the cracking of shattered bones and blood sprayed from Zhuo Zhibo’s mouth violently. Most of his body had been squashed. He could no longer employ any more tricks.

Li Qingshan rushed over to Xiao An’s side. “Are you alright?”

Zhuo Zhibo knew that the only thing awaiting him was death now that he had fallen into Li Qingshan’s hands. He laughed crazily as he spurted with blood. “She has been struck by my Spiritual Flame blade. She’s dead.”

Xiao An shook her head to express that she was fine.

Li Qingshan was still worried about her, so he picked her up like a doll, cradling her in his hand. He saw that her beautiful skin was completely fine. There was just a small hole in her clothes.

“H- how’s that possible!?” Zhuo Zhibo widened his eyes, refusing to accept this. Even Qi Practitioners would be dead for sure if vital points like their heads or hearts were pierced.

Xiao An's flesh and blood, including her vital points and her heart, had all been refined by herself. It was only a representation of a body. Her true form was just a skeleton. Even if her body, her flesh, was destroyed, she would still be alive and kicking.

Something like a heart could be repaired if it were pierced. It would not take her much effort at all. That was why Xiao An had not dodged, 'throwing her life away' in the clash against Zhuo Zhibo.

Zhuo Zhibo suffered from his lack of information. If he had not been so determined, he might have been able to maneuver himself between Li Qingshan's fingers for a while.

Li Qingshan lifted Zhuo Zhibo before him. "You're much weaker than I imagined you'd be."

Zhuo Zhibo said, "Don't kill me, I can give you a lot of benefits..." At the same time, he concentrated on the Spiritual Flame blade. He wanted to find an opportunity to deal a fatal strike against Li Qingshan.

"You'd better keep all of that to yourself!" Li Qingshan completely ignored Zhuo Zhibo's nonsense, directly crushing him to death. The best way to resist being tempted by the enemy was obviously to shut them up for good.

The Spiritual Flame blade fell into the water quietly.

Zhuo Zhibo had seen Li Qingshan's true form. Li Qingshan would never allow him to exist for any longer in this world. And, the only benefits he needed right now were pills, large quantities of pills. As long as his cultivation strengthened, there would be plenty of benefits. The Soaring Dragon Elder's sumeru ring was still on his finger. Even all of Zhuo Zhibo's wealth probably would not be worth as much as a single item in there.

Li Qingshan found a hundred treasures pouch within the bloody mess. He signalled. "Xiao An, time to clean up!"

Flames immediately surged over, taking away Zhuo Zhibo's corpse without even leaving behind a single droplet of blood. Afterwards, it scattered and swallowed the corpses of the other Black Wolf guards, turning them all into the purest form of energy.

Whether it be the bones or the flesh and blood of Qi Practitioners, they completely surpassed what ordinary people could provide in terms of quality. It was equivalent to a rare delicacy. The colour of the Skull Prayer Bead became purer once more.

Afterwards, the flames returned with seven hundred treasures pouches and seven low grade spiritual artifacts. Li Qingshan picked up the Spiritual Flame blade that had fallen into the water. This was a true mid grade spiritual artifact. It would definitely be priceless, but before he could even inspect it properly, his heart suddenly skipped a beat. "Someone is coming!"

Xiao An nodded, expressing that she had sensed it too. This person had concealed his aura as much as possible, but slivers of it had still leaked out, unable to fool their senses. The person was actually a sixth layer Qi Practitioner as well.

Li Qingshan said to Xiao An. "Let's hide and see who it is." He began to use the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression. The daemon core returned to his dantian, and he returned to human form, hiding all of his aura. He sank into the depths of the murky lake water with Xiao An.

Before long, a figure arrived at the cave opening, scanning through the cavern silently and secretly. The darkness underground drastically affected his vision, preventing him from seeing what was in the water.

However, Li Qingshan managed to see him clearly. He also wore a black uniform from the Hawkwolf Guard, but his embroidery differed from regular Hawkwolf guards. Li Qingshan immediately understood that he was the Black Wolf commander who had never shown himself before. He wondered why he had come as well.

This person was Lao Xishan. He had come here in pursuit of Zhuo Zhibo, wanting to seek an opportunity to avenge himself. However, as soon as he encountered the first fork, he had almost lost track of Zhuo Zhibo. He had only chosen one of the paths because of the number of people he could sense. He had only just broken through to the sixth layer, so he struggled to control his true qi a little, which was also why Li Qingshan had managed to discover him so easily.

Lao Xishan widened his eyes and inspected the cavern with great caution. The daemon qi he had sensed earlier was no joke. If he really did run into a powerful daemon, it would be extremely dangerous. The auras of the Qi Practitioners had vanished one by one earlier, so they must have been doomed. He was reluctant to follow in their steps.

However, after sensing for quite some time, he failed to discover anything in the end. The daemon qi seemed to have vanished into thin air. The Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression was so effective at hiding auras that even a ninth layer Qi Practitioner like the West Gate Granny failed to discover Li Qingshan, let alone a sixth layer Qi Practitioner who had only broken through recently like him.

Don't tell me that Zhuo Zhibo is dead? That was what Lao Xishan thought. His emotions were very mixed. He felt both joy and pity. He had bided his time and steeled his resolve to become stronger. After all these years, he was about to settle his grievances with his old enemy, but his enemy had died in the hands of some daemon. However, at the end of the day, his feelings were still more on the positive side. He made up his mind to take no risks and returned quietly along his original path.

Li Qingshan and Xiao An emerged from the water and sat down by the water to rest. They wanted to see what they had obtained!

But suddenly, Li Qingshan wondered about how Hao Pingyang and the others were doing. Had they found the dwelling of the Zombie Daoist yet? Hopefully they were fine!

Blood flowed unceasingly from Jin Bao's body. His eyes were wide open with regret while his face was frozen with the fear of death. However, it was unable to stop the arrival of death. Someone had ripped him open viciously from his chest to his abdomen, disemboweling him. It was a horrific death.

This time, Li Qingshan was unable to save him.

## **Chapter 178 - Iron Plate Corpse**

The boat travelled with the flow. For a moment, the boat was quiet. The atmosphere was rather cold.

Hao Pingyang's face was completely sunken as he sat at the very front, gazing at the depths of the cave as splashes of water landed on him. Zhang Lanqing frowned, focusing on steering the boat with his head lowered.

Jin Yuan and Jin Bao both felt rather awkward and ashamed. They said nothing either.

Suddenly, He Yishi said, "How many years have we known each other? We only met Li Qingshan less than a day ago. Are we supposed to drift apart as seniors and juniors over a single outsider now?"

They had all entered the Academy of the Hundred Thousands when they were young, and they had joined in the same year. Although a difference existed between their strengths due to their varying talents and level of work, it had never affected their relationship. Or in other words, Hao Pingyang did not look down on them due to being stronger. Instead, he took care of them.

Jin Yuan said, "Yishi is right. Senior brother Hao, please calm down. Qingshan will be fine. Our priority right now is to work together against the Zombie Daoist so that we can complete the mission our master gave us."

After a moment of silence, Hao Pingyang sighed heavily and nodded slightly. He said, "Prepare yourselves. This time, that kid's not here to take care of you anymore."

Jin Bao said confidently, "Don't worry. We'll definitely do well this time!"

These scenes and images flashed through Jin Yuan's head, but they had already lost their original colour. They were pale white. All that was left was Jin Bao's dead expression.

His tears fell endlessly. He took one last glance at his younger brother. He was afraid to stop, so he continued to run around mindlessly in the pitch-black caves like a headless fly. The heavy, bestial breathing from behind drew closer and closer.

A boulder suddenly appeared before him. The path ahead had ended. Unknowingly, he had actually reached a dead end!

Why would this happen? If he had stayed behind and received the enemies with Li Qingshan, would he have suffered the same fate? Yeah, it must have been different. Even a Black Hawk commander could not be more terrifying than this monster.

Bang!

Jin Yuan abruptly turned around, and he saw a head fly over in the darkness, bouncing a few times on the ground before rolling over to his feet. It was the head of a puppet. He had released it to block the monster, but it had been completely destroyed in a single stroke.

A tall, wide figure walked over from the darkness in front of him. Its shoes seemed to be made out of metal as they scraped against the ground. Its eyes revealed a bloodthirsty light as four, long canines protruded from its lips. It heaved constantly like a starving beast.

"Aaaargh!" Jin Yuan howled as he launched a barrage of Fire Crow arrows with the Thousand Mechanism crossbow in his hands.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

They only produced sparks when they landed on the black figure. The sharp bolts failed to pierce the monster's hide, and the string of explosions failed to harm it at all. Instead, that infuriated it, making it let out a roar.

It was possible to see through the firelight that the monster was adorned in a set of iron plates. It did not wear it like armour. Instead, it was embedded in its body, covering its every inch and muscles. Even half of its face was metal, which made it seem particularly cruel and vicious.

“D- don’t come over! Senior brother, save me!”

The monster lunged at Jin Yuan with lightning speed. A sharp claw stabbed viciously into Jin Yuan’s chest, lifting him up into the air. It bit down on his neck and gulped down the fresh blood.

Jin Yuan struggled for his life, constantly beating the monster’s body, but it was useless. His body gradually weakened, drooping down after twitching a few times. His last thought flashed through his head.

If I didn’t flee, I could have died with senior brother and everyone else at the very least. Senior brothers, I’m sorry!

The frantic sound of a bell suddenly rang out in the depths of the cave. The monster raised its head and let out a furious, reluctant roar while holding Jin Yuan’s corpse. The monster rushed off in the direction of the bell.

The monster arrived in a spacious cavern with the two corpses before leaning on Jin Yuan’s corpse again, sucking blood from his neck.

The stone coffin was now gone from the altar in the cavern, while the thick chains around the coffin now wrapped around Hao Pingyang firmly. Surprisingly, He Yishi and Zhang Lanqing were right beside him. They were tied up as well. They seemed haggard, barely breathing.

The horrific deaths of the siblings left Hao Pingyang utterly devastated. He roared out, “Jin Yuan! Jin Bao!” The chains rattled from his movement; the sight saddened Zhang Lanqing and He Yishi as well.

“Jejeje!” The Zombie Daoist let out a crazy laugh. “Did you really think that a bunch of trash like you could deal with this daoist? Have you finally witnessed how powerful the Iron Plate corpse is?”

He spent all these years hidden underground, studying the art of refining corpses. Useless rotting corpses and zombies were not the only things he refined. Things like that could only be considered as the very basics in the path of refining corpses. They could be used for dealing with the weak, but against stronger Qi Practitioners who were skilled in battle, they were basically useless. Only when he had refined an Iron Plate corpse could he be considered someone who knew how to refine corpses.

The Zombie Daoist said, “Do you know just how much effort I spent refining this Iron Plate corpse?”

Hao Pingyang and the other two cursed aloud.

The Zombie Daoist paid no heed to them and continued, “It took me several years of work. I dug up graves everywhere, and who knows how many people I had killed. I had only managed to find twelve suitable corpses from over a thousand. Afterwards, I forged steel until it was molten and poured it onto these corpses, layer by layer, replacing their flesh and blood. Just this process took me three years and destroyed half of the corpses that I had.”

“Afterwards, I constantly watered them with blood, constantly refining them with my techniques. Only then did the corpses gain some consciousness, turning alive once again. This took another three years. In the end, only a single one succeeded.”

“The owner of this corpse was originally a first-rate master who practised external martial arts. I doused him in molten iron when he was still alive, even using true qi and pills to sustain his life, preventing him from dying so that he could accumulate enough resentment and grievance. Only then did I start refining him, and as expected, only he succeeded. You really can’t afford to show benevolence as a person!”

He Yishi shivered all over. Just how terrifying of a torture was that, being doused by molten iron? What the Zombie Daoist was implying made his heart grow even colder.

The Zombie Daoist laughed crazily, “Although it took a decade of hard work, it was worth it! It was worth it!” The Iron Plate Corpse was invulnerable, and it could move as swiftly as the wind. Its body was as tough as a spiritual artifact. Even sixth layer Qi Practitioners would be forced to avoid it if they encountered one.

When Hao Pingyang and his junior brothers barged into the dwelling, the Zombie Daoist, who had been prepared the entire time, released the Iron Plate Corpse. There was only a single possible outcome after that.

That was equivalent to being encircled by two sixth layer Qi Practitioners, who were further supported by a group of zombies. They became heavily injured very soon. Jin Bao used the opportunity that arose when Hao Pingyang struggled against the Zombie Daoist and when the Iron Plate corpse attacked the others to flee. Jin Yuan immediately followed him, but in the end, they were both caught by the Iron Plate corpse and killed.

The Zombie Daoist had vented all of his repressed feelings from across the years. He calmed down and said sinisterly, “Do you know why I’m telling you all this? That’s because I’ll turn you all into Iron Plate corpses as well! With the experience from last time, it’ll definitely be very easy this time round.” This was the terrifying aspect of refining corpses. If he had enough time, he could create an army alone.

Hao Pingyang continued to curse vigorously, while blood drained from Zhang Lanqing and He Yishi’s faces. If they were going to be refined into Iron Plate corpses, just the process alone would be enough for them to wish that they were dead.

He Yishi’s mind gave way. He sobbed and begged, “Please, don’t kill me! I’ll give you whatever you want! Once I formally become an engineer, I’ll be able to make a lot of spiritual stones! I can’t die here!”

Hao Pingyang said, “Don’t beg him! He won’t spare you. As disciples of Mohism, even if we have to die, we should die like men. Master will avenge us.”

He Yishi said in resentment, “It’s all your fault. If you hadn’t brought us along, none of this would have ever happened! It’s all your fault!”

Hao Pingyang was stunned. He was speechless.

Zhang Lanqing said, “He Yishi, have you lost your mind?”

He Yishi said, "I haven't lost my mind at all. You're the same as him. Just because you're at the fifth and sixth layers, you scold and beat us however you want. All you have is better talent and a higher cultivation, so what's so impressive about that?"

Hao Pingyang's heart turned cold. Despite his higher cultivation, he only took a thirty percent share. If he wanted to, he could have embarked on this mission with much better companions. All he wanted to do was to take care of the juniors he was close with, but he never thought it would all end up like this.

The Zombie Daoist chuckled like he was watching a show.

He Yishi tried to suck up to the Zombie Daoist. "Sir daoist, enlightened master, this one is willing to slave away for you. I'll do anything you want, as long as you spare me."

The Zombie Daoist said, "Alright. If you want to slave away for me, there'll be plenty of opportunities."

After pausing slightly, he said, "That is, once you become a zombie. Compared to living people, zombies are much more reliable. Tsktsk, you probably won't be able to become an Iron Plate corpse with your talent." Then he turned to Hao Pingyang. "You, on the other hand, are pretty good. It's just a pity that the kid called Li Qingshan didn't come with you. Otherwise, I'll have three Iron Plate corpses. No one will be able to oppose me in Jiaping city anymore!"

As soon as He Yishi showed delight, he plunged into despair once again. He was ashen.

Even as a zombie, he was not as great as Hao Pingyang. That only added insult to injury.

There was a gentle sound, and a tiny figure quickly flew over.

"Who's there?" The Zombie Daoist suddenly turned around and gazed into the pitch-black cave. He forced the restless Iron Plate corpse back under control before waving his right hand as he commanded four zombies to leap forth.

He had specially refined these four zombies. They were much more powerful than the zombies in the morgue. Although they were not as powerful as the Iron Plate zombie, they were equivalent to Qi Practitioners of the third or fourth layer. However, after they leapt over, he did not hear anything from them again.

The Zombie Daoist's expression changed. His connection with the zombies was severed at the same time. "Who is it? Get out here!"

"Brother Hao, you really are bad at making friends!" Li Qingshan walked over from the entrance.

Zhang Lanqing said, "Qingshan!"

The Zombie Daoist became overjoyed instead of angry. "It's you!" He studied Li Qingshan. "You really are a piece of great material. If you're refined into an Iron Plate corpse, you might even be more powerful than him."

Hao Pingyang said, "Be careful, that's an Iron Plate corpse!"

"Too late!" Cold light flashed through the Zombie Daoist's eyes. He rang the bronze bell in his hand, and the Iron Plate corpse lunged towards Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan retreated rapidly as he drew his Wind-entwining blade. He launched it as hard as he could, past the Zombie Daoist and directly towards the chains around Hao Pingyang's limbs.

### **Chapter 179 - Zombies Know Martial Arts**

"Don't even think about it!" The Zombie Daoist extended his hand and easily grabbed the Wind-entwining blade that had flown past him. He swung it heavily against the stone altar, and the ruined blade immediately shattered.

With a swish, the Iron Plate corpse swiped at him with its claws and left behind three gashes on the Black Wolf uniform that could even block crossbow bolts.

Li Qingshan was forced out of the dwelling in horrible shape. He called out, "Xiao An!"

Twang! A crossbow bolt pierced through the air with a shrill whistle.

The Zombie Daoist suddenly looked around. All he found was the same child who sat on the roof of the morgue under the moonlight standing there silently, holding a Thousand Mechanism crossbow in each hand.

She launched sixty Fire Crow bolts, which turned into sixty specks of light. From above, below, left, and right, they sealed off all the places where the Zombie Daoist could dodge.

"Trying to lure the Iron Plate corpse away?" The Zombie Daoist sneered. Since he could not dodge, he would not dodge. He was a sixth layer Qi Practitioner after all. Aside from being able to refine corpses, he possessed powerful true qi as well, so how could he be killed so easily?

True qi surged out from his sea of qi in his dantian, coating his body. The low grade spiritual artifact robes swept before him, and with the input of true qi, they turned into a steel screen.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! The Fire Crow bolts landed on the robes and were immediately set off, exploding loudly.

Although the robes had been reduced to dust, the Zombie Daoist was completely unscathed. He pulled out the same Thousand Mechanism crossbow. "Let me try now!" He had just taken this from Zhang Lanqing. He planned on returning the favour.

Zhang Lanqing had never thought that a weapon he had created would instead become a tool for the enemy.

Xiao An did not try to take it on forcefully. She retreated behind a stone pillar. There were a few clinks, and a few Fire Crow arrows landed on the rock before exploding loudly. They blew apart the stone pillar, but Xiao An had vanished behind it.

The Zombie Daoist frowned. Suddenly, he turned the Thousand Mechanism crossbow towards Hao Pingyang. "What are you trying to do?" The Zombie Daoist fired away.

Hao Pingyang just happened to be lunging over with his broken chains in an attempt to launch a sneak attack.



Xiao An had not been trying to defeat the Zombie Daoist using the crossbows. Instead, she had saved Hao Pingyang, aiming a few Fire Crow bolts accurately at the chains. The Zombie Daoist was extremely alert, so he obviously noticed it.

Hao Pingyang did not try to dodge at all. He swung the chains heavily and blew up the crossbow bolts in the air. He roared out as he charged at the Zombie Daoist like he wanted to take him down with him. He wanted to unleash all the rage within his heart.

The Zombie Daoist stood exactly where he was as he faced the enraged Hao Pingyang. He constantly fired away with the Thousand Mechanism crossbow in an extremely controlled manner, pausing slightly after two or three bolts each time. He was not like Jin Bao and Jin Yuan, who fired all the bolts mindlessly.

The light from the explosions constantly illuminated his face, lighting up his sneer. How was it possible for him to be defeated by an enemy he had just caught?

Just when Hao Pingyang reached five steps away from the Zombie Daoist, the exploding crossbow bolts blew away the metal chains, creating an opening. In the end, a single crossbow bolt managed to cross through this opening, landing directly on his chest.

Hao Pingyang used his true qi desperately to block it, but he was still blown away. He slammed against the stone wall several meters away heavily, making all of his efforts go to waste. A Qi Practitioner without spiritual artifacts was like a tiger that had lost its fangs and claws. Moreover, he was a frail tiger right now.

The Zombie Daoist placed down the Thousand Mechanism crossbow as he looked down on him. Suddenly, his heart skipped a beat, and he shielded his waist in a hurry, but it was already too late. A tiny figure rushed past him with unbelievable speed, stealing the bell from his waist.

The Zombie Daoist was startled, but he was not shaken up. He said coldly, "Do you really think you can control the Iron Plate corpse now that you have the bell?" The bell was only a tool for summoning and keeping the Iron Plate corpse under control. What actually controlled the corpse was his own will. Moreover, the bell was only useful if it were used by the master of the corpses.

Xiao An turned around and rushed out of the cave. All she saw was the Iron Plate corpse rushing about in pursuit of Li Qingshan. Although his speed had been amplified by the Swift Breeze talisman, his Black Wolf uniform was still in tatters. However, his wounds were not severe thanks to the Ox Demon Forges its Hide.

If it were not for the fact that there was no reasonable way to explain it, he would have transformed and killed the Iron Plate corpse a long time ago. The Iron Plate corpse was fast and strong, but it was dumb. It did not know any moves. It was not his opponent.

Xiao An jingled the bell, but the Iron Plate corpse continued to pursue Li Qingshan like it had not heard it at all. Just as the Zombie Daoist had said, the Iron Plate corpse could only be controlled by him.

Xiao An placed down the bell and raised her small hands.

Li Qingshan dodged a swipe from the Iron Plate corpse by a hair's breadth. The Iron Plate corpse seemed to hear something, suddenly looking back. All it saw was pale, red flames filling the entire cavern, surging over.

Its heart that was filled with resentment and bloodthirstiness suddenly developed a familiar sensation of fear.

The Iron Plate corpse did not have true qi or daemon qi. It relied on its iron plates to block all attacks from techniques or spiritual artifacts. However, it struggled to stop the invasion of fire now. The pale, red flames swallowed the Iron Plate corpse and coiled around it like a snake. All of it surged into its mouth until not a single flicker was left.

The Iron Plate corpse's movements suddenly halted. Pale, red flames seemed to appear in the depths of its eyes. The shriveled brain within its skull was burnt to a crisp, transformed into a furnace that began to control the Iron Plate corpse's body.

Xiao An waved the bell, and the Iron Plate corpse immediately arrived before her. Of course, what controlled it was not the bell, but Xiao An's fire. Her fire could control the dead upon embedding itself in their bones.

The bodies of ordinary people and even Qi Practitioners were not worth controlling, as their flesh and blood would naturally decay. Moreover, unrefined skeletons were limited in strength. It would not be worth her effort.

However, the Iron Plate corpse was different. After being refined, it would never decay, and its physical might was tremendous, basically seeming like the Iron Plate corpse was prepared for her. This was the absolute power that higher abilities had over lower techniques. Their cultivation was clearly similar, but it could not even threaten her.

Li Qingshan smiled. "Nicely done!" With that, he had gained a powerful lackey, drastically strengthening him. Moreover, everything would become more convenient, including killing the Zombie Daoist in a perfectly justifiable fashion.

Xiao An copied Li Qingshan and shrugged as she smiled slightly.

Back in the dwelling, Zhang Lanqing and He Yishi, who had just seen a glimmer of hope, plunged into despair once again. They believed that before long, the Iron Plate corpse would return with Li Qingshan and Xiao An's dead bodies, just like what had happened to Jin Yuan and Jin Bao.

Hao Pingyang stood up with difficulty as he supported himself against the wall. He glared daggers at the Zombie Daoist, but he was riddled with injuries now. Moreover, most of his true qi had been consumed. He no longer had any spiritual stones to replenish it either, so he posed no threat to the Zombie Daoist at all.

The Zombie Daoist was teeming with confidence, but whenever he thought of Xiao An, he would always feel rather uneasy. Suddenly, his eyes widened. His connection with the Iron Plate corpse had actually been severed.

He immediately lost all his composure, rushing out of the cavern without caring at all. This was the fruits of several years of labour. He had placed so much effort into it, so he could not afford to lose it. He had to regain control over the Iron Plate corpse no matter what the price was.

Before he could even exit the cavern, a tall figure blocked the entrance. It was the Iron Plate corpse.

The Zombie Daoist used his chants and techniques in a hurry, but all of his commands were like stones cast into the sea. He did not receive any replies at all.

Xiao An waved the bell, and the Iron Plate corpse lifted its claw and reached towards the Zombie Daoist.

The Zombie Daoist was filled with disbelief. How was it possible for his control over the Iron Plate corpse he had spent so many years refining to be taken away so easily? If this really were possible, there was no point for any corpse refiners to exist at all.

However, the cruel reality was presented right before him, regardless of whether he believed it or not. Ten years of hard work had been taken away from him after just a while of satisfaction. This felt like raising a child after so much difficulty, only for them to call someone else father. It was enough for him to cough up blood.

“Nice!” Hao Pingyang called out. Zhang Lanqing and He Yishi were delighted as well. They did not know the art of refining corpses, so they had no idea how strange this all was. They only felt that Li Qingshan was extremely lucky, actually managing to turn the tables in such an unbelievable fashion.

With his mind perturbed, his actions descended into a mess as well. There was a bloody flash, and four vicious wounds appeared on the Zombie Daoist’s chest. The pain, however, jerked him back to reality. He turned around and fled. As long as he was still alive, all was still possible. He already possessed the experience of refining corpses, so there would always be an opportunity for him to make a return if he escaped.

The Iron Plate corpse blocked the Zombie Daoist’s path, raising a hand and launching a punch. It crushed the air, causing it to whistle.

The Zombie Daoist layered his true qi in front of him instinctively to block, but the Iron Plate corpse forcefully blew it apart with its terrifying strength, sending him flying.

The Zombie Daoist’s eyes widened as he looked at the Iron Plate corpse. It’s impossible for my Iron Plate corpse to be so powerful!

He understood the strength of what he refined the best. The current Iron Plate corpse was far more powerful than when he controlled it.

This was obviously due to Xiao An’s pale, red flames. Her flames could turn ordinary skeletons into powerful warriors, so it obviously offered quite a boost to the Iron Plate corpse as well.

And, when the Zombie Daoist controlled the Iron Plate corpse, he could only give it orders, which the Iron Plate corpse would then complete out of its desire for blood. It would only attack instinctively, paying no attention to its moves or how it used its strength.

However, under the control of Xiao An’s flames, the Iron Plate corpse was basically like her clone. She could control its movements down to the finest detail.

This was like an ordinary person who had suddenly developed internal martial arts and learned the moves. They would obviously become much stronger.

Before the Zombie Daoist could even return to his senses, the Iron Plate corpse had strode over in pursuit. Its steps seemed to follow some kind of pace, making it impossible to read the direction of its attacks. It differed drastically from its straightforward method of attack from before.

The Zombie Daoist took a great step backwards and avoided the range of the Zombie Daoist's claws. Afterwards, he watched on in disbelief as the Iron Plate corpse jumped up and launched a roundhouse kick across his face viciously.

The tremor from the attack made the Zombie Daoist's face ripple and twist. He spat out a few teeth. Why did the Iron Plate corpse know roundhouse kicks!? He had never heard of any Iron Plate corpses using roundhouse kicks against its opponents. They all used their claws and teeth.

Before the Zombie Daoist had been dropped to the ground, the Iron Plate corpse rushed up and grabbed him by his calf. With a shoulder slam, it knocked him into the ground before picking him up and throwing him against a stone pillar to the side.

The Iron Plate corpse's movements made it seem like a master of martial arts. It demonstrated true skill, conquering power with technique and focusing all on speed.

Li Qingshan even saw many moves that copied his Ox Demon's Fist of Great Strength and Tiger Demon's Fist of Bone Forging. Who knows how many times Xiao An had seen Li Qingshan practise these two fist styles. She unleashed all of it through the Iron Plate corpse now. As a result, the Zombie Daoist could not even put up any resistance.

Li Qingshan sighed. It was true. If zombies knew martial arts, they were unstoppable.

### **Chapter 180 - The Zombie Daoist's Death**

Bang! Thump! Bang! Bang!

The mighty sixth layer Qi Practitioner, the Zombie Daoist, seemed like a sandbag. He was thrown around by the Iron Plate corpse as the world spun around him. The only reason why he did not perish immediately was because of his protective true qi. However, he was unable to break free from the Iron Plate corpse's grasp. Even if he remained alive, he would just serve as a toy to Xiao An for a little longer.

At the beginning, Hao Pingyang and the other two still cheered them on, but now, they were completely stunned. A layer of cold sweat covered their backs. As it turned out, the Zombie Daoist had not been using the full power of the Iron Plate corpse. If the Iron Plate corpse had been so vicious right from the beginning, the five of them would not have been its opponent even if they worked together.

Li Qingshan went up to help up Hao Pingyang. He took out a recovery pill and Qi Gathering pill, feeding it to him. "Are you fine, brother Hao?" Then he glanced at Jin Yuan and Jin Bao's corpses. "I've come too late!"

Hao Pingyang thanked him with difficulty. Afterwards, his lips seemed to be glued together. He was unable to say anything more. The threat of death had receded, so pain and exhaustion immediately overwhelmed him. He did not go without fear either.

“Just rest!” Li Qingshan patted his shoulder. He settled down and leaned against the wall, meditating.

Then, Li Qingshan went to free He Yishi and Zhang Lanqing from the rope. Their situation was basically the same as Hao Pingyang. Zhang Lanqing still managed to force out some words of gratitude, while He Yishi was completely stunned. His eyes were wide open as his mouth hung slightly agape. This was something that was originally worth celebrating over, but he was unable to cheer up at all. He just wanted to burrow into a crack in the wall and hide forever.

Li Qingshan said to Xiao An, “Just enough will do!”

The Iron Plate corpse grabbed the Zombie Daoist by the head and smashed him into the ground.

In the beginning, the Zombie Daoist still tried to put up a desperate struggle, letting out some howls and roars, but he did not even have the strength to resist now. Blood oozed from his head. The situation was no longer a battle, but a child’s mean game.

Xiao An lacked Li Qingshan’s abhorrence towards evil. To her, the Zombie Daoist’s life was no different from the life of those red and black ants. Of course, the Zombie Daoist was a little better. He was both fun and tasty.

With a jingle, the Iron Plate corpse stopped. Xiao An looked at Li Qingshan, asking him whether he had anything he wanted to ask.

Li Qingshan drew his finger across his neck. The Zombie Daoist was actually still conscious. He raised his bloody head and looked at Xiao An. “It’s you, it’s you...” Perhaps it was a moment of inspiration right before death, but he was now extremely certain that she was the one who had taken away all the corpses in the pit. She was not an ordinary child, but a monster even more terrifying than the Iron Plate corpse.

His voice came to a halt. The long, metal claw on the Iron Plate corpse’s right index finger swept past the Zombie Daoist’s neck and blood sprayed out. However, the Zombie Daoist was still alive. He stared straight at Xiao An. All these years of practising qi had granted him tremendous vitality.

The Iron Plate corpse bit down on his neck and sucked to its heart’s content, draining his blood dry. The Zombie Daoist’s blood flowed through its body, transforming into new strength, while the Zombie Daoist withered like an empty juice carton.

Hao Pingyang’s eyes widened. He basically struggled to believe that the crafty, powerful Zombie Daoist who had almost taken their lives here would actually meet his end like this. Although they were enemies, he still believed it would be a little more difficult to kill the Zombie Daoist, that he would not just die in such a hilarious fashion.

But in reality, the weak were so worthless in the eyes of the powerful that they were like toys. Before an absolute difference in strength, there might not even be time for blood to warm up. There would only be endless despair, such that even death would come in an almost hilariously easy fashion.

Li Qingshan had experienced this sensation once before, and he had sworn to never experience it a second time. This willpower constantly pushed him forward to becoming stronger.

As Hao Pingyang and the other two meditated and rested, Li Qingshan looked through the Zombie Daoist's dwelling. The dwelling had been roughly chiseled out from the natural cave system, forming several rooms.

The room for the stone coffin was only one of them. There was a bedroom as well, which possessed all the furniture and decoration of a home, not just a stone seat and a stone table. There was even a kitchen that possessed a stove and all the kitchenware as well. As it seemed, even the Zombie Daoist liked to eat cooked food. He sure knew how to live in the gloomy depths of the earth.

The remaining rooms were all for refining corpses. They were filled with corpses that were either waiting to be refined or had been refined to a certain degree. The several hundred corpses were all left to Xiao An, who reduced them to flames. The Pale Flames of Bone Smelting turned the bones into fluid, which returned to her hand and merged with the other bone fluid before being smelted further by the pale flames.

Li Qingshan knew that she was forging a second Skull Prayer Bead. She had benefited quite a lot from this mission as well. Just the number of zombies she had devoured reached into the hundreds, while Zhuo Zhibo and the Black Wolf guards were equivalent to several hundred ordinary people as well. She had refined them all, which benefited her cultivation of the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty tremendously.

With her experience from before and her greater strength, she refined it extremely swiftly this time. In just a single moment, the bone fluid condensed together, forming a round prayer bead. It danced and revolved in the centre of her hand with the other Skull Prayer Bead. She had gained another artifact that she could control and wield.

The agility and might of the Skull Prayer Beads exceeded regular mid grade spiritual artifacts. Regular Qi Practitioners only controlled a single flying sword or blade. If they had anymore than that, they would become distracted, and their power would decrease. As a result, they just focused on a single one instead, unless the spiritual artifact came in a set. However, spiritual artifacts that did come in a set were extremely rare, and they would not necessarily be as agile when used.

Every prayer bead was linked to Xiao An's mind. They were basically her clones, extremely nimble and clever. Only when she assembled the minimum number of prayer beads, fourteen, could she be considered to have forged the Skull Prayer Beads of the lowest tier. However, they would be powerful enough to destroy any and all Qi Practitioners.

With a higher ability from beyond the Nine Heavens like the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty, Xiao An's rate of growth in terms of strength would increase with her cultivation. She could easily crush cultivators of the same level now. Once she reached higher cultivation levels, she would even be able to suppress or kill opponents above her cultivation.

Li Qingshan rubbed Xiao An's hair. "I really can't help but feel proud when I see you."

The Ox Demon's Fist of Great Strength, the Tiger Demon's Fist of Bone Forging, and the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression were all extremely powerful abilities. As Li Qingshan practised them simultaneously, his strength also grew rapidly, but he was still slightly worse compared to the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty.

Xiao An pressed her cheek against the back of his hand to comfort him.

Li Qingshan pinched her smooth, young cheek and smiled. "I need to keep working hard as well. I can't let you exceed me. Let's go!"

With the bountiful spoils this time, his strength would definitely leap forward. He wanted to open the sumeru ring sooner, to see what the black ox had left for him, even though he already had some idea about what it was.

The two of them returned along the same path. Hao Pingyang and the other two had already retrieved their hundred treasures pouch, having recovered using the spiritual stones and pills inside.

Hao Pingyang said, "It's impossible to describe my gratitude with words. In the future, if you ever need me, just let me know, brother. No matter how dangerous or difficult it is, I won't even question it."

Li Qingshan said, "You're too kind, brother Hao. We had all agreed on this in the first place. It's just a pity that I couldn't arrive sooner, or..."

Hao Pingyang became gloomy. He sighed heavily. As the leader of this mission, he felt very ashamed over Jin Yuan and Jin Bao's death. However, if they had not deserted them, they would have lasted until Li Qingshan arrived even if the Zombie Daoist had caught them.

Li Qingshan said, "Please restrain your grief, brother Hao. After all, there's no such thing as being absolutely safe when you come out for missions. You've already done everything that you could."

Hao Pingyang handed a hundred treasures pouch towards Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan said, "This is the Zombie Daoist's hundred treasures pouch!" Ever since he saw what was inside Zhuo Zhibo's hundred treasures pouch, he became extremely eager towards the Zombie Daoist's hundred treasures pouch. He had also been a sixth layer Qi Practitioner for many years, so it must contain quite an impressive sum!

"Please split it, brother Hao!"

Hao Pingyang only took out a few books from the hundred treasures pouch before handing it back to Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan was surprised. "Huh?" Surely the Zombie Daoist was not this poor!

Hao Pingyang explained, "Everything in the hundred treasures pouch should have gone to you, but our mission was to retrieve this method for refining and nurturing corpses so that our masters and senior brothers in the school can study it. That's why I took the books. If you'd like them, I can make a copy for you once we get out. There's still quite a lot of things in there. I haven't looked through it properly." As he said that, he handed the hundred treasures pouch to Li Qingshan again.

Li Qingshan declined and said, "I have no need for these techniques for refining corpses. As for everything else, I'll just take thirty percent like what we agreed on."

Hao Pingyang said, "Don't say anything more. If you don't take it, that means you're looking down on me." Li Qingshan was basically responsible for defeating the Zombie Daoist all by himself, such that he

was fortunate to still have his life intact. He would never be able to bring himself to take a share from Li Qingshan.

Zhang Lanqing chimed in as well, "Qingshan, just accept it. You deserve it all."

He Yishi wanted to say something, but he lowered his head instead. He did not dare to speak. After making such a great fool of himself, he felt utterly embarrassed. Now, Hao Pingyang and Zhang Lanqing basically treated him like he was not there at all. They did not ask for his opinion. He felt both wronged and resentful inside.

Li Qingshan said, "Alright. If that's the case, I'm not going to hold back."

Hao Pingyang eased up slightly. "Let's get out of here!" He stowed the corpses of the Jin brothers into his hundred treasures pouch so that he could take them back and have them buried.

Li Qingshan took the Zombie Daoist's corpse. That was worth several thousand Qi Gathering pills. However, the Iron Plate corpse could not be stored in his hundred treasures pouch, and its appearance was far too horrifying as well. As a result, he found a bamboo hat and a straw cape to cover it up, making it follow behind him.

They boarded the boat, travelling along the same way as they had come here, this time against the flow.

Although it was not as tense and scary as when they first came here, the atmosphere was much heavier. The three of them were all troubled inside. They were in no mood to talk.

Only the flowing water splashed and gurgled constantly in the darkness.

Li Qingshan leaned against the side of the boat and admired the cave, but he struggled to settle down. His bosom warmed up as Xiao An leaned against him quietly.

Li Qingshan smiled towards her, gently caressing her soft, wavy hair and smelling the faint fragrance of sandalwood. His heart gradually calmed down.

At this moment, a ray of light suddenly appeared in the endless darkness.