

## Stranger 331

### Chapter 331: All Cattle Inn

Calm down, Im not done yet. Youngsters these days are so impatient. White Lord explained smilingly, The truth isnt as complicated as you think. The reason we want you to become our master is very simple: we think that youre an interesting guy.

Interesting? Ye Qing frowned.

White Lords smile turned meaningful. One, you, an early-stage Spirit Purifier, managed to snatch us from the hands of Huo Hao, an early-stage Spirit Master. That proves that you have great potential. Two, you carry a lot of secrets, and frankly some parts of you are an enigma even from us. We are fairly certain that youll make for an interesting master.

Something flickered behind Ye Qings eyes, but he didnt say anything.

Aaaaaaand finally, we are just a weak, pitiful Strange Artifact. We are as delicate, frail and helpless as an innocent young girl whom anyone could overwhelm should they so desire. When we fell into Huo Haos hands, we had no choice but to do his bidding. Now, we have to do your bidding.

White Lord said with a pitiful voice, But only if you feed us properly, of course!

Ye Qing was silent for a moment. Then, he broke into a sudden grin and said, In that case, Im pleased to make your acquaintance.

Regardless of whether White Lord was telling him the truth, Nanke undoubtedly represented a golden opportunity. He couldnt think of a real reason to discard it.

Hahaha Lil White at your service, my dear master! White Lord replied in an exaggerated fashion.

We promise you wont be disappointed, Black Lord supported its companion as usual.

Who are you talking to, Joyless? It was at this moment Chu Nianjiu and Lin Yuhuai walked over after hearing an unfamiliar voice. Huh? Whats that?

Ye Qing put away Nanke and said, Its called Nanke, a rather unique Strange Artifact. Let us walk as we speak.

On the road, Chu Nianjiu took a sip from his wine gourd to calm himself a little. Holy shit! Ive never heard of such a Strange Artifact! Its practically as good as the Martial Tower!

Thats what they said, but I wont know if its true until Ive tested it, Ye Qing replied.

He could have pretended that Nanke was just a mundane object and enjoyed its benefits himself, but one, Chu Nianjiu and Lin Yuhuai were his friends; two, they had both contributed to him obtaining Nanke; and three, Nanke could be shared with others. Hence, he saw no reason not to share it with his friends.

Ive heard of Nanke before, Lin Yuhuai said suddenly. The man had been conspicuously quiet until now.

What do you know, Brother Lin? Ye Qing asked.

Lin Yuhuai thought for a moment. Youve both heard of the Strange Artifact Register, right?

Ye Qing and Chu Nianjiu nodded. The Strange Artifact Register was a ranking list distributed by a sect known as the White Jade Capital, and it recorded some of the most famous Strange Artifacts across the world.

Five towers and twelve cities,

Look up to find the White Jade Capital.

Thanks to the Watcher of Heavens, White Jade Capital was able to create all kinds of ranking lists such as the Heaven, Earth and Human Champions Ranking that listed the best warriors in the entire world, the Natural Creations Ranking that listed the greatest natural creations of the world, the Strange Artifact Register that recorded some of the most famous Strange Artifacts of the world and more.

Lin Yuhuai continued, Assuming my memory isnt playing tricks on me, Ive seen Nanke on the Strange Artifact Register before. Its ranked quite highly among its peers too. Its review regarding the Strange Artifact was: One hundred years, a Nanke dream. All to prepare, a life of conflict.

Er, Im gonna need you to break that down for me, said Ye Qing while scratching his head. He understood the individual parts of the sentence, but he couldnt quite figure out what the whole sentence meant.

Lin Yuhuai answered, One hundred years, a Nanke dream refers to Nankes ability. Its more or less the same as what you told us.

All to prepare, a life of conflict referred to the fact that all owners of Nanke were famous warriors who shook the world during their time such as the Young Marquis Huo Wushang from a hundred years ago, the Sky Climbing Qilin' Xiang Tianling, the 'Absolute Truth' Fang Xing, the Grand Snow Gentleman' Yu Tianxing and so on.

Wait a second. Arent they all warriors who died young because of one reason or another? Chu Nianjiu rubbed his nose.

Lin Yuhuai nodded. Exactly. That is why it says, all to prepare, a life of conflict at the end. Everyone who owned Nanke was an extraordinary warrior, but their life was also full of turmoil. So much turmoil that, as far as we know, none of them had ever died a peaceful death.

Thats why you need to be careful, Joyless. In a sense, Nanke is a cursed object.

Thank you for the warning. I will. Ye Qing smiled. He wasnt too surprised because he had a feeling that this was the case.

Eh, most Strange Artifacts are cursed objects. As long as youre strong enough to ward off the curse, then theres nothing to be afraid of, Chu Nianjiu declared boldly before sipping his wine. By the way, can we use Nanke?

Naturally.

Oh ho! Now were talking! Chu Nianjiu snapped his fingers. Do you want to give it a try tonight?

Sure. Why not? Both men exchanged wide grins with each other.

As long as you know what youre doing. Lin Yuhuai shook his head at the duo.

All Cattle Inn? A gloomy-looking man wearing a tight martial outfit recited the name on the inns roof before speaking to his companions, This is it. The young Taoist should reach this place by nightfall, and barring exceptional circumstances, he should stay the night here. This is our chance to eliminate him.

Okay. What should we do, squad leader? A Dark Guard[1] asked.

The young Taoist is extremely powerful. It would be folly to attack him directly.

The leader of the group thought for a moment before saying, Lets do it this way. Well kill everyone inside the inn and pretend to be the innkeeper, the waiters and more. Well poison the food and drink and kill him once hes weakened.

As you command, Everyone in the squad responded.

Its still early though. Why dont we eat lunch at this inn before we kill them? A Dark Guard suggested.

The man mulled over the suggestion. Sure. I see no reason to make lunch ourselves when we can save ourselves the trouble.

A wise decision, squad leader.

The squad had just entered the inn when a woman walked up to greet them. Are you here to eat or to stay, customers?

The woman was in her thirties,[2] but she was still very beautiful. She also wore a revealing dress that flashed her assets just enough to draw a mans gaze, but not enough that it would be immodest. She was like a beautiful wildflower in these barren, dangerous lands.

For a time, everyone stared at the woman for a good few seconds. Some were even swallowing from how dry their throat was.

Youre going to embarrass me if you keep staring at me like this, customers. The woman giggled at their wide-eyed reactions.

Oh! Ahem. You are? The squad leader coughed to cover up his embarrassment.

I am the innkeeper of All Cattle Inn. You may call me Mrs. Jiao. The woman smiled brightly. Please, come in.

Mrs. Jiao (Lovely)? A fitting name. One of the Dark Guards licked his lips and allowed his eyes to roam freely across her body. He didnt try to conceal his lust at all.

Mrs. Jiao didnt seem to feel it, however. She simply beamed at him and said, You have a sweet mouth, customer.

After the Dark Guards had occupied a table, Mrs. Jiao asked, What do you like to eat, customers?

What do you have? The squad leader asked.

Mrs. Jiao answered, You might have already figured out from our inns name, but we are an inn that specializes in beef. There isnt a single part of a cattles body that we cannot cook into a delicious meal, and our cook is proficient in all kinds of cooking methods such as stir fry, deep fry, stew, boil and more. As for our signature dishes, we have boiled beef, stir-fried tripe, crystal beef tendon, dried beef head meat, charcoal-grilled short ribs, oxtail soup and more.

Thats a lot of choices. Im not sure we can arrive at a decision quickly. Do you have a suggestion, innkeeper?

One man abruptly grabbed her hand and chuckled. It needs to be sweet, tender and smooth.

Hmm? Are you talking about my hand or the dishes? Mrs. Jiao lightly extracted her hand from the mans grip and suggested, Since there are so many of you, why dont you try out our specialty, the Beef Buffet?

The Beef Buffet? Ive never heard that before. Sounds like its worth trying. The squad leader then asked, Is your beef fresh?

Im offended by that question, customer! We slaughter our cattle on the spot! Itll be the freshest beef you ever taste! Mrs. Jiao giggled. If you dont believe me, I can take you to the back garden so you may pick a bull yourself.

Ill go! A Dark Guard who was just as lecherous as he looked hurriedly jumped to his feet. Ill come with you to the back garden, innkeeper! Dont worry, brothers! I promise Ill pick a big and strong bull so you may enjoy lunch to your hearts content!

Lets go, innkeeper!

Before anyone could react, the guy was already pulling Mrs. Jiao toward the back garden.

Hmph! Its been a while since he became a Dark Guard, and Yang Yun still couldnt fix his lecherous nature! Hes going to die to a woman someday! A Dark Guard who was just a little too slow to make his move grunted with clear jealousy.

Thats because hes a rapist who specifically targets married women back in the day. He would never have been accepted into the Dark Guards if the young master didnt think highly of his movement art and poisoning skills, another guy echoed in agreement.

I can hear your jealousy all the way from here. Its only going to get worse when the screaming starts, so you best plug up your ears while you still can! Another guy taunted.

That lucky bastard. Someone sighed enviously.

Noticing that the conversation was steadily spiraling out of control, the squad leader decided to rein them in. Enough. The walls have ears. Zhao Lei, Ju Shui, scout out the area and check if theres anyone else staying in the inn besides the staff. I dont want to miss anyone when we clean out the place later!

As you command, two Dark Guards responded before leaving to carry out their orders.

At the back garden, Yang Yun watched Mrs. Jiaos plump, swaying bottom and felt his mouth growing drier and drier. When they arrived at the cattle pen, Mrs. Jiao said, This is the place, customer!

Yang Yun reluctantly removed his gaze from Mrs. Jiaos body and looked at the cattle pen in front of him. He immediately exclaimed with surprise, Heavens, your cattle pen is massive! The cattle look pretty amazing too! What shiny fur and fat, strong muscles!

Hahaha! Our cattle are quite famous, you see. A lot of inns and restaurants buy their cattle from us! Mrs. Jiao giggled.

Yang Yun checked out the feeder tray. I can see why. Your cattle eat better than many people. White mantou, candied fruit, jerkies and even flatbreads? No wonder your cattle look as strong as they are.

Well, the best feed produces the best cattle, dont you agree? Mrs. Jiao smiled. Have you made your selection, customer?

I sure have. I choose you. Yang Yun chuckled.

Mrs. Jiao giggled behind her hand. You flatter me, customer, but Im asking which bull you want for your lunch!

Yang Yun took one step forward and embraced her. The bull can wait. Why dont we do something else first?

Haha! Please dont, customer. It wouldnt be good if someone else sees us! Mrs. Jiao struggled, but she was unable to break out of Yang Yuns iron grip.

Like theres anyone at this place at this time, Yang Yun replied while fondling Mrs. Jiao everywhere. And even if there is, I cant wait any longer.

#### Chapter 332: A Tale of Cattle

Why so hasty, customer? Your brothers are waiting to eat beef, you know? It will be bad if lunch is delayed because of us!

After struggling a couple more times to no avail, Mrs. Jiao opted for the opposite approach and pressed up against Yang Yuns chest. You can always find me after you finish lunch!

Hehehe, remember what you said, innkeeper! Yang Yun reluctantly let her go and began looking for a suitable bull in the cattlepen.

*Im not Im help? Why are there words inside the cattlepen?*

Yang Yun had just taken a few steps when he noticed that many of the wooden stakes and feeder trays had strange markings that looked like words. It looked like they had been chewed out with teeth. It took him a long time to recognize just a handful of words, and while he found them to be strange, he didnt really pay attention to them.

Huh? Why are these cattle crying, innkeeper? Suddenly, Yang Yun noticed a few cattle shedding tears and moving closer to him. It was almost like they were trying to tell him something.

Well, animals can feel emotions as well. They must realize that one of their own or they themselves are about to die. That is why theyre crying, Mrs. Jiao said with a giggle.

Youre quite knowledgeable, innkeeper! Yang Yun grinned.

His grin slowly stiffened on his face, however. It was because he saw one of the crying bulls staring him straight in the eye and writing with its hoof:

SAVE

ME

Save me?

At the same time, Yang Yun recalled the words he saw on the wooden stakes and feeder tray. Suddenly, the words he couldn't identify before became clear in his head:

*I am not cattle I am human Help Help me*

If these cattle were human, then who were they before they were transformed into cattle?

Could they be the customers who visited the inn?!

He immediately recalled another oddity he didn't notice until now. He had seen several cartloads of goods parked at the back garden while he was making his way to the cattlepen earlier, so this meant that there should be other people in this inn. However, the dining hall was completely empty when they entered even though it was lunchtime.

Besides that, the white mantous, flatbreads, candied fruits and jerkies he saw in the feeder tray earlier were obviously traveling rations, but the innkeeper claimed that they were fodder for the cattle. Could cattle even eat such things?

All the signs seemed to be pointing toward one thing.

Cold sweat began creeping onto his forehead. His back felt ice cold as well.

Have you done picking a bull, customer? Mrs. Jiao asked in her usual sweet voice, but right now, Yang Yun couldn't feel any attraction toward her at all. In fact, he nearly jumped like she was a walking Anomaly.

Gulp

Yang Yun swallowed as quietly as he could and stealthily wiped away the words on the floor with a wisp of force. Then, he forcefully suppressed his fear and feigned nonchalance, Yep! I-I'm done picking! I want t-this one!

N-Now let's get back to my brothers. I-I'm sure they're getting impatient.

Yang Yun spun around and hurriedly strode toward the exit, but right before he would step out of the cattlepen, Mrs. Jiao's voice came from behind him,

You saw everything, didn't you?

W-What? I didn't see anything! Yang Yun knew his cover was blown there and then. He raced forward as quickly as he could while getting ready to cry for help.

MOO!

But what came out of his mouth wasn't a human cry, but a bull's moo. Not only that, he realized that his hands had turned into hoofs, thick fur was growing out of his arms and his body, and he was leaning forward uncontrollably as if standing in a vertical position went against his nature.

The next moment, his bones contorted painfully, and his flesh began warping and swelling into something else. A tail grew out of his butt as well.

Moo!!!

It was after the transformation that Yang Yun realized that he had turned into a bull. He was gradually losing his ability to think like a human as well. It might not be long before he turned into an actual bull; cattle that anyone could slaughter as they pleased.

He charged forward with all his might while mooing as loudly as he could. Perhaps his companions might think that something was amiss if he created a big enough racket. But the second he lifted a hoof, a rope abruptly wrapped around his neck and dragged him away with unstoppable force. He was then tethered to a wooden stake.

I was going to let you live a little longer, but what can I do when you discover my secret[1]?

Mrs. Jiao giggled as she sauntered over to Yang Yun. She was holding an exquisite root carving[2] of an old yellow bull and a mill. The bull was currently turning the mill like it was alive, and every time it made a full circle, the mill would release some sort of strange energy that made Yang Yun's consciousness just a bit blurrier than before.

It's fine though. You will all turn into my cattle eventually.

Mrs. Jiao circled around Yang Yun a couple of times before complimenting him, "As I thought, warriors make for good cattle. Just look at that smooth fur, healthy physique, and firm muscles. Anyone can tell that you're top quality livestock. You're gonna sell for a lot of money, dearie."

Her delight only lasted for a few seconds, however. Still, how am I going to explain your disappearance to your companions? They don't look easy to fool. How troublesome.

Oh well. I suppose I'll have to do that.

Mrs. Jiao walked around the cattlepen for a bit. Then, she stopped in front of a black bull and mumbled, "You're old and thin, so you're not worth much anyway. Very well."

Mrs. Jiao grabbed the head of her bull carving and turned it backward. The bull carving began turning the mill backward and causing the black bull to let out a moo of pain. Its body began shrinking, and its fur began receding back into its body. One full revolution later, the black bull actually turned back into a human being; a thin, frail old man to be exact.

The old man was naked and crouching on all fours. He was dripping saliva and wearing a goofy grin on his face.

Have you become a bull for so long that you've forgotten how to act like a human?

Mrs. Jiao kicked the old man, but he couldn't seem to feel it. He continued to wear a silly grin on his face.

This isn't going to work, Mrs. Jiao mumbled to herself before grabbing a cowhide hanging on a drying pole and throwing it over the old man. Then, she grabbed the bull carving's head and turned it again.

The bull carving let out a displeased moo. Then, it reluctantly turned the mill in reverse again.

The cowhide started morphing into Yang Yuns appearance. It had his face, his features, everything. Then, it clung to the old mans skin and shrank until the old man looked just like Yang Yun.

This is much better.

Mrs. Jiao giggled. Now go. Do not draw that groups suspicion. If you perform well, Ill allow you to remain a human for a bit.

Hehehe The fake Yang Yun let out a silly grin and slowly rose to a standing position. He began walking back and forth inside the cattle pen as if he was trying to get used to his body.

Were back, squad leader.

Zhao Lei and Ju Shui returned to the dining hall and saluted their leader.

How many people are there in this inn? The squad leader asked.

No one, actually. Its strange. Theres no one in this inn besides the innkeeper and the cook, Zhao Lei reported with a puzzled voice.

Whats so strange about that? There are countless inns out there that have zero customers. A guy sipping his wine dismissed his concerns. In fact, this is better for us. Itll save us so much trouble.

No, thats not what I mean. Zhao Lei shook his head with a frown. Some of the beddings in the guest rooms are disturbed, and I saw parcels and clothes inside the rooms as well. There should be other customers inside this inn, and yet this whole place is empty besides us. Something doesnt feel right.

Come now, youre overthinking this. Maybe those customers just left the inn, and the innkeeper didnt have the time to clean the bedding. As for the parcels, maybe theyre gifts for the innkeeper or discarded trash.

Another Dark Guard chimed in, My Warding Talisman isnt sensing anything. The innkeeper is definitely a human.

I hope so! Zhao Lei sighed, though his worries hadnt abated much.

Whats taking Yang Yun so long? Someone asked suddenly.

You know how that guy is. Im surprised we havent heard the screams yet, The jealous guy from before muttered.

The squad leader frowned. Someone go get Yang Yun. We have a mission to carry out. I dont care what he does during his free time, but letting loose right before a mission is just unprofessional and risky.

Ill go! A guy responded. However, he had just risen to his feet when Yang Yun walked out of the entrance leading to the back garden.

Youve been gone for a long time, Yang Yun. What did you do? A guy asked while winking at Yang Yun.

I went to pick a bull, hehe Yang Yun said with a silly chuckle.

Yeah, that smells like bullshit. How long does it take to choose a bull? Tell us, Yang Yun. You fucked the innkeeper, dincha? Someone asked with a lecherous grin on his face.



Hehe Yang Yuns only response was to chuckle again.

Do you even need to ask? Just look at his face!

Seriously? But youve only been gone for like what, ten minutes? You dont last very long, do ya?

Sure seems like it. Ill introduce you to a good doctor when we get back. He's been a kidney specialist for sixty years, and his treatments are sugar free. I guarantee youll be fucking like a racehorse after this!

Hahahahahaha!

Everyone guffawed, and Yang Yun was still chuckling like an idiot. Everyone thought that Yang Yun was still high from the experience and paid his strange reaction no heed.

The group continued to chat and drink until the dishes were served. The innkeeper hadnt been joking when she named the feast the Beef Buffet. There were beef tongue, beef liver, beef tail, cuts, chucks, ribs, loins, rounds, flanks, plates, briskets and shanks[3]; pan-fried, stir-fried, boiled, friend, steamed, cooked and more. Every dish looked and smelled like heaven on earth.

For a moment, everyone was transfixed by the heavenly food in front of them. Then, they pounced on top of the table like they had never eaten in their lives and chowed down like no tomorrow. Some people even thought using chopsticks was too troublesome and tossed them away. They grabbed the beef directly with their hands and shoved it all into their mouths.

Hahaha eat. Eat until you can eat no longer, customers. Only then can you be sold for a good price. Hahaha

The innkeeper couldnt stop giggling as she watched the group from the sidelines.

It wasnt long before everyone had reached max capacityliterally. Their stomachs were bulging, and even their intestines were full of beef. Despite this, they continued to shove food into their mouths like they were crazy.

No one noticed the transformation. First, they started growing thick hair on their body. Then, their arms and legs turned into that of a bulls. Finally, their head transformed into a bulls head as well.

However, it wasnt until they had completely wiped out the dishes, and they had completely transformed into fat bulls that they finally noticed their transformation. There were black, yellow, white, spotted bulls and more.

Moo moo moo!

Shocked and horrified, the bulls ran all over the place in panic. Mrs. Jiao giggled at the sight and called out, Hubby, the cattle are escaping. Come out and catch them before its too late!

Coming!

A hunch-backed, ugly man ambled out of the kitchen. A rope flew out of his sleeve and split into several ropes before catching every bull by the neck with unerring precision. As soon as the ropes appeared around their necks, the bulls abruptly calmed down as if by magic. They then followed the man to the back garden with mute obedience.

Hahaha thats another big haul.

Mrs. Jiao smiled so wide that wrinkles appeared on her face. She then looked at the fake Yang Yun the only human of the group who wasn't turned into a bull and rebuked him, What are you blanking out for, old man? Clean up the items already! It would affect our business if a customer sees this mess!

Hehe The fake Yang Yun let out a silly chuckle and began licking the dirty plates. The leftovers on the plates were no longer beef, however. They were grass.

Humans eat meat, and cattle eat grass. But in All Cattle Inn? It was the other way around.

Hahaha I wonder when the next batch of cattle will show up? Hahaha

Chapter 333: So Sad He Can't Help But Laugh

The sun had just crossed the midway point when a drizzle began pouring from the sky. By the time it was almost evening, it was raining cats and dogs.

Suddenly, the door of All Cattle Inn rattled open. A young man rushed in to avoid the rain.

Mrs. Jiao was dozing off at the counter until the sudden gust of wet wind jolted her awake. Her eyes lit up when she saw that a customer had come in.

Are staying or eating, young Reverend?

The young Reverend, Qi Xuanyun, blushed like an apple when he looked up and saw the scantily-dressed Mrs. Jiao greeting him warmly. He hurriedly looked down and stuttered, B-Both. Im staying for the night.

Theres no hurry. My inn has many high quality rooms. You can stay here forever if you want to! Mrs. Jiao giggled and took one step toward Qi Xuanyun.

One night is fine! Qi Xuanyun hurriedly took two steps backward when he caught a whiff of her sweet scent.

Hahaha! Very well. What would you like to eat, young Reverend? It may be May now, but a rain like this is still going to give you a cold, Mrs. Jiao said concernedly. Youre going to need something warm and fulfilling considering how thin you are.

What? What do you have? Qi Xuanyun asked.

We serve delicious wine and top quality beef. Our beef especially is to die for. You literally wont find another beef like ours if you miss this chance, so, would you like some beef, young Reverend? Mrs. Jiao suggested.

Qi Xuanyun rejected her suggestion immediately, No, no! Im a monk[1]. My master forbids me from drinking wine or eating meat.

Mrs. Jiao giggled. Were in the middle of nowhere, young Reverend. Surely your master wouldnt know if you sneak a bite or two?

Also, wine and food arent the only sweet things here. I daresay that Im quite sweet myself. Would you like to give it a taste, young Reverend?

No I I Qi Xuanyun was barely coherent. He was so stunned his head almost hit the floor, much less his jaw.

Suddenly, a cough broke out from the entrance. Ahem let that young Reverend go! Were the ones you're after!

Three people stepped into the building then. They were none other than Ye Qing, Chu Nianjiu and Lin Yuhuai.

Welcome, customers! This way please! Mrs. Jiao immediately stopped teasing Qi Xuanyun and welcomed them inside. Would you like to eat or stay, customers?

We're staying, but only for a night. We just want to take shelter from this rain, Chu Nianjiu answered. We'd like dinner as well, and we have no qualms with our food. Anything is acceptable.

He then glanced at Qi Xuanyun. The young Taoist was still shocked that a woman had come onto him and added, Since the young Reverend obeys a monk's customs, just serve him a few plates of cold vegetables and boil him a pot of tea.

Sounds great! Please give me a moment, Mrs. Jiao replied cheerfully and sashayed toward the kitchen.

We meet again, young Reverend! Ye Qing saluted Qi Xuanyun.

You're the one on the boat! The young Taoist immediately recognized Ye Qing and exclaimed with pleasant surprise, Why are you here?

It is I. Ye Qing confirmed with a smile. We were passing through the area. Honestly, we weren't expecting to run into you. It's a mighty coincidence.

It really is! The young Taoist was incredibly excited before looking at Lin Yuhuai and Chu Nianjiu. Thank you both for helping me out earlier. My name is Qi Xuanyun.

I'm Chu Nianjiu!

I'm Lin Yuhuai!

You already know my name, but I'm Joyless Ye.

Well met, Brother Chu, Brother Lin, Brother Ye! Qi Xuanyun greeted everyone. Just call me Xuanyun. My master and senior brothers all call me that.

Very well. We shan't be strangers. All three men smiled at his youthful appearance. Let's share a table, Xuanyun.

Of course! Qi Xuanyun sat down, beaming.

Hubby, another four cattle just entered our inn. Every single one of them is a top-tier stock, Mrs. Jiao said to the cook as soon as she entered the kitchen. The hunch-backed man was currently lying down on top of a bunch of hay like a bull. Make sure they won't be able to escape, okay?

You know my cooking skills, dear. They won't. The hunch-backed man grinned a mouthful of yellow teeth at his wife before sitting up and pulling a blade of yellow grass from his hay bed. He bent it into the shape of a cut of beef and placed it on a plate. Amazingly, the yellow grass transformed into an actual cut of beef that was bubbling with oil and leaking aroma everywhere.

The hunch-backed man would proceed to weave more dishes such as roast beef, boiled beef, deep-fried flank, crystal shanks and more. Each and every dish looked wonderfully lifelike and perfect in both color and aroma.

Your skills are getting better and better, hubby, Mrs. Jiao complimented her husband as she admired the dishes.

You flatter me, dear. The hunch-backed man shot her an honest grin before saying, Go. Its bad service to make our customers impatient.

Agreed. See you in a bit! Mrs. Jiao replied before placing some of the plates in a tray, lifting them up and carrying them back into the dining hall.

The foods here! Sorry to make you wait, customers!

Enjoy, dear customers. There are more in the kitchen, so please give me a moment. Mrs. Jiao gave them a bright smile before returning to the kitchen.

However, when she returned with another tray of food, she was astonished to find that the table was perfectly empty.

Customers, what?

Apologies, innkeeper, but its been days since we ate something, so Chu Nianjiu apologized smilingly.

But the plates? Mrs. Jiao blinked. Warriors were capable of extraordinary feats, so she wasnt exactly surprised to hear that the trio had devoured their food in less than a minute. But where were the plates? She couldnt spot a single plate on the table.

Yeah. About that. Your dishes are so tasty that we accidentally swallowed the plates as well. Ye Qing chimed in with a grin. I never knew that plates tasted like fried chicken, crunchy and sweet!

Hahaha it seems like you are very hungry. Dont worry, the one thing our inn does not lack is meat. I promise that you will eat your fill, Mrs. Jiao giggled.

Thank you very much, innkeeper. Ye Qing smiled back. Oh right, can you please serve my friend his vegetables first? He was real envious when he saw us chowing down like no tomorrow. Look, hes practically shedding tears of frustration.

Mrs. Jiao looked. Qi Xuanyun was currently covering his mouth with both hands, and his shoulders were shaking from time to time. Although his expression was hidden, she could clearly hear short burst of laughter escaping through his fingers.

What do you mean hes crying? Hes obviously laughing! Mrs. Jiao looked puzzled.

Didnt you know? Some people shed tears when they are at the peak of happiness. Naturally, the opposite can happen as well. Thats whats happening to my friend right now, Ye Qing lied through his teeth before comforting her, Ah, I suppose an innkeeper wouldnt be very knowledgeable. Your ignorance is forgiven.

Mrs. Jiao: ...

Fine, fine. Please give me a moment, customers. I shall return with your food right away. Mrs. Jiao winked flirtatiously at Ye Qing before taking her leave.

Man, it smells good!

After Mrs. Jiao was gone, Chu Nianjiu stared at the food in front of him with a pang of hunger. However, he quickly shook away his desires and asked, Are you sure we cant eat this?

Lin Yuhuai had sealed off his sense of smell, but even the sight of the delicious dishes elicited a pang of hunger in him. He too asked, Are you sure the food is tampered with, Joyless?

Just now, when the dishes were served, Lin Yuhuai and Chu Nianjiu suddenly felt hungry beyond imagination even though they werent a moment ago. They felt like shoving everything down their gullet even if their stomach were to burst as a result.

But right before they would pounce on the food, Ye Qing and Qi Xuanyun got in their way. Then, Ye Qing tossed everything out of the window in the blink of an eye.

Strangely, they regained their wits as soon as the dishes were thrown out. When the innkeeper returned with a new tray of dishes, their desire began to spiral out of control again.

Of course theyre tampered with. Ye Qing pressed a finger to his forehead and relied on his demonic lotus to remain clearheaded. What kind of food would drive you crazy?[2]

Besides, these arent meat. Theyre grass, all of them.

His colleagues didnt possess his level of spirit, so they couldnt see what he was seeing. In his eyes, the delicious beef wasn't beef at all. They were grass.

Seriously? Chu Nianjiu exclaimed in surprise.

Brother Ye isnt lying to you two. It really is grass, Qi Xuanyun chimed in with a barely suppressed grin on his face. It was because he was still young, and Ye Qings earlier comment tickled him just right. He would be laughing out loud if he was used to laughing in front of an audience.

Lingguan, please wash away the evil, clear the mind, and open ones eyes. Go!

A yellow talisman flew out of his sleeves and slapped itself onto the food. The talisman abruptly burst into flames and released a puff of green smoke. When the smoke was gone, the delicious food on the table had turned into piles of grass.

It really is grass. Is there something special about it? Chu Nianjiu asked.

Its called the Cattle Transformation Grass. Qi Xuanyun explained, Legend says that the Cattle Transformation Grass is created from the vengeful soul of an old bull after it died. Cattle become sapient as they age, as this particular bull resented the fact that humans ate cattle, but cattle could only eat grass. So, its vengeful soul transformed into the Cattle Transformation Grass.

The Cattle Transformation Grass is irresistible to most humans. Anyone who eats it would transform into cattle. If the victim could protect their mind and maintain their humanity, then they would turn back into a human after a day. But if not, then they would remain as a cow or a bull for the rest of their lives.

The young Taoist suddenly let out a cold chuckle. I finally found you, you bastards.

Ye Qing asked curiously, It sounds like youve been searching for this inn for a while.

It was clear from Qi Xuanyuns earlier actions that he was prepared for this.

Yes, I've been searching for this inn, Qi Xuanyun admitted honestly. Some time after I left my mountain, I encountered a strange incident where a bunch of people were plagued by nightmares every night. They dreamed of cattle with human faces yelling hatefully at them saying, You ate me! You ate me!

This isn't an isolated incident either. A lot of people were plagued by the same nightmare. I even stumbled upon a county where almost every man, woman and child were experiencing the same dream.

Qi Xuanyun fell silent for a moment before continuing, If that was all the harm it did, then maybe I could've overlooked it. The problem is that everyone who was infected by the nightmare would gradually go insane and think of themselves as cattle. They would even walk on all fours and eat fodder like cattle. In the end, they all died because of their insanity.

I remember something like this in one of the Pacification Bureaus records, Lin Yuhuai suddenly spoke to Ye Qing and Chu Nianjiu via sound transmission, The case file is named the Nightmare Cattle Incident, and it was classified as a Phenomenon-class incident. It was an unresolved case even to this day.

The Pacification Bureau once mobilized a massive amount of manpower to investigate this case, but they weren't able to find anything. It was because the location of the incidents were completely random, and the clues that we collected were a chaotic mess at best, and useless at worst. It was very strange.

Now that you remind me, I too have heard of that case before, Chu Nianjiu echoed in agreement.

Ye Qing was the only one who didn't know jack about this.

#### Chapter 334: Yellow Bull Root Carving

In fact, this nightmare had claimed the lives of many in my hometown, Qi Xuanyun's expression turned sorrowful when he said this. Since then, I swore I would find the one behind this incident no matter what. After many years of investigation, I finally discovered that every single one of these victims had eaten at the same restaurants. Specifically, they had eaten the restaurants beef.

A little more digging later, I found out that these restaurants had bought their cattle from the same inn. That inn is none other than All Cattle Inn.

This one? Ye Qing asked for clarification.

This one, Qi Xuanyun confirmed. The inn itself is abnormal though. It would appear at a location for several days before disappearing for a time. Then, it would appear somewhere else.

I've been chasing for a very long time. Finally, I found it.

Ye Qing fell silent for a moment. Based on what you told us, I believe I've more or less figured out the whole case.

Assuming I'm not mistaken, the innkeepers use the Cattle Transformation Grass to transform everyone who eats in their inn into cattle. Then, the cattle are sold to nearby restaurants.

The cattle were formerly humans who ate the Cattle Transformation Grass, so it makes sense that the people who ate them would experience strange, debilitating nightmares and act like cattle.

That is most likely the truth. Qi Xuanyun said coldly, Tonight is the night I kill these evildoers and end their crimes once and for all.

Go wild. Im here to help. Ye Qing clapped Qi Xuanyuns shoulder.

Chu Nianjiu and Lin Yuhuai exchanged smiles with each other before declaring, We too see no reason to allow this despicable inn to exist any longer.

The innkeepers coming. Do as you see fit, Ye Qing instructed before putting all the dishes on the tablethe Cattle Transformation Grassinto his Natures Shell.

Your vegetables have arrived, young Reverend, Mrs. Jiaos sweet voice arrived before her person.

When she saw that the table was empty once again, her eyes widened. Did you guys finish everything again?

Yep. It is as you see. Ye Qing shrugged. Your beef is so delicious we cannot help but eat the plates again.

And now, were gonna eat you! Chu Nianjiu sipped his wine and added.

Ye Qing: ...

Lin Yuhuai: ...

*Bro, theres an underaged boy right here! Control yourself!*

At this point, even the dimmest bulb in the world wouldve noticed that something was amiss. Mrs. Jiaos smile stiffened as she exclaimed in realization, You didnt eat the beef?

HUBBY!

Mrs. Jiao screeched and tossed her tray at the group. Then, she sprinted toward the kitchen at full speed.

At the same time, countless ropes slithered out of the floor, and each one had a strap on it. They attempted to catch the group by the neck.

However, the second the rope emerged from the floor, Ye Qing had already closed the distance and reached out with his left hand to grab Mrs. Jiaos skull.

Right before he would grab her, Mrs. Jiao abruptly twisted like a snake and dodged the attack by a hairs breadth.

Not pausing for even a moment, Ye Qing clenched his hand into a fist and thrust in an inch forward. Fire burned, rivers evaporated, and the space around them turned into a scorching hot furnace.

*Cloud Vaporization Style*

The others werent idle, of course. Qi Xuanyun was already shooting a Palm Thunder at Mrs. Jiao, and Chu Nianjiu and Lin Yuhuai were launching their respective attacks as well.

In response, Mrs. Jiao let out a cute whimper and summoned her bull carving. She slapped her hand over the bulls head and forced the disgruntled bull to turn the mill backward.

As the millstone turned, an anomalous energy rippled out of it. The scorching hot furnace that was Ye Qings fist force shrank back into his fist, Qi Xuanyuns Palm Thunder shrank back into the giant palm in the sky, and everyone elses attacks moved in reverse until they were no more.

It was like someone was turning the wheel of time in reverse. Everything had returned to what it was before.

With that done, the bull carving stopped in its tracks and began turning the mill normally. The millstone released a new ripple of energy that attempted to corrupt their mind and spirit.

Chu Nianjiu and Lin Yuhuais mind and spirit were the weakest of the four of them. Bull fur began growing on their skin.

Purple lightning shot out of Qi Xuanyuns body and burned away the bull fur as soon as they exited his pores.

Ye Qing was the only one who wasnt impressed by the attack. The evil, twisting energy was absorbed and neutralized by his demonic lotus as soon as it entered his mind. Scoffing, he tapped the space in front of him with his fingers and stunned Mrs. Jiao.

As soon as her eyes grew unfocused, Ye Qing turned on his feet, kicked off the floor, and shot toward Mrs. Jiao like a loose arrow. At the same time, Red Sleeve slipped out of his sleeve and released a curtain of light that looked like a drizzle in springsoft, pleasant, and perfectly deadly.

At the last possible moment, Mrs. Jiao regained her consciousness and used her Strange Artifact. The bull carving abruptly sprinted around the millstone and caused its light to shine brighter than ever before. It annihilated the saber forces before it could carve her up like sushi.

This was just the beginning though. A flash of crimson appeared right after the curtain of light disappeared. There was a crack, and the root carving abruptly split into two.

Pwack!

Mrs. Jiao turned death pale and coughed up a mouthful of blood. Ye Qing was about to press the advantage and kill her when suddenly, he heard a tigers roar and caught a whiff of something horrible. It smelled like the mouth of a bloodthirsty beast. Without hesitation, he activated the Nine Impetus of Tai Chia white fish and a black fish appeared and swam in a circle around him to form a tai chi symboland neutralized the tremendous force slamming into his back. He turned around to find a massive tiger being flung toward a wall.

Roar!

His enemy wasnt relying on a single Stranger to kill him though. A lion that was covered in flames jumped toward him from his blind spot, and the tiger had gotten back on its feet and was rushing him as well.

Ye Qing reversed his grip on Red Sleeve and did a quick twirl. The saber drew a full moon and sliced both Strangers in two.

Strangely, they turned into grass when they hit the ground.

Go, dear! Ill catch up to you in a moment! The hunch-backed man rushed out of the kitchen while weaving all sorts of Strangers with grass. Every time he finished weaving, the Stranger would come to life and rush Ye Qing. There were tigers, lions, wolves and even dragons.



You guys deal with Mrs. Jiao! Ye Qing yelled and thrust his left hand forward. The Burning Wind blew, and the Netherflame burned brightly. Like day and night intertwined into a beam of pure power, they disintegrated the grass-made Strangers like nothing and shot toward the hunch-backed man.

The hunch-backed man blanched when he felt the unbelievable heat contained within the black-and-white flames. He hastily jumped away from the all-consuming flames or at least, he tried to.

*Snap!*

Someone snapped their fingers, and he blanked out as if someone had slapped a lock around his mind. When he regained consciousness, he saw a flash of crimson followed by overwhelming light and darkness. After that, there was only eternal darkness.

On the other side, Mrs. Jiao had been smashed into smithereens by Qi Xuanyun's lightning as well. Without her root carving, there was just no way she could fend off Chu Nianjiu, Lin Yuhuai and Qi Xuanyun at the same time.

One thing Ye Qing noted after the fight was that Mrs. Jiao and her husband's spiritual power was on the same level as him even though they were just early-stage Spirit Purifiers, and ordinary ones at that. He knew this because they had both snapped free from his Heavenly Demon Captures The Soul. It might have something to do with what they were doing, though he would never learn the answer now that they were both dead.

You're incredible, Brother Ye! Qi Xuanyun stared at Ye Qing in shock after killing Mrs. Jiao. He knew from the start that the trio were strong, and Ye Qing in particular gave him the heebie-jeebies. Despite this, he was sure that Ye Qing was on Feng Yang Gentleman's level at most and no match for him.

But after what he just saw, he was starting to think that Ye Qing might actually be stronger than him. Considering that he was just an early-stage Spirit Purifier, this was unbelievable.

Hehe, I'm not bad, I suppose. Ye Qing shrugged. A man should be humble!

Is there anyone else in this inn, Joyless? Chu Nianjiu asked.

Ye Qing answered, There is one inside the back garden, but he's just an ordinary person.

He had scanned the entire place using his demonic thought earlier. The only person in the area besides them and the innkeepers was that man, and he was just an ordinary person who felt like his days were numbered.

Let's go, Lin Yuhuai said.

When they arrived at the back garden, they saw a handsome man wearing a silly grin inside the cattle pen. He was dripping saliva and sleeping in the middle of a bunch of cattle.

He's definitely just a normal person. Let me wake him up, Ye Qing said. He had just set foot inside the cattle pen when a few cattle swarmed him and mooed at him loudly. At the same time, some of them began writing on the ground with their hoofs.

Help

Ye Qing narrowed his eyes. As he thought, every bull and cow in this inn was formerly a human.

The good news was that the cattle swarming him had just eaten the Cattle Transformation Grass a while ago. That was why they were acting so human. But the others there was probably no saving them.

Calm down. You're safe now. Just make sure to remember that you're human, and you will return to normal in three days, Ye Qing consoled them. The Cattle Transformation Grass was probably a kind of curse, and he was hardly an expert in this area. There was nothing he could do to help them.

It was at this moment Qi Xuanyun spoke up, Allow me.

Eight views approach the firmament and expel the evils. The wind rises

The young Taoist shook his sleeves once and produced a yellow talisman that was obviously brimming with power between his fingers. At the same time, he chanted a bunch of words that Ye Qing didn't care to make sense of.

When he was done, the yellow talisman abruptly transformed into a gust of wind and blew past the cattle. Wisps of filthy energies immediately started rising from their bodies.

When the wind passed completely, a dozen or so people returned to normal. But only a dozen. The rest remained as they were.

It's too late for these people. They had turned into cattle for so long that they had completely lost their humanity and sapience. Not even my Evil Expelling Talisman can save them now.

Qi Xuanyun wore a sorrowful look as he spoke. Even if they turned back to normal, they would remain retarded for the rest of their lives.

Thank you for saving us, heroes! Thank you!

Some of the victims immediately ran up to the group and thanked them profusely.

Ye Qing pointed a finger at Qi Xuanyun and said, You're welcome, but the one you should really thank is him. I couldn't have dispelled the curse afflicting you all.

Thank you for saving our lives, young Reverend!

Thank you, thank you, thank you

We will never forget what you've done for us. Never!

Maybe it was because they were still in shock, but most of the victims weren't quite themselves yet. They could only repeat words of gratitude over and over.

Qi Xuanyun had never experienced a situation like this. Blushing like an apple, he waved his hands repeatedly to indicate You're welcome but was unable to say a single word. In the end, Lin Yuhuai had to step in to save him from his predicament.

Suddenly, a cry of surprise broke out. You Which one of you is Yang Yun?

Ye Qing looked and saw a man staring back and forth between the retarded man curled up on the ground and the guy next to him. His expression was panicked and horrified because the two men shared the exact same appearance.

Chapter 335: Paper Dolls Carrying A Litter

Which Which one of you is Yang Yun? The few people surrounding Yang Yun backed away from the two identical-looking men, eyes darting about as they tried to distinguish who was real and who was fake.

Are you guys stupid? Of course Im Yang Yun. That guys the fake.

When Yang Yun saw the distrustful look in their eyes, he said, Old Zhao, Ju Shui, we visited Unforgettable Scent together. Old Chen, Old Fang, we peeped on Widow Lin while she was bathing. Dont tell me youve forgotten about it!

Enough! We believe you. Youre definitely Yang Yun. Yang Yuns co-conspirators hurriedly stopped him. Hell was going to break loose if he continued any longer. Speaking of which

Old Chen scoffed, Of course we know better than to lust for a friends wife, but is she your wife? No, shes just your sister-in-law. Plus, were just peeping on her, not making a move on her. Also, why are you so angry? Youre not planning to cuck your late brother, are you?

You piece of shit!

So, what the hell happened to you, Yang Yun? The squad leader asked after things were back under control.

Yang Yun kicked the guy who looked like him in annoyance before answering, I was picking a bull in the back garden when I discovered the innkeepers ploy. I was just about to warn you guys when she turned me into a bull.

Later, I saw the innkeeper using a root carving to turn a bull into a human. She later put a cowhide on him and turned him into me.

Hehe The retarded man on the ground chuckled dumbly as if he couldnt feel the pain.

I see. So the Yang Yun who came back to us was a fake all along. I was wondering why youd turned into a silly git, but I thought you got the innkeeper to give you a Ju Shui abruptly realized that this might not be the best place to talk about such things and changed the subject. Anyway, what is your plan for this guy?

Im gonna kill him, of course. Yang Yun harrumphed and raised his hand to kill the retard.

My, as expected of Feng Yang Gentlemans subordinates. You will kill even an old man who had lost his mind, Ye Qing suddenly interrupted from the sidelines.

Yang Yun visibly stiffened as panic flickered in his eyes. The squad leader looked like he was about to snarl for an instant before he calmed himself. Who is Feng Yang Gentleman? I think you mistook us for someone else, hero.

Did I? Ye Qing smiled. I highly doubt it.

This wasn't the first time he saw some of these people. They had been acting as Duanmu Yus bodyguards while he and Qi Xuanyun were dueling each other.

You've really gotten the wrong people, hero. We don't know a Feng Yang Gentleman, the squad leader replied calmly. Anyway, since you and your friends saved our lives, it's only natural that we obey your wishes. Let him go, Yang Yun.

Fine, Yang Yun replied reluctantly.

You know who you are, Ye Qing replied smilingly, and you definitely know what you came here to do.

Why are you speaking in riddles, hero? I don't get a word you're saying! The squad leader said nonchalantly.

That's perfectly fine. So long as you get that you don't have the strength to do jack. Ye Qing's smile abruptly turned cold and unfeeling. When you get back home, remember to tell a certain someone that such tactics are as futile as they are outdated. He's lucky that he got away with it this time, but next time he won't be.

Killing intent flashed in the squad leader's eyes, but it disappeared as quickly as it came. We will remember your advice, hero. Goodbye.

The Dark Guards left after that curt goodbye.

What was that about, Brother Ye? Why was Feng Yang Gentleman brought up in the conversation? Qi Xuanyun asked in a puzzled tone after the Dark Guards were gone.

They're Feng Yang Gentleman's men, and they were most likely after you! Ye Qing said seriously.

Qi Xuanyun was inexperienced, but he wasn't stupid. He should be able to figure out his meaning.

As expected, Qi Xuanyun quickly put two and two together. Are you saying that they were sent by Feng Yang Gentleman to kill me?!

Yep. Ye Qing shrugged. It would be too much of a coincidence otherwise.

Although Feng Yang Gentleman's reputation was pretty good, he knew better than anyone that one's reputation didn't equate their character. It had barely been a day since Qi Xuanyun defeated Feng Yang Gentleman, and his men had appeared at Qi Xuanyun's path. Could it really be a coincidence?

There were many shadows in this world that couldn't withstand sunlight, just as there were many people's consciences who couldn't stand exposure.

If that's true, why did you let them leave? Chu Nianjiu asked.

Because it is ultimately just a guess. Ye Qing smiled. Also, this is Xuanyun's decision to make, not mine. They had just left anyway. Xuanyun could easily catch up if he wants to do something about them.

It's fine. The young Taoist shook his head after thinking for a moment.

By the time the group of four had fully investigated the inn, the sky had darkened completely. Even the downpour had come to a stop.

The people they saved had already taken their leave. Although Ye Qing assured them that the inn was safe now, the trauma they had suffered wasn't so easily forgotten. It so happened that the inn was just an incense stick away from a village called Green Water Village, so they decided to travel full speed toward the village.

This was why no one suspected that something was wrong with All Cattle Inn until it was too late. If All Cattle Inn had appeared in the middle of nowhere, then anyone with common sense would find it suspicious. After all, how could an inn sustain themselves without customers? But an inn located just an incense stick away from a known village was hardly unusual, even if it didn't exist until a few days ago.

Well, they're gone. What about us? Qi Xuanyun asked timidly after only the four of them were left.

We're staying, of course. The inn is safe now, Ye Qing replied matter-of-factly. As for these poor people[1] we'll head to Green Water Village tomorrow and request the local Pacification Bureau to deal with them.

Chu Nianjiu, Lin Yuhuai and Qi Xuanyun found no problems with his decision.

The group of four went to the second floor and chose a room for themselves. A quick chat later, they went back to their rooms to catch a well-deserved rest.

Ye Qing didn't rest though. Instead, he produced Nanke from his Nature's Shell. The two snakes curled around the Strange Artifact greeted him as soon as they emerged,

Good evening, master. White Lord and Black Lord

... At your service, master!

The two snakes were as lively as ever, it seemed.

I'm going to use Nanke. What is your request? Ye Qing asked directly.

White Lord smiled widely. Our first request is very simple, master. We want you to sing a song for us loudly!

It's a simple request, isn't it?

*It is simple, but it's also quite embarrassing!*

Ye Qing hesitated for a second, but his desire to grow stronger ultimately conquered his embarrassment. Just to clarify, but any song is fine, right?

White Lord smiled. That is correct, master.

Okay then. Listen well! Ye Qing cleared his throat and began singing at the top of his lungs,

Two little tigers,

Two little tigers,

(They) run very fast,  
(They) run very fast,  
one doesn't have eyes,  
One doesn't have a tail,  
How very strange,  
How very strange[2]

Inside the neighboring room, Qi Xuanyun was meditating on his bed when he was violently jolted back to reality. What is Brother Ye doing?

Not far away, Chu Nianjiu spat out the wine inside his mouth with a strange expression. No wonder they say that no one is perfect in this world. Joyless Im surprised he can speak normally when his singing is ghastlier than a ghouls scream!

Even Lin Yuhuai was holding back a grin. It takes a truly unique person to sing a song this poorly. In a sense, its a talent.

But where did he learn this song? Why have I never heard of it?

Ye Qing had notified them that he was going to use Nanke before they went into their rooms, so his sudden outburst was probably Nankes request.

*Those foolish artifact spirits must be regretting their life choices right now.*

After Ye Qing was done singing, he looked at Black Lord and White Lord and asked, How is it?

Black Lord looked completely out of it, and White Lord looked like it had a million things to say. In the end, it could only ask, Master, are you sure thats a song?

Ye Qing tilted his head in confusion. What do you mean? A nursery rhyme is still a song, you know!

If you think that doesnt qualify, then I can sing another song!

White Lord hurriedly said, No, no, your song is so wonderful that itll haui mean resonate in our dreams for a long time to come. If we hear more, Im worried that we wont be able to stomach anything for the next three days to come, so please, stop.

*Why did I make that request? I would strangle past me if I could!*

A pleasure to lubricate your eardrums! Ye Qing smirked before sitting on the bed and closing his eyes.

The second he did this, Nankes double doors slowly opened to reveal a black, mysterious and unspeakable void. Then, Black Lord and White Lord moved closer to Ye Qing, opened their mouths, and inhaled a wisp of light out of his forehead.

On the bed, Ye Qing felt a sudden wave of dizziness as he plunged into a patch of dreamy void. There was only darkness and emptiness wherever he looked.

The next moment, Ye Qing sensed a giant mysterious eyeball slowly opening amidst the darkness. His consciousness blurred again, and he realized that he was sitting inside a small litter being carried by two people. Also, he was tied up.

*Bondage right from the get go?*

The litter and the rope were made of paper, but when he tried to struggle free, he was surprised to find that he couldn't.

Even stranger was the fact that the two bearers carrying the litter were paper dolls. They looked just like the Golden Boy and Jade Maiden that were normally burned in a sacrificial ritual. Their cheeks were painted with red circles, and their smiles looked eerie to put it mildly.

The mountain wind was strong, and the night was cold. The two paper dolls moved very swiftly despite the fact that they were running along a mountain trail.

As they walked, more and more paper dolls emerged from the mountain forest and fell behind them. Their numbers kept growing as if they were endless. By the time they arrived at a small temple, the mountain trail was absolutely covered in paper dolls with no end in sight. More importantly, they were all looking up at him.

Even with Ye Qings willpower, he couldn't help but break out in cold sweat.

### Chapter 336: Five Viscera Temple

When the litter finally came to a stop, Ye Qing squinted at the signboard on the temple's roof and muttered, The Five Viscera Temple?

The temple was made from bones, and it looked like a bone giant without a head from the outside. There were five niches[1] placed at the east, south, west, north and center of the temple, but instead of statues, they held a human heart, liver, spleen, lungs and kidneys respectively.

All five organs looked bloodied and fresh. It was as if they had just been dug out of a living human's body.

Ye Qing narrowed his eyes some more. A temple that was shaped like a headless human, and five organs placed in five directions to represent the five phases[2]. This is definitely the Five Viscera Temple.

Despite Chu's best efforts to educate the people, there remained some places in the realm where the people were particularly ignorant and superstitious. One such superstition involved using the heart, liver, spleen, lungs and kidneys to build a Five Viscera Temple and worship the Five Temple God. They believed that they would gain his blessing and protection if they did this, and fresh viscera was the best offering they could give him.

This was a thing even back in Ye Qings world where the supernatural didn't exist, so of course human sacrifice was still a thing in certain places. This was particularly prevalent for those who worshiped the Five Temple God where a temple of bones were built, and a living human's internal organs were splayed across the floor as offerings.

*Are these paper dolls planning to sacrifice me to the Five Temple God?*

*But why is this dream unfolding this way? I entered Nanke to train, and this doesn't look like training!*

As expected, the two paper dolls dragged him into the temple as soon as they set down the litter. The paper dolls outside the temple had dropped to their knees as well.

Inside the temple, the two paper dolls summoned a paper knife and severed the paper rope binding him. Then, they got ready to dig out his internal organs.

The second the paper rope was severed, Ye Qing suddenly realized he could move his limbs and channel his energies like normal. He didn't hesitate to unleash his astral qi and burned the two paper dolls into dust.

*Rumble!*

The Five Viscera Temple shook once, and bright red blood began seeping out of the five organs placed at the five phases. At the same time, a loud and imposing voice boomed inside the temple,

**You dare blaspheme against a god, mortal?**

As if on cue, the paper dolls outside the temple swarmed in like locusts.

Ye Qing threw a punch. The Burning Wind burned dozens of paper dolls into ash in an instant.

Their numbers were endless, however. As more paper dolls quickly flooded into the temple, Red Sleeve slipped into his hand, and he spun a full circle on his feet. A gentle breeze joined the night, and the blade flashed crimson.

*Spring Wind*

Love was the graveyard of all heroes. An entire horde of paper dolls dissolved into dust just like that.

Not done yet, Ye Qing threw Red Sleeve into the air, blade facing toward the ground. When it fell, countless saber forces burst out of its body and rained on top of the paper dolls like thin, fine rain.

*Fine Rain*

Ye Qing didn't wait for the attack to hit his enemies. He threw another punch with his left fist.

*Cloud Vaporization Style*

The fine rain was long and seemingly unending. Countless paper dolls were shredded into itsy bitsy pieces by the saber forces. Then, Ye Qing's fist force gathered up the remains like a vacuum, plowed into the thick of it like a vacuum, and exploded like a bomb. The invisible flames howled like a hurricane as countless paper dolls were consumed by it.

The moment didn't last, however. Just a few breaths later the second the invisible flames grew a tad weaker more paper dolls climbed over and around the flames and surrounded Ye Qing.

*Divide*

*Break Through*

*Illusionists Grace*

*Nine Impetus of Tai Chi*

*Hellfire Red Lotus Saber Art*



Ye Qing danced through the paper dolls like a phantom. Movement art, fist art, saber art he used it all.

The paper dolls were only as strong as a late-stage Vessel Augmentor, but the problem was that their numbers seemed infinite. Ye Qing was a Spirit Purifier with an immense amount of astral qi, but he lacked the one advantage that put him above all others: the Annon Sutra.

For whatever reason, the Annon Sutra didn't exist in the dream, and so he was unable to pop a dragon-serpent rune and restore his strength. As a result, he slowly ran out of astral qi and could only rely on his body to fight against the paper dolls.

Having depleted his true qi, his techniques were far less powerful than they were before. At first, he still used complicated and powerful techniques to clear swathes of enemies. However, he quickly realized that the results were subpar, and they cost stamina he couldn't afford to waste to execute.

His techniques began growing simpler and simpler. In the end, he was killing the paper dolls using basic techniques alone. A straight punch, an elbow strike, a basic kick, a basic sweep; a simple cut, a basic swing, an orthodox block, a standard parry. He was able to hone his techniques to the point where every part of his body had become a weapon.

Finally, he managed to kill all of the paper dolls before his stamina ran out. But before he could even let out a sigh of relief, the temple suddenly shuddered unnaturally, and the heart, liver, spleen, lungs and kidneys flew out and turned into semi-transparent silhouettes.

### **You dare blaspheme against a god, mortal?**

Ye Qing looked up at the five silhouettes. One silhouette was holding a Five Fire Cover, another was gripping a Wooden Talisman Sword, a third was wielding a Qilin Shield, a fourth was swinging a White Tiger Truncheon, and the last silhouette was grasping a Water Splitting Battle Axe.

The next moment, five Vermillion Birds flew out of the Five Fire Cover and covered the sky in crimson fire, the Wooden Talisman Sword turned into the Azure Dragon and caused the forest to grow like crazy, the Qilin Shield turned into an actual Qilin that ripped the earth asunder, the White Tiger truncheon turned into the legendary White Tiger, and the Water Splitting Battle Axe turned into the Dark Tortoise.

Motherfucker!

Faced with such an apocalyptic scene, Ye Qing could only let out a furious, impotent cry before a sea of fire and water annihilated every atom in his body. The next moment, he opened his eyes and saw Nanke floating in the air, and its bronze double doors slowly swinging shut.

You're awake, master, White Lord greeted him smilingly after the doors were shut.

How much time has passed? Ye Qing asked.

Seven or eight minutes or so, Black Lord replied.

Only eight minutes? Ye Qing raised an eyebrow. He had survived over six hours in the dreamscape before the Five Temple God got serious and annihilated his ass, but in reality only eight minutes had passed. It really was the Nanke Dream.

Did you get what you were wishing for, master? White Lord asked.

I have! Ye Qing answered honestly.

As the saying went, there was no better teacher than experience. The six-hour long battle was short, but his understanding and mastery of his fist arts, saber arts, movement arts and more had jumped a level. His combat experience especially had increased drastically.

I lasted shorter than I expected though. Ye Qing looked at White Lord. Is every dream this difficult?

He lasted six hours only because he was strong. Anyone else at his cultivation level would probably last three hours at most. If he was a weakling, what improvement could he possibly derive from several minutes of combat?

The point was, this wasn't the significant improvement he was promised.

White Lord explained, Master, your dream is created based on your strength, the martial art you wish to improve in, and many more variables. To put it simply, the difficulty of the dream is directly proportional to your strength, the level of improvement you desire, and the number of martial arts you wish to improve at the same time.

Realization struck Ye Qing. No wonder the dream was as difficult as it was. When he constructed the dream, his wish was to improve in everything. Since every martial art he practiced was exceptional to a certain degree, it was no wonder he faced the Four fucking Symbols[4] themselves just six hours into the battle.

The next time he uses Nanke, he should envision one or two martial arts at most. This way, the dream would be more on point, and it wouldn't be so unbelievably difficult that he was booted out just six hours into the dream. That was the best way to maximize the Strange Artifacts effectiveness.

Why didn't you tell me this before? Ye Qing's voice turned a little icy.

You didn't ask, White Lord complained in an aggrieved voice.

Can I use Nanke again? Ye Qing asked.

White Lord shook its head. No. You'll need to wait a full day starting now.

Fine. By the way, may I know what your next request is? Ye Qing asked another question.

White Lord answered, It doesn't work like that, master. We'll only make a request the next time you use Nanke.

Fine. I should've known it would be a waste of breath! Ye Qing grunted.

Uwu I knew that all men are bastards! White Lord began weeping, When you need me, you'll call me baby. But as soon as you're done with me, you'll kick me aside like a pair of sandals!

Despicable! Black Lord spat on the floor.

In the end, Ye Qing shrugged. If that's what you think, then sure. I don't care to change your opinion. He then put Nanke away before they could make a response.

*Maybe I'm a playboy after all. When it comes to Strange Artifacts at least, muahahaha!*

After he put Nanke away, Ye Qing lay down on the bed and was out like a light.

Technically speaking, whatever he experienced inside the Nanke Dream wouldn't transmit to reality. But the dream was so real that he felt like he had just fought a six-hour long battle. Naturally, he needed a good sleep to wash away the fatigue.

It was midnight when it began raining cats and dogs again. The downpour was so strong it was as if the rainwater had merged with the night to form a black prison.

Suddenly, a patch of still shadow began to move unnaturally. It was an inn, but it was moving about like it was alive. The walls were wriggling, and a pair of giant eyeballs abruptly appeared to the left and right of the main entrance of the inn. The double doors opened and closed as a puff of hot air was ejected into the surroundings almost like a yawn.

Then, the inn shook and began rising into the air. What looked like four tortoise legs appeared on the four corners of the inn. The legs stretched and bent for a bit like a man who was stretching his legs, and the giant eyeballs shone with clear comfort.

*Whoosh!*

The next moment, the main entrance of the inn swung open, and the walls beside it crumpled inward. The strong wind and the cold rain were sucked into the inn until it grew an entire size.

Finally, the inn took off into the rain like a horse, except that it was an inn. It crossed mountains and rivers like they were nothing and traveled several kilometers in just the blink of an eye. Strangely, its movement didn't cause any sound whatsoever.

Mm

Inside his room, Ye Qing was deep asleep. However, his brows would knit together, and his breathing would turn rapid from time to time. He seemed to be sleeping very poorly for some reason.

Ye Qing was dreaming himself sleeping in his bed, but instead of getting twice the satisfaction, he dreamed that a pair of giant eyes would flutter open and stare at him from the ceiling every time he closed his eyes. But when he opened his eyes to look, the eyes would disappear like they never existed.

He knew they existed though. They just wouldn't appear when his eyes were open. It was almost like the pair of eyes was playing peekaboo with him. It was as eerie as it was preposterous.

Chapter 337: Tortoise House

While Ye Qing was involuntarily playing peekaboo in his dreams, he did not realize that a pair of giant eyes was watching him in real life.

Every time the giant eyes closed, his dream self would open his eyes and find nothing on the ceiling. When the giant eyes opened, he would fall asleep inside his dreams.

He thought that the giant eyes were playing peekaboo with him, but in reality, it was just blinking slowly.

An indefinite amount of time later, Ye Qing opened his eyes again but this time in reality. Seemingly caught off guard by Ye Qing's sudden awakening, two pairs of eyes of disproportionate sizes stared at each other for a good few seconds.

The moment didn't last. The giant eyes began blinking rapidly as it finally recovered from its surprise, and Ye Qing felt an overpowering wave of fatigue pressing down his eyelids. This time though, he was prepared. He protected his mind with his demonic thought, and the demonic lotus dispelled the exhaustion.

Hmph! Ye Qing grunted and used the Heavenly Demon Captures The Soul, his demonic thought sweeping across the area like a scythe.

Now fully awake, Ye Qing scanned his surroundings carefully with his demonic thought. However, his brows quickly knitted into a frown. He couldn't find the giant eyes, nor could he sense any anomalous presence inside his room. It was the same for Chu Nianjiu, Lin Yuhuai and Qi Xuanyin, though he noticed that their breathing was a little rapid and erratic.

What spot check? I didn't do anything! [1]

Did something happen?

What's wrong?

All three men startled awake at the same time.

Come out. Something has entered the inn! Ye Qing said seriously.

The three warriors frowned and appeared outside their rooms in the blink of an eye. When they saw Ye Qing standing at the dining hall on the first floor, they went over to him and asked, What's wrong, Joyless?

Ye Qing rubbed his nose and explained, Like I said, something is in the inn with us. I dreamed of a pair of giant eyes watching me from the ceiling. When I woke up, I noticed that there really was a pair of giant eyes watching me.

Huh? Did you feel like someone's watching you, but when you opened your eyes, you couldn't see anything out of the ordinary?

When Ye Qing nodded his head, Chu Nianjiu replied with a deep frown, I had the same dream as well.

Me too.

Same here.

Lin Yuhuai and Qi Xuanyun also echoed in agreement.

Do you know what's spying on us, Joyless? Chu Nianjiu asked.

No. The eyes disappeared when I tried to attack them, Ye Qing shook his head, and I haven't found anything so far.

Lin Yuhuai produced a yellow talisman with an eye drawn on it. It floated into the air of its own accord and scanned the surroundings, blinking.

Suddenly, the yellow talisman shuddered. Then, a tear slid down the eye.

The Divine Eye is crying, so something is definitely wrong with this place. But I don't think there's any danger for now, Lin Yuhuai declared after putting away the talisman.

The yellow talisman he just used was called the Malefice Detection Talisman. If the Divine Eye didn't move, then the area was considered safe. If the Divine Eye shed tears, then it meant that the area was unusual, but there was no danger. Finally, if the Divine Eye shed tears of blood, then it meant that the area was unusual, and there was grave danger lurking within it.

Ye Qing rubbed his nose thoughtfully. He was still thinking when Qi Xuanyun spoke up, Huh? Why are the windows closed? I'm pretty sure some of them were open when we went to bed earlier.

The windows? Wait a second Ye Qing's finger paused when he realized something. He hadn't looked beyond the inn because his attention was all focused on what was inside. He immediately stretched his demonic thought outward to perceive his surroundings, but all he could sense was a blank, empty void.

As it turned out, the anomaly wasn't in the inn with them. The inn itself was anomalous.

Ye Qing stepped toward the main entrance and attempted to pull the double doors open. However, they didn't budge in the slightest.

He wasn't using his full strength as a matter of course, but there was no way a simple wooden door could resist him. Heck, not even a steel door that weighed hundreds of kilograms could resist his strength.

I thought this might happen. Ye Qing narrowed his eyes and channeled his full strength. His arm muscles bulged, and his vigor raced at top speed. Then, he pulled the doors again.

*Creaaaaaaaaak*

The double doors strained under the strength of five dragon elephants, but instead of opening, they simply bent at an odd angle. Even the walls were stretching together with the doors. It wasn't working.

Try the windows!

Ye Qing sucked in a deep breath until his stomach rumbled like thunder, blue veins surfaced on his arms, and his muscles bulged like the roots of a tree. Then, he continued pulling the doors with all his might.

At the same time, Chu Nianjiu, Lin Yuhuai and Qi Xuanyun went up to a window each and tried to open them. Unsurprisingly, they were sealed shut.

Shit, I can't open this

*BANG!*

A short while later, Ye Qing came to the conclusion that the doors wouldn't yield to his strength and gave up reluctantly. The doors and the walls immediately bounced back in position and even shook a little almost like they were flesh, not wood or mud.

The hard way it is!

Ye Qing gathered his qi, essence and spirit at one point and launched a devastating punch.

*Break Through*

His fist sank several inches into the door like it was rubber, but that was it.

*Bang!*

When Ye Qing injected more strength into his legs, his feet sank into the floor like it was rubber as well. His spine snapped straight like a dragon, and his fist moved forward another inch.

One inch was enough to conjure rain and thunder.

Rumbling noises came from the point between his fist and the door, and even more force poured out of Ye Qings body. The door gave way a couple more inches, but still it refused to open.

Hmph!

The next moment, the force rebounded and pushed him away from the door. He stifled a groan as his feet dug a pair of deep gorges across the floor. He didnt stop until he finally slammed into the wall on the opposite end of the room.

It was like the floor was made of memory foam. It returned to normal almost as soon as Ye Qings feet had left the affected area.

On the other side, Chu Nianjiu, Lin Yuhuai and Qi Xuanyun were attacking the windows using their martial arts as well, but just like Ye Qing, neither ice, fire, wind or lightning could deal any damage to it at all.

Glug

Glug

It was at this moment the entire inn suddenly shook like it was alive. The walls were squirming, the furniture was warping, and the floor was twisting like it was being molded by an invisible hand.

At the same time, a strange noise was resounding throughout the inn. It sounded suspiciously similar to the sound of someone clearing their throat.

Oh shit!

Ye Qings eyes flashed with realization as attempted to cry out a warning. But before he could do so, the double doors abruptly flung open, and all four of them were sucked out of the entrance by an irresistible force. Like dandelion seeds that had left their roots, they could only tumble helplessly through the air until gravity finally pulled them back toward the ground, hard. Even after they landed, they rolled uncontrollably for dozens of revolutions and broke at least a couple of trees before they finally came to a stop.

Cough! Cough! Spit

All four men were Spirit Purifiers, so the crash that couldve killed an ordinary person a million times over didnt hurt any of them. The dizziness was no joke, however. It was all they could do not to throw up all the contents in their stomachs, and the soil they accidentally swallowed certainly didnt help things.

Achoo!

Achoo!

ACHOO!

It took the group a while to realize that the sneezes weren't coming from one of them. When they turned and looked, they were immediately greeted by the unbelievable sight of a massive building with giant eyes on the walls sneezing repeatedly. Every time it sneezed, the air it discharged was strong enough to uproot trees and shake the ground like an earthquake.

Is that All Cattle Inn?! Qi Xuanyun blurted with wide-eyed disbelief.

It definitely is. Look! The signboard is still up there! Lin Yuhuai pointed.

Can anyone tell me why All Cattle Inn turned into whatever the hell that is? Chu Nianjiu instinctively reached for his wine gourd only to remember that he had left it inside the inn.

Tortoise legs, two eyes, a living building Ye Qing murmured as he stared at the sneezing inn intently.

Joyless? Chu Nianjiu looked at Ye Qing. Do you know what that is?

It's a Tortoise House! Ye Qing exclaimed suddenly.

A Tortoise House? Qi Xuanyun repeated.

Ye Qing began slowly, I read a book called Jade Dragon Record. It mentioned a mild-tempered Stranger who was shaped like a house and born with two eyes and four legs. It loves living with humans and running, and it usually travels at night and stops during the day. It could usually run hundreds of kilometers in a single night. Since it looked like a tortoise, it was named the Tortoise House.

The chapter also came attached with the Tortoise Houses characteristics and various stories, but long story short, it's almost a perfect match with what we just saw. It has two eyes and four tortoise legs. It enjoys observing the humans living inside its house or rather, its body but doesn't harm them. It also runs like the wind.

The Tortoise House, you say? It's hard to believe that such a Stranger exists in this world! Chu Nianjiu exclaimed in wonder. They were lucky that the Tortoise House was a rare gentle Stranger. Any other Stranger would have digested them for turning their insides inside out.

Assuming Joyless is correct, then this explains how the Jiao husband and wife were able to escape punishment until now, Lin Yuhuai mused thoughtfully.

All Cattle Inn had existed for many years and harmed countless people in the process, but they were always able to escape thanks to their strange ability to appear at a completely different place seemingly overnight. They must have a way to manipulate the Tortoise House and use it as their mount.

Agreed. Ye Qing nodded. In fact, an even more incredible Stranger was mentioned in the Jade Dragon Record. It's called the Tortoise City, and as you might infer from its name, it is a tortoise so large that it could carry an entire city on its back. The Tortoise House is a baby compared to it.

It is said that tens of thousands of people lived in the Tortoise City, and it resembles a small, isolated country. As the Tortoise City only lives in places where sources of water and plants are abundant, its people are well fed and clothed. It is also shielded from all dangers or disasters. It is why the Tortoise City is also nicknamed the Human Paradise.

I've heard of the Tortoise City, but this is the first time I've heard and seen the Tortoise House, Lin Yuhuai replied.

You're incredibly well-informed, Brother Ye! Qi Xuanyun looked impressed.

It's nothing. You just need to read more, Ye Qing replied humbly.

The book also mentioned that the Tortoise House was an incredibly useful transportation tool as it could travel hundreds of kilometers in a single night. In fact, it was so steady that he didn't realize that it was moving at all while he was inside it. Still, the Tortoise House was also an immeasurably powerful Stranger. Even his full power could not harm the Tortoise House in the slightest. It was one thing to manipulate it like the Jiao husband and wife did, but he imagined that only a truly powerful warrior could truly tame it.

Achoo!

Achoo!

A long distance away, the Tortoise House sneezed another two times before shaking back and forth like a human would shake its head. It shot them a glance before disappearing into the night.

Phew it's finally gone.

All four men sighed out in relief when they saw this. Although the book claimed that the Tortoise House was gentle, whoever said that what was recorded in the books must reflect reality? A simple sneeze from the Stranger could literally uproot trees and cause a mini earthquake. They would be lying if they said they weren't wary of it.

Chapter 338: Coffin Haulier

Ye Qing wiped away the rainwater on his face and said, It's gone, but now we have a new problem to solve.

What problem? Chu Nianjiu produced a wine jar from his Nature's Shell and took a sip.

Where are we? Ye Qing snatched the wine jar and took a sip as well. Warmth spread inside his stomach and chased away the night's chill.

You're right! Where did the Tortoise House drop us? Qi Xuanyun exclaimed in shock.

Ye Qing grimaced. A Tortoise House goes wherever it pleases, but normally, it would stop close to a settlement. But since we exited the Tortoise House halfway, this could easily be the middle of nowhere.

And you didn't think to mention this earlier, brother? Chu Nianjiu glared at Ye Qing, though it was mostly because the young man had stolen his wine. Again.

Ye Qing replied innocently, I just remembered.

Can we still catch up to it? Qi Xuanyun asked hurriedly.



Sure if you can move faster than the Tortoise House that is. Ye Qing smirked.

Oh never mind then. Qi Xuanyun bowed his head in shame. The Tortoise House could supposedly travel hundreds of kilometers in a single night. There was no Spirit Purifier in the world who could catch up to it.

It was at this moment Lin Yuhuai spoke up, Its around 3.45 am right now. Were still two hours or so away from dawn. If you are right about the Tortoise House traveling at night and stopping during the day, then we simply need to follow its trail for two hours or so to make it to settlement, or at least close to one.

Smart! Chu Nianjiu snapped his fingers and hung an arm across his companions shoulders. I knew you'd be more reliable than Joyless.

Ye Qing rolled his eyes. And how am I unreliable, exactly?

Chu Nianjiu replied matter-of-factly, If you haven't made a racket during midnight and even tried to dismantle the Tortoise Houses insides, it wouldn't have spat us out and left us to dry, or should I say, wet. It might even have carried us all the way to Tian Yong if we were lucky.

So it's my fault? Ye Qing rubbed his nose.

Im glad you can recognize your own mistakes. Chu Nianjiu gave Ye Qing a pat on the shoulder. Then, he strode off toward the distance and said, Now, let us be off!

Your face is thicker, so whatever you say. Ye Qing shrugged in Lin Yuhuai and Qi Xuanyun's direction before walking after Chu Nianjiu. They all began following the trail the Tortoise House left behind.

It was night and raining cats and dogs, but since they were all Spirit Purifiers, the detrimental environment wasn't really an issue. Add to the fact that Lin Yuhuai was using a Horse Talisman, and they had walked almost ten kilometers in just half an hour[1].

What's that down there?

Suddenly, Lin Yuhuai was taking the lead since he was the best at navigating out of all of them. Stopped in his tracks.

They were currently standing on a small hill. When Ye Qing looked over the cliff, he saw four people carrying a coffin and trekking through the rain without a sound at the bottom.

Standing on the head of the coffin was a large, magnificent-looking cock. It was flapping its wings and crowing from time to time. Standing on the rear end of the coffin was a black cat with smooth, shiny fur and blue eyes that shone eerily in the night. It was a frightening sight to say the least.

The coffin looked pretty heavy, and the ground was anything but even. Despite this, the four men overcame the terrain without any difficulties whatsoever.

It was strange enough to find a group of people carrying a coffin deep in the mountains. The fact that it was past midnight and raining cats and dogs only made things creepier.

Are they human or Stranger? Qi Xuanyun shivered as purple lightning sparkled within his sleeves.

Stop. They are human. Ye Qing stopped the young Taoist before he did something he might regret.

Yes, they're human. Coffin hauliers to be exact, Chu Nianjiu added. A black cat, a cock, long robes and masks. Those are the characteristics of a coffin haulier.

Coffin haulier? Ye Qing asked curiously.

Chu Nianjiu answered, Coffin haulier is a very special occupation, and not just for the reasons you think. Similar to corpse carriers, corpse shepherds and coffin raisers, their job is to carry a body that has died in a foreign place back to their homeland to be buried.

Coffin hauliers often have to deal with ghosts and evil creatures due to the nature of their trade, so they came to possess a unique set of skills and inheritances. I once interacted with some coffin hauliers by chance and picked up some of their rules and taboos.

First, not everyone can become a coffin haulier. They must be born between 11.45 am to 12.45 pm, the time where yang energy was the strongest. People who were born at this time possessed strong affinity for yang energy and were naturally resistant toward ghosts, evils, and many taboos.

There are many rules a coffin haulier must obey. For starters, they must wear a yaksha[2] mask when performing their jobs because a yaksha is a common soldier in the Fengdu. One look at their faces, and the weaker ghosts and evils would be too scared to try anything.

All coffin hauliers must wear a black robe called the Fearless Robe. They're delivering a coffin at night after all. If they can do this, what other taboo could they possibly fear?

The cock on the head of the coffin is called the Walker Cock. The Walker Cock must be the strongest and most majestic of cocks, and it must crow every time they had walked a hundred steps. A Walker Cocks crow also possessed the power to intimidate Strangers and repel evils.

The cat on the rear end of the coffin is called the Omen Cat. Cats are strange creatures who naturally possess the ability to see ghosts, and an Omen Cat is a cat that is raised by a Coffin Haulier. If the cat puffs up its fur, screeches, or runs away, it means that danger or some sort of anomaly is nearby.

Coffin hauliers normally travel at night and rest during the day to avoid scaring others[3]. It is also advisable not to call out or disturb the coffin hauliers in the middle of a job because bad things are sure to follow. So on and so on.

How interesting! Ye Qing was deeply engrossed with the tale.

Chu Nianjiu continued while watching the coffin hauliers from afar, Generally speaking, a coffin haulier only needs to wear a yaksha mask and a Fearless Robe to deliver an ordinary person's corpse. But the coffin these people are hauling is made of golden zhennan wood[4], a wood that is known for its evil suppressing properties, and the pole used to carry the coffin is a century-old Mahogany Pole. The rope is soaked in a black dog's blood, the knot binding the coffin is a Seven Star Knot, and the four corners of the coffin are nailed by Corpse Suppression Nails, not to mention the Walker Cock and the Omen Cat.

This is the highest level of precaution a Coffin Haulier could take when delivering a corpse. They call it Carrying the King of Corpses. This means that the body they're carrying is incredibly dangerous.

Are you sure? Qi Xuanyun asked somewhat skeptically.

Chu Nianjiu's tone turned a tad melancholic. It is very dangerous to carry out a job at this level. There's an extremely high chance they're all going to die on the job, which is what happened to my friends back then. Their bodies were never found.

Qi Xuanyun hurriedly apologized, Sorry, Brother Chu. I didn't know!

Chu Nianjiu smiled. It's fine. It happened a long time ago.

Anyway, we can resume our journey now that the coffin hauliers are gone.

After they got off the hill, Chu Nianjiu looked at the coffin hauliers' muddy footprints and said, We can follow their trail. The coffin hauliers can only be headed for a settlement, and generally speaking their trail is less likely to be haunted by Strangers and other evils.

Meow!

Meow!!!

*Meeeeooooooooowwww!!!*

It hadn't been too long since they followed the coffin hauliers' trail when suddenly, a terrible cat's screech pierced through the night. It sounded shrill and urgent as if it had encountered something absolutely terrifying.

Something's wrong! Chu Nianjiu blanched and raced toward the source of the noise without thinking. The rest of them didn't hesitate to follow after him.

They saw the four coffin hauliers just a dozen or so breaths later. For some reason, the coffin hauliers were just standing where they were, eyes unfocused and unmoving. The rope binding the coffin had snapped in half, and the black cat and the cock were nowhere to be found.

Even eerier was the fact that countless ghosts were floating around the coffin. They seemed to be kneeling on the ground and praying at the coffin. Their movements were perfectly in sync almost as if they had practiced this before.

*It's like a Ghost King, to have hundreds of ghosts kowtowing to it like loyal subjects. Chu Nianjiu isn't kidding about its danger level.*

Ye Qing's expression was wary and serious. Individually, the ghosts weren't nearly strong enough to threaten them, but quantity was a great equalizer.

Lin Yuhuai examined his surroundings and said slowly, These are all locust trees which makes it incredibly easy for yin energy to accumulate. No wonder there are so many ghosts at this place.

Locust trees were also known as yin wood or ghost wood among the populace. It was because they often attracted stray ghosts and souls to their side. This place was full of locust trees, wet, and overflowing with yin qi. It was no wonder there were hundreds of ghosts in this place even though it was in the middle of nowhere.

*Bang!*

*Bang!*

*Bang!*

As the ghosts continued to pray, the coffin lid suddenly shook as if someone was trying to bang their way out of the coffin. It was also growing stronger probably because of the ghosts prayer.

We cannot allow that thing to exit the coffin! Chu Nianjiu turned pale and yelled immediately.

Lets kill the ghosts first, Ye Qing declared and threw a punch. The Burning Wind burned entire swathes of ghosts into dust but didnt touch a hair on the four coffin hauliers.

Chu Nianjiu, Lin Yuhuai and Qi Xuanyun unleashed their powers as well.

Although the ghosts were numerous, they were Malice-class Strangers at most. It took the group of four little time to kill them all. Then, Lin Yuhuai dashed over to the coffin and slapped a yellow talisman on it.

*Sizzle!*

The coffin fell silent for an instant. Then, the yellow talisman began burning earnestly, and the banging renewed twice as strong and loud as before.

Ye Qing frowned and placed a hand on the coffin lid. He pushed so hard that the entire thing sank several inches into the ground.

The shaking was considerably weaker than before, but Ye Qings expression didnt relax in the slightest. Even with five dragon elephant strength, he was just barely keeping the coffin lid in place. Not only that, layers of frost were creeping up his right hand, and yin qi colder than anything he had ever felt was invading his body and ravaging his insides.

Save the coffin hauliers first! They would know what to do! Chu Nianjiu yelled and flicked a drop of water at the two coffin hauliers who were closest to him each.

As soon as the water seeped into the mens foreheads, two ghastly silhouettes immediately floated out of their bodies.

I knew it. Hmph!

Chu Nianjiu made a grabbing motion, and the ghastly silhouettes disappeared in the blink of an eye.

At the same time, two yellow talismans flew out of Lin Yuhuais sleeves and plastered themselves on the other two coffin hauliers forehead. When they burned, another two ghosts flew into the open. They didnt get far before two bolts of lightning annihilated their existence.

The four coffin hauliers swiftly regained their consciousness, but there was no time to thank their saviors. They each produced a dark yellow, rusted nail from their pocket, ran up to the four corners of the coffin, and began hammering it in with a wooden hammer.

*Bang! Bang! Bang!*

Their movements were well-practiced and in sync. Every time the nails sank an inch into the coffin, a terrifying burst of yin energy would wash out of the coffin. It turned the ground into ice and killed every plant unfortunate enough to be caught in it.

Luckily, the tremors also grew weaker and weaker. When all four nails sank fully into the coffin at the same time, the coffin stopped shaking altogether.

## Chapter 339: Death Knell

All four coffin hauliers sighed in relief when the coffin stopped shaking completely. One of them turned toward the group and saluted them deeply. Thank you so much for saving our lives, warriors.

You're welcome. Ye Qing returned the salute.

Where's your head? Chu Nianjiu asked.

The four coffin hauliers immediately stared at him with unfriendly, suspicious eyes.

It takes five coffin hauliers at minimum to carry the King of Corpses—four people to carry the coffin, and one head to scout the route ahead. Chu Nianjiu said slowly, I thought your head was scouting ahead of you, but obviously that isn't the case.

If they really had a fifth member, the coffin hauliers would not have entered such a dangerous location.

The coffin hauliers didn't respond to his question. Their gazes were also growing increasingly hostile.

Haha, calm down, brothers. We're not bad people. Chu Nianjiu chuckled before crossing his fingers together with his thumbs pointing toward the ground. It looked like he was about to kowtow to the coffin hauliers.

Oh, a friend. The coffin haulier let out an obvious sigh of relief before crossing his fingers in the opposite way, and his thumbs were pointed toward the sky[1]. It looked like he was praying to the heavens.

These three are my friends. They're good people. Chu Nianjiu smiled. My name is Chu Nianjiu.

The hand gesture he performed earlier was a common greeting between coffin hauliers. A body belonged to the earth, so one must pray to the earth before putting the body in a coffin. That was what his hand gesture symbolized. But a coffin haulier relied on the heavens to grant them safe passage while they carried a body to its destination, so they must pray to the heavens before departing on their journey.

These hand signals were generally known to coffin hauliers only. That was why very few people knew about it.

The coffin haulier introduced themselves, My name is Peng Hu, and these three are my brothers. They're Peng Lin, Peng Shan and Peng Chuan.

You're all Pengs? Would you happen to hail from the Peng Clan of Jian Nan? Chu Nianjiu asked curiously.

You heard of my clan, brother? Peng Hu exclaimed in surprise.

Although the Peng Clan was considered a major martial clan in Jian Nan, few people knew about their ancestral profession.

Chu Nianjiu smiled. Three years ago, I made the acquaintance of a disciple of the Peng Clan.

May I know who that person is? Peng Hu asked.

His name is Peng Feipao, Chu Nianjiu answered. He claimed to be the firstborn of the Peng family, and that it was the biggest misfortune of his life. It was because he had to take care of two useless younger brothers all day and night.

Hahaha! You're speaking of Young Master Feipao! Peng Hu's smile widened. It would seem that he had tweaked some details of the truth though. For starters, he's not the oldest of our three young masters. He is the youngest.

Moreover, both of his older brothers are far more capable than Young Master Feipao. They have been slowly taking over the family business and calling the shots in recent years. Young Master Feipao is the one who's an idler with no notable achievements under his belt. He was kicked out of the clan a few years ago, so it was probably around that time where you ran into our young master.

He was expelled from the clan? Chu Nianjiu exclaimed with surprise before chuckling. Everything makes sense now. I wondered why the young master of the Peng Clan looked worse than a beggar.

The first time I encountered him, he had been starving for three days. He was so desperate he tried to swindle a little girl into giving him her cotton candy, heh

Later, when I treated him to a drink, he boasted to me how much of a genius he was and how he was the highest authority in the Peng Clan save for his father. He even promised to treat me at Jian Nans best brothels such as the Qiqi Brothel, Orchids Shape and more. I guess it was all a lie!

Hahaha Young Master Feipao is a little Peng Hu scratched his head awkwardly. Even he felt second-hand embarrassment on behalf of Peng Feipao.

He no longer suspected Chu Nianjiu of foul play though. Only an acquaintance of Peng Feipao would be able to point out his true character and behavior.

Anyway, let's get serious, shall we? Chu Nianjiu's gaze turned serious. Can you tell me what happened to your head?

Peng Hu hesitated for a second before admitting, To be honest with you, our head died some time ago.

He's dead? Chu Nianjiu was stunned. The head of the coffin hauliers was normally the strongest and most experienced of them all. These four coffin hauliers were middle-stage Astral Refiners, so their head had to be a late-stage Astral Refiner or even a Spirit Purifier.

Then why are you still carrying the King of Corpses? Don't you know that's plain suicide? Chu Nianjiu's voice grew harsh.

Peng Hu didn't take offense with his tone, however. He let out a bitter chuckle and explained, That's because the body is one of our clan elders. We had to bring him back to the clan no matter what.

A member of the Peng Clan must be put to rest where their roots are.

The body is an elder of your clan? Chu Nianjiu looked even more confused. How did your elder perish in a foreign land and turn into this?

The horror contained within the coffin was no joke. They had all experienced its power.

Peng Hu took a moment to organize his answer. To be honest, we're not very sure ourselves. Our elder went to Tian Yong to help out a friend, but several days later, we received word that he had

died in an uninhabited mountain. His cause of death was unknown. Later, the patriarch ordered us to bring the body back to the family.

We started the journey with nine people: eight coffin hauliers and one head. The journey to our destination was smooth, and the clan elders body looked perfectly normal when we placed him in the coffin. We thought it would be an easy job and carried on with our duties as per standard procedure.

However, we heard strange noises from the coffin not long after we began our return journey. One of our brothers suddenly turned into a charred corpse, but no signs of fire could be seen around him. We had no idea what happened to him.

Its not unusual for a coffin haulier to lose a man or two during the journey back, and since we couldnt find what had killed him, we decided that the faster we make it back to the clan, the safer we would be. But the next day, another one of one brothers died a strange and inexplicable death. His body was bloated and discolored, and both his nose and his mouth were covered in soil. It was like he had drowned underground.

A tremor entered Peng Hus voice when he said this, By now, we realized that this wasnt going to be an easy job. Odd noises were coming from the coffin more frequently as well. Our head immediately declared a Carrying the King of Corpses and took the necessary measures.

It was peaceful for two days. Then, the anomalies resumed.

First, one brother suddenly shattered into a million pieces while carrying the coffin. Then, someone got caught in a quicksand and died.

Worse, the thing inside the coffin is growing stronger with each death. At some point, our head had to nail four Corpse Suppressing Nails into the coffin to finally suppress it. It proved to be a temporary measure, however.

Peng Hus eyes started darting around when he said this. He was also shivering a little.

Ye Qing frowned. Why didnt you open the coffin and check out whats going on inside?

Peng Hu shook his head. One of our rules states that a coffin cannot be opened the moment the body is on its way toward its final resting place. It is unlucky to break this taboo.

Chu Nianjiu helpfully added, Hes right. While the coffin is being delivered, it cannot be opened barring exceptional circumstances. For one, it is considered disrespectful toward the dead, and two, such an ill-fated act would draw evils and Strangers.

Chu Nianjiu asked, What happened to your head?

Peng Hu said sorrowfully, He passed away last night. We were passing through a forest, and he was scouting ahead like usual. Suddenly, the coffin made a strange noise, and he slipped and fell into a valley like he was possessed. He was skewered by a bunch of branches and killed.

Now only four of us are left.

Chu Nianjiu was silent for a moment. To tell you the truth, the chance that the four of you are going to complete your job is very slim. Its far more likely that youre going to die on the job. Personally, I would advise you to seal the coffin temporarily and message the Peng Clan to send reinforcements.

But Peng Hu shook his head stubbornly. Unacceptable. The Peng Clan had already prepared the altar and selected the best time and date to bury the body. We must take the body back on time.

You are Lin Yuhuai wanted to say something, but in the end he was unable to find the words to describe his exact feelings.

I know you mean well, but the Peng Clan has its own rules and principles. Peng Hu looked at them with unwavering determination. Im sorry, but well have to decline your suggestion.

In that case, I wont try to change your mind. Chu Nianjiu sighed before asking, Oh right, do you know where the closest settlement is from here, Brother Peng? To tell you the truth, were lost!

Peng Hu answered, Ah, there is a small village named Auspicious Phoenix Market about ten or so kilometers from here. Head south from there, and youll reach Qing He[2].

Thanks for the directions. Chu Nianjiu saluted Peng Hu before adding, It looks like youre planning to rest and resupply at Auspicious Phoenix Market as well. If you dont mind, can you lead us there?

That was what he said, but everyone knew he really wanted to protect the coffin hauliers. He didnt make the decision on his own, however. He looked at his companions and asked, Are you all okay with that?

I have no opinion, Lin Yuhuai replied.

Same here, Qi Xuanyun hurriedly answered.

Sorry to inconvenience you, Brother Peng! Ye Qing saluted Peng Hu.

Thats

Peng Hu knew what they were planning and wanted to turn them down, but Chu Nianjiu cut him off with a smile and said, Feipao is my friend, you know. Surely I can do him a favor?

Very well! Peng Hu chuckled bitterly and accepted the offer. Please give me a moment.

Peng Hu walked up to the coffin and pulled it out of its hole. Then, he commanded his companions, Get the ropes!

Two coffin hauliers immediately pulled out a pair of ropes that were drenched in a black dogs blood. They tied the two ends of the coffin firmly.

Like carrying a mountain

After the coffin was firmly secured, they went under the Mahogany Poles and grabbed it firmly.

Protect us, gods and Buddhas. Taboos are nothing to us!

Raise!

With that, the four men strained their muscles and lifted the coffin into the air. After they gave Ye Qing and the others a nod, they started running forward at a blistering pace.

Keep up, everyone! Chu Nianjiu yelled and raced after the coffin hauliers.



Caw! Caw!

Crows cawing at the dead of the night? This is a little inauspicious, isn't it? Ye Qing remarked unhappily when he heard the caws.

They're just crows, dude. Superstitious much? Chu Nianjiu scoffed.

Qi Xuanyun corrected him immediately from on top of his paper horse, You are wrong, Brother Chu. If you saw a black dog digging a grave, a crow cawing during the second half of the night, a stray cat laughing, a cock flinching, an incense stick that is conspicuously long compared to the other two incense sticks[3], or using a pair of chopsticks upside down during a meal, then you must have encountered some sort of evil. That's what my master told me.

What Qi Xuanyun said was, in fact, fairly common taboos and gathas. If a black dog pawed at a grave, it meant that a corpse was coming to life. If a crow cawed during midnight, even gods and ghosts would stay out of an area, much less a human. If a stray cat was smiling, it was the screech of a deity or a ghost. If a cock was flinching, then the ghost that scared it must be incredibly scary. If an incense stick was conspicuously longer than the other two incense sticks, then the human who saw it didn't have much longer to live.

And finally, only a ghost would eat with the butt end of a pair of chopsticks.

Were these taboos and gatha true? Not necessarily. But in this world, it was better to be safe than sorry.

#### Chapter 340: The Dead Kowtows

Have you actually seen any one of these taboos coming true with your own eyes? Chu Nianjiu countered.

Qi Xuanyun turned a little red. In fact, I have.

During my journey, I saw a family paying their respects to a dead relative. For some reason, one of the three incense sticks they burned was conspicuously long compared to the others. They either didn't know about the taboo or didn't take it to heart, but the next day, the whole family of five all died a sudden, inexplicable death.

Lin Yuhuai smiled. When it comes to these things, it's better to believe that it's real than otherwise. Plus, the gathas aren't complete nonsense. Cats, dogs, crows and cocks are all naturally spiritual animals who are especially sensitive toward evils and filth.

Fine, forget what I said. Chu Nianjiu shrugged.

They continued to navigate through the forest following Peng Hus group, but as they walked, the crows began cawing again.

Caw! Caw!

Caw! Caw!

Strange. I keep hearing caws, but why can't I see a single crow? Qi Xuanyun muttered under his breath when he heard the caws again.

What did you just say? Ye Qing abruptly stiffened like a statue.

B Brother Ye? What's wrong? His reaction was so intense that it caught Qi Xuanyun off guard.

I was wondering why I keep feeling like something isn't right. Now I understand.

Qi Xuanyun was just talking to himself, but his words lifted a strange worry that had been plaguing Ye Qing since he heard the caws. His eyes abruptly turned pitch black as he tapped the space in front of him.

*Buzz!*

His demonic thought rippled, and the scenery around them abruptly shattered like glass.

They weren't walking in the middle of a forest, rain and vapor. No, they were standing just a few steps away from a cliff.

As for Peng Hu, the situation was far worse. Half of his foot was sticking out of the cliff's edge. Just one more step, and he would fall straight to his death.

For some reason, Peng Hu couldn't seem to perceive the danger he was in. He lifted his foot to take another step forward.

PENG HU! Chu Nianjiu yelled at the top of his lungs.

Someone moved faster than his voice could travel. Ye Qing abruptly appeared next to Peng Hu like a ghost and caught his shoulder in a firm grip, forcing him to stop.

Ye Qing looked down and saw a man hanging on the cliff with both hands. His body was completely broken, his head was shattered so badly that brain matter was leaking all over the place, and his body was covered in blood and brain matter. Right now, the man was glaring at Ye Qing while sticking out his long, long tongue.

Is this the Cliff Ghost? exclaimed Lin Yuhuai as he appeared next to Ye Qing.

Did it blind us with an illusion?! Chu Nianjiu asked.

Yeah. Ye Qing nodded.

The Cliff Ghost was a person who fell off a cliff and died, but they refused to pass away into the afterlife due to overwhelming hatred or resentment. So, they turned into an evil ghost.

A Cliff Ghost normally clung to the cliffside waiting for preys to pass through the area. Then, it would blind its prey with illusions and cause them to fall off a cliff and die.

The more people it killed, the stronger it would become. The Cliff Ghost in front of them was a Hatred-class Stranger.

Uwargh!

Seeing that its ploy had failed, the Cliff Ghost let out a weird scream and tried to attack Ye Qing.

*Palm Thunder*

But before Ye Qing could even do anything, Qi Xuanyun fired a Palm Thunder at it and removed it from existence.

Objectively speaking, a Cliff Ghost was terrible in a straight fight. Its true strength lay in its ability to seamlessly trap its victims within its illusions.

Even Ye Qing didnt realize that something was amiss until Qi Xuanyun had unwittingly given him a flash of inspiration.

Peng Hu and the other coffin hauliers snapped back to reality after the Cliff Ghost was killed.

Where are we? What happened? Peng Hu voiced his confusion.

You were blinded by an illusion just now, Chu Nianjiu explained.

A Cliff Ghost?! Peng Hu was an experienced coffin haulier. He immediately figured out the truth.

In fact, most coffin hauliers were just as experienced and knowledgeable as a member of the Pacification Bureau. After all, their job involved carrying dead bodies at night and traveling everywhere under the sun. Bodies were naturally attractive to Strangers and the like, so they couldnt help but be experienced even if they didnt want to.

Peng Hu looked grateful. Thank you for saving our lives, Brother Chu. That wouldve killed us all.

Dont thank me. Joyless is the one who saved you. Chu Nianjiu pointed at Ye Qing.

Thank you, Brother Ye! All four coffin hauliers saluted Ye Qing deeply.

Dont thank me. Thank it! Ye Qing pointed at a crow perched on top of a crooked tree next to the cliff. A white crow to be exact.

The Crow of Light?! Peng Hu recognized the white crow immediately.

Thats right. Ye Qing smiled.

If say, the Cliff Ghost was an evil Stranger created from the resentful soul of a victim who fell off a cliff, then the Crow of Light was a good Stranger created from that very same soul.

When the Cliff Ghost blinded someone with its illusions to lure them to their deaths, the Crow of Light would caw repeatedly to warn them of the danger.

For whatever reason, the Cliff Ghost couldnt create an illusion of the Crow of Light probably because it was its antithesis. It couldnt mask the Strangers caws either.

The humans were expected to recognize the discrepancy and subsequently the danger they were in.

Caw! Caw!

Seeing that everyone was looking at it, the Crow of Light cawed one last time before flying down the cliff and disappearing into the clouds below.

Wait a second. Why couldnt I hear its caws? Peng Hu suddenly realized something.

Ye Qing thought for a second. Its probably because of the coffin youre carrying!

Peng Hu instinctively opened his mouth to refute it, but when he really thought about it, he couldnt deny the possibility at all.

Thats that. Let us resume our journey! Chu Nianjiu said.

Peng Hu nodded, and the coffin hauliers lifted the coffin once more. However, they had just left the cliff when suddenly, they heard banging noises from the coffin again. In fact, the very first bang was enough to snap the ropes and cause the coffin to fall to the ground.

Get the Corpse Suppression Nails! Peng Hu roared when he saw this.

He had just finished when he saw Peng Chuan kneeling in front of the coffin and clutching his stomach with a pained expression on his face.

Peng Chuans stomach began swelling bit by bit. Water mixed with bits of sand and soil started leaking from his eyes, ears, nose and mouth.

Grrrrrrr!

Peng Chuan clutched his own throat with a death grip. As soon as he opened his mouth, a stream of murky water immediately splashed against the ground.

Peng Chuan! Peng Hu cried out in shock as produced a line marker[1]. He then threw an ink black thread at his brothers forehead.

Unfortunately, the ink black thread ignited before it even touched Peng Chuans forehead. The line marker he was holding also exploded into smithereens all of a sudden and covered Peng Hu in ink.

What the

Peng Hus wide-eyed expression made it clear that he wasnt expecting this. The line marker he used was a signature Strange Artifact among the coffin hauliers. The line marker was made of Thunderstruck Wood, the ink was a black dogs blood, and the thread was created by the hands of a virgin boy. The combination of evil suppressing qualities was so potent that it could flay half the life of a Hatred-class Stranger with a single touch. But now, it couldnt even touch Peng Chuan.

Lin Yuhuais reaction was no slower than Peng Hus. At the same time the coffin hauliers ink marker exploded, he appeared in front of Peng Chuan and attempted to slap a yellow talisman on his forehead.

*Crackle!*

Unfortunately, the outcome was the same. The yellow talisman was halfway to Peng Chuans forehead when it abruptly burned into ash.

The coffin!

Ye Qing chose to tackle the coffin and slapped his hand over the body. An unbelievably cold and evil stream of energy immediately poured into his body.

Using his astral qi as the fuel and his body as the furnace, Ye Qing refined the yin energy pouring into his body and surrounded the coffin in Burning Wind at the same time.

The Burning Wind was one of the hottest and most yang astral qi in the world. It was slowly but surely neutralizing the yin energy inside the coffin.

The problem was that Peng Chuan was still leaking muddy water from his orifices. His skin was starting to bloat and turn pale like that of a drowned body.

What do we do? Peng Hu was so anxious that his eyes were bloodshot.

We open the coffin! Ye Qing replied without hesitation. He was hoping that suppressing the entity within the coffin would be enough to eliminate Peng Chuans symptoms, but it hadnt worked at all.

The only way to save Peng Chuan now was to open the coffin and check what the hell was going on inside.

No! You cant do that! Peng Hu cried.

Ye Qings eyes glinted dangerously. Who is more important, the living or the dead?

But thats Peng Hu looked conflicted.

I Peng Hu was paralyzed with indecision.

Ye Qing didnt care to wait for Peng Hu to arrive at a decision. Every wasted second was a second Peng Chuan came closer to death. He unleashed his force and threw the coffin lid into the air.

Professionalism was a positive trait, but blind professionalism was just stupid.

Sometimes, that stupidity could even claim a persons life.

You!

Shocked and angry, Peng Hu was about to rebuke Ye Qing when he saw what was inside the coffin. Whatever words he was going to say died in his throat.

He had imagined all kinds of scenarios about what might be inside the coffin. The corpse couldve turned into a zombie, it couldve been possessed by some sort of evil, or it couldve transformed into a Stranger. However, he never imagined that the body would have shifted to a kneeling position.

When did it happen, and how was this even possible? The coffin was only as tall as a child. It wouldve been impossible for a living adult to kneel inside the coffin, much less a dead one.

In reality, the body had shifted to a kneeling position. Its joints were completely bent, and its chest and waist were compressed together by an unknown power, so much so that some of its rib bones were literally sticking out of its chest. That was how it managed to kneel inside the coffin.

Not only that, the bodys head would knock against the bottom every three breaths three times in a row. Such was its force that its head was shattered, and blood caked the wooden board.

It was kowtowing. The body was kowtowing toward a paper doll placed at the end of the coffin. It was unusual to say the least.

How How can this be? Peng Hu and the rest of the coffin hauliers stared at the strange sight, flabbergasted.

The strange bangs we heard earlier is probably the sound of the body kowtowing toward the paper doll, declared Ye Qing while narrowing his eyes. That, and the body shifting to a kneeling position.

He was one hundred percent certain that the coffin hauliers deaths had something to do with its kowtowing.

Ye Qings first thought was to control the body, but when his demonic thought wrapped around it, he couldnt sense any anomalous energy from it.

Is it that paper doll?

Ye Qing immediately scanned the paper doll with his demonic thought, but the moment he made contact, his mind shook, and he suddenly felt unbelievably hot. He flushed as red as blood as an invisible fire had suddenly burst into life inside his body. His unusual reaction caught everyone by surprise.

Hmph! Ye Qing grunted and channeled his astral qi to suppress the unnatural heat. Then, he said, Its the paper doll thats causing the problem.