

The Quest 461

Chapter 461: Divine Thought Slaughter (1)

Zhang Quan, the Spiritual Pivot Formation, the traitor of the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect.

There must be a connection between these three.

However, there aren't many clues, and it's not easy to investigate.

For now, the Formation is what's important.

In the courtyard where the gentle breeze blew, Mo Hua was still practicing the Spirit Pivot Formation.

But as he practiced, he suddenly felt as if he had forgotten something.

What had he forgotten?

Mo Hua paused for a moment, then suddenly remembered.

Zhang Quan's ancestor was still tucked away in his Storage Bag...

That Ancestral Master Picture of the Zhang Family!

The one depicted on the picture should be an ancestor of the Zhang Family.

When Zhang Quan held a ceremony and burnt incense to worship the Ancestral Master Picture, he could borrow the Divine Thought of his predecessors to refine and control the Corpse Controlling Bell.

The Picture contains Divine Thought.

This indicates that the Ancestral Master Picture is very likely to be a Contemplation Map.

And the offering for the ceremony is a person's Divine Sense.

Therefore, the beings residing inside this Contemplation Map, even if not ghosts like the Little Green-faced Ghost, must be some foul and evil thoughts.

Zhang Quan practiced Corpse Refinement.

His method of Corpse Refinement was passed down from his own ancestors.

Then, his ancestor must also be no good.

Mo Hua touched the Storage Bag, his expression somewhat hesitant.

"Should I take a look?"

There would probably be risks involved in looking at it.

Just like in Black Mountain Stronghold, there might be some evil spirits in this Ancestral Master Picture waiting to invade his Sea of Consciousness.

And the Taoist Stele has only recovered halfway.

If the Taoist Stele can't suppress the evil spirit and he rashly allows it to invade, it would be like inviting a wolf into his house, which could lead to disaster.

Possibly even risk exposing the secret of the Taoist Stele, making it even more dangerous.

But not looking at it wouldn't be good either.

This Picture can't be kept.

If kept, once it falls into Zhang Quan's hands again, it would be helping the tyrant do evil.

If it doesn't fall into Zhang Quan's hands and instead is obtained by other cultivators, it could also harm lives by providing Divine Sense for the evil spirit housed within the Picture to consume.

If he keeps it himself, the risk is quite high.

Who knows, at a critical moment of life and death, the evil thoughts within this Picture might emerge and cause trouble.

So it can't be kept.

If not kept, then it can only be destroyed.

A fire would burn Zhang Quan's ancestral master to ashes and scatter them to the winds.

If Zhang Quan knew about this, he would probably be angered to death.

Mo Hua couldn't help but sneer internally.

But after some thought, Mo Hua felt somewhat reluctant.

After all, Contemplation Maps are quite rare.

So far, Mo Hua had only come across two:

One was the Landscape Taoist Child Painting from the Black Mountain Stronghold.

The other was this Ancestral Master Picture of the Zhang Family.

Both Paintings were extremely precious and deeply treasured, difficult for one to come by.

To destroy it would be an awful waste.

More importantly, if he could refine the Divine Thought within the Contemplation Map, it could enhance his Divine Sense.

Mo Hua's strongest attribute was his Divine Sense, which was also what he lacked the most.

His Divine Sense was far beyond that of a Qi Refinement cultivator and no inferior to that of an average cultivator in the initial stage of Foundation Establishment, even slightly more profound.

But this Divine Sense was still far from enough.

He must find a way to break through his Divine Sense to the middle stage of Foundation Establishment.

That is, to the realm of fourteen Patterns.

Then he would be able to establish his foundation and construct the Taoist Foundation of Divine Sense, and walk the path of Proving the Dao with Divine Sense.

Currently, he lacked difficult Formations to refine his Divine Sense.

The Spiritual Pivot Formation was made of twelve Patterns, but it wasn't complete.

It would probably take some trouble to acquire the complete Spiritual Pivot Formation Chart.

Under these circumstances, if he could refine the Contemplation Map, his Divine Sense would progress much faster.

And Mo Hua would be able to achieve Foundation Establishment sooner.

After some thought, Mo Hua still went to ask Mr. Zhuang for advice.

He placed the crumpled, incense-ash smudged, wrinkled Ancestral Master Picture of the Zhang Family in front of Mr. Zhuang.

Mr. Zhuang looked at this dirty lump of a thing with an expression that was somewhat at a loss for words.

"How did it get crumpled like this?"

Mo Hua, with a serious face, said:

"I was afraid it would bewitch me!"

Mr. Zhuang was silent for a moment, then asked, "Did it bewitch you?"

"Mhm," Mo Hua nodded.

"How did it bewitch you?"

"It praised my talent, promised me opportunity, and even wanted me to look at it..." Mo Hua snorted, "It wishes!"

"And then..."

"Then I taught it a lesson, and it quieted down," Mo Hua replied.

Mr. Zhuang took another look at the Painting.

The Painting was creased from being crumpled by Mo Hua's small hands; it was covered in ash and even had a few little footprints on it.

It looked indeed as if it had been "taught a lesson"...

Mr. Zhuang couldn't help but chuckle.

Mo Hua asked softly:

"Master, can I look at this Painting?"

Mr. Zhuang thought for a moment, then shook his head:

"Not yet."

Mo Hua was a bit disappointed, then his eyes lit up, and he asked:

"Not yet... So, Master, when can I?"

Mr. Zhuang didn't answer but instead asked:

"How have you progressed with the Spiritual Pivot Formation?"

"I've learned a little..."

Mo Hua conveyed his insights and understanding of the Spirit Pivot Formation to Mr. Zhuang.

After listening, Mr. Zhuang nodded slightly.

Unable to restrain himself, Mo Hua said,

"Master, isn't this Spirit Pivot Formation a bit too simple..."

Mr. Zhuang paused, and couldn't help but tap Mo Hua's forehead with his finger, "Don't say that outside."

Otherwise, certainly, some Formation Masters would get annoyed and couldn't help wanting to beat you up.

Mo Hua grinned sheepishly, but still puzzled, he said,

"Master, I thought the Spirit Pivot Formation would be more difficult..."

"Like the first-grade, ten-pattern Reversed Spirit Formation, or the eleven-pattern Thick Earth Formation, which require the comprehension of something deeper to master the Formation..."

"But this Spirit Pivot Formation doesn't seem to require much comprehension, and I just learned the basics..."

Mr. Zhuang smiled somewhat meaningfully, "How do you know you haven't comprehended anything?"

Mo Hua was startled, "What have I comprehended?"

I don't even realize it myself...

Mr. Zhuang asked, "What is the core of the Spirit Pivot Formation?"

"Spiritual Power control," Mo Hua blurted out.

"How to control it?"

"Through the Formation, decipher the essential structure of Spiritual Power, then parse the Spiritual Power, forming filaments. Divine Sense takes the Formation as the pivot, controlling the Spiritual Power filaments to manipulate external objects."

Mr. Zhuang said with a profound smile,

"Does that sound familiar?"

Mo Hua furrowed his brow in thought.

Divine Sense controlling Spiritual Power...

After a moment, Mo Hua suddenly came to a realization.

"Heaven Yan Jue!"

Heaven Yan Jue is also a Cultivation Technique for cultivating Divine Sense manipulation.

The more profound the practice of Heaven Yan Jue, the sharper the control by Divine Sense.

"Correct!" Mr. Zhuang nodded, "The Spirit Pivot Formation emphasizes Spiritual Power control. Heaven Yan Jue is about Divine Sense manipulation. They are related by the same origin..."

"When you studied the Spirit Pivot Formation, it's not that you failed to comprehend."

"Rather, you have gradually comprehended these Formation principles while practicing Heaven Yan Jue over time."

"Therefore, comprehending the Spirit Pivot Formation was actually not that difficult for you."

"After comprehending the Ultimate Formation, it was just an everyday comprehension that deepened a bit, without the feeling of a Sudden Enlightenment..."

Mo Hua nodded slowly, understanding in his heart.

A moment later, he furrowed his brow again and asked,

"But Master, the control of Spiritual Power involved in the Spirit Pivot Formation and Heaven Yan Jue is still different, right?"

There's still quite a disparity between the two.

That's why he didn't think of this at the beginning.

Mr. Zhuang looked at him approvingly and nodded,

"They take similar paths but to different ends. Their essence is similar, but their focuses are different..."

"Heaven Yan Jue emphasizes Divine Sense manipulation, focusing on the Divine Sense itself."

"The Spirit Pivot Formation emphasizes Spiritual Power control, focusing on Divine Sense manipulating objects, or rather, Divine Sense controlling Spirit, meticulously controlling Spiritual Power with Divine Sense."

"One is internal, the other external; they complement each other."

"You've practiced Heaven Yan Jue, and your Divine Sense control is strong, so you find it easier to understand the principles of the Spirit Pivot Formation and comprehend them more thoroughly."

"Divine Sense Manipulation..." Suddenly, an idea struck Mo Hua, and he asked, "Does this have anything to do with Divine Sense Manipulation in the Foundation Establishment Stage?"

Mr. Zhuang explained,

"The principle is the same; both are about manipulation, but the forms are different. Divine Sense Manipulation is about strength, while controlling objects with Divine Sense is about finesse."

Mo Hua said, "So can I do Divine Sense Manipulation now?"

"No," Mr. Zhuang said, "You can only learn it upon reaching Foundation Establishment. Although your Divine Sense is sufficient, your Cultivation is not."

Mo Hua was a bit disappointed, but after some thought, it made sense.

The techniques of Foundation Establishment are not so easily learned by those in Qi Refinement.

After listening to Mr. Zhuang's explanation, Mo Hua understood a lot, but he also had many questions.

"Master, what do these have to do with the Contemplation Map?" Mo Hua asked.

Mr. Zhuang's gaze grew concentrated as he said,

"Do you remember me saying I would teach you the spell point of Divine Thought Slaughter?"

Mo Hua's heart tightened, and he showed expectation, nodding again and again.

Mr. Zhuang's gaze was profound as he spoke slowly,

"Divine Thought Slaughter is based on Divine Sense, manifesting form, and controlling objects with Divine Sense is the spell point."

"Divine Sense as the base, manifesting form, and controlling objects with Divine Sense is the spell point..."

Mo Hua quietly repeated these words.

Mr. Zhuang asked, "Do you understand now?"

Mo Hua honestly shook his head.

He understood the words "Divine Sense," "manifesting," and "controlling objects" when taken separately, but when Mr. Zhuang strung them together, he was somewhat confused.

"No matter," Mr. Zhuang said with a smile, "Let's take it step by step..."

"Divine Thought Slaughter is considered an extremely unorthodox method, and it is very difficult and extremely dangerous. Normal Cultivators don't learn it."

"Even among Demon Path cultivators, not many can do it."

"I am teaching you because you aim to Prove the Dao with your Divine Sense, and you will inevitably face deadly threats at the level of Divine Sense."

"In fact, you have already encountered it..."

For example, the Little Green-faced Ghost in the Contemplation Map of Black Mountain Stronghold...

Mr. Zhuang silently contemplated.

He didn't know how Mo Hua had resolved it, and he didn't ask further.

Some secrets are meant to be kept.

Mr. Zhuang gave Mo Hua a meaningful look and admonished,

"Possession counts for advantage, but absence serves as utility."

"External objects can be relied on, but should not be depended upon."

"You must continually strengthen your Divine Sense, mastering the spell point."

"Learn to rely on your own strength, to face the various dangers hidden within Divine Thoughts..."

"It's you who aims to Prove the Dao with Divine Sense, not any external object."

Mo Hua was stunned for a moment, then enlightened, his young face serious, as he earnestly nodded.

Seeing the clarity in Mo Hua's eyes, Mr. Zhuang felt reassured and nodded slightly.

Then he pointed to the table, at the bundle of wrinkled old ancestral pictures of the Zhang Family,

"Once you've learned the spell point of Divine Thought Slaughter, you can use this picture for practice..."

Chapter 462: Manifestation (1)

"Practicing with the Zhang Family's ancestor as a sparring partner?"

Mo Hua's interest suddenly piqued, and then he asked:

"Master, how exactly does one perform Divine Thought Slaughter?"

Mr. Zhuang gave a faint smile, took a sip of the tea brewed by Mo Hua, waited for the aftertaste to mellow, then sat up straight and began to speak slowly:

"As I mentioned earlier, one's Divine Sense is the basis, its manifestation forms the figure, and controlling objects creates the technique..."

"The so-called Divine Sense as the basis means that the strength of Divine Thought Slaughter is fundamentally dependent on the strength of the Divine Sense itself."

"Even if a Qi Refinement Cultivator has strong abilities and numerous spell points, they would still find it difficult to surpass the Divine Thoughts of a Foundation Building Cultivator."

"Of course, this is based on the premise of Divine Sense Manifestation."

"Inside the Sea of Consciousness, if the Divine Sense isn't manifested, no matter how strong, it is merely fish on the chopping block, unable to resist and can only be slaughtered at someone's will."

Mr. Zhuang continued to give examples:

"A first-grade demon thought of a Qi Refinement ghost, if it invades the Sea of Consciousness of a Foundation Building Cultivator, uses the Foundation Building Divine Sense as a nurturing ground, consuming it daily to strengthen itself."

"A Foundation Building Cultivator, if unable to perform Divine Sense Manifestation and knows no other exorcising techniques, can only let the Little Green-faced Ghost devour the Divine Sense."

"He wouldn't even know that his Sea of Consciousness had been invaded by external evil."

"Unknowingly, he becomes the nourishment for the ghostly being."

"His Divine Sense is consumed bit by bit by the ghostly being."

"As this continues, he will suffer from the draining of Divine Sense, mental fatigue, eventually harboring delusional thoughts, besieged by desires, which leads to a major change in temperament, becoming neither human nor ghost, culminating either in entering demonic insanity and dying, or perishing from depleted Divine Sense."

"And after the ghostly being consumes his Divine Sense, strengthened by its malevolent thoughts, it can then continue to seek the next host to parasitize..."

A chill rose in Mo Hua as he listened.

If he hadn't forced back the Little Green-faced Ghost in his Sea of Consciousness using Formation.

And suppressed it with the Taoist Stele, devouring it.

The consequences would have been unthinkable.

What if the Little Green-faced Ghost had parasitized him, turning him into something neither human nor ghost without him being aware of it, it would have harmed not only himself but also his parents and friends around him.

Mo Hua felt somewhat scared after the fact.

Divine Thought indeed harbors extraordinarily dangerous risks, and moreover, is almost impossible to guard against.

The techniques of Divine Thought Slaughter must be thoroughly learned; anyone who dares to enter one's Sea of Consciousness without permission in the future shall be eliminated without exception!

Mo Hua nodded repeatedly and eagerly asked:

"Master, then how does one manifest Divine Sense?"

Mr. Zhuang said, "You can manifest your own form within your Sea of Consciousness, can't you?"

"Mhm." Mo Hua nodded.

This was something he had been able to do naturally since birth.

Ever since he was born, there had always been a manifestation of his own Divine Sense in Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness.

He had previously thought all Cultivators were like this.

It was only after encountering the Little Green-faced Ghost that he realized he was an exception.

Not all Cultivators can manifest themselves in the Sea of Consciousness.

Whether it was due to a distinctive talent in his Divine Sense or the presence of the Taoist Stele in his Sea of Consciousness, Mo Hua was not quite sure.

But since this belonged to innate Divine Sense Manifestation.

Thus, Mo Hua was also unclear about how exactly this kind of manifestation came about.

"Those who know themselves are wise. A Cultivator who contemplates their own form thoroughly enough can manifest it."

Mr. Zhuang said and then glanced at Mo Hua, pondering before he continued:

"You are able to manifest your Divine Sense because it is inherently strong, and you possess a pure heart with clear thoughts, which naturally led to the manifestation of your own form within the Sea of Consciousness."

Of course, there might be other factors too...

Mr. Zhuang's gaze became slightly focused, but he did not delve further and instead resumed speaking:

"Divine Thought Slaughter, with manifestation of oneself, is only the foundation."

"Since one can manifest oneself, naturally, one's spells, Martial Arts, and Spiritual Artifacts can be manifested as well."

"Being able to manifest spells or Martial Arts gives you the means to carry out Slaughter..."

Mo Hua, finding all this a bit mysterious, then asked:

"Master, is this manifestation somewhat like 'fantasy' or 'delusion'? Like daydreaming, turning whatever one thinks of into reality?"

If you think you understand this Spell, then you have that Spell;

If you think you've mastered this Martial Art, then you've mastered that Martial Art;

If you think you possess a certain Spiritual Artifact, then you have that Spiritual Artifact...

So if you imagine a dragon in your Sea of Consciousness, does that mean you have a dragon?

Mr. Zhuang chuckled and shook his head:

"It's not that whatever you think of becomes reality. If it were so, Divine Sense Manifestation would be far too simple."

"Divine Sense Manifestation is based on 'reality' to manifest the illusory Divine Thoughts."

"Without an objectively real thing, you cannot manifest the illusion of it."

"If you want to manifest a Spell, you must actually know that Spell."

"If you want to manifest a Spiritual Artifact, you must truly possess that Spiritual Artifact..."

"And even then, it's not as if you can manifest it just because you know it or have it."

"You must understand the Spell thoroughly, be extremely familiar with the object, and fully comprehend its essence to manifest it within the Sea of Consciousness."

"Things you have never seen, don't understand, haven't grasped, or are unfamiliar with cannot be manifested."

"Even if you did manifest them, they would only be unfounded and fragile illusions, unable to withstand a single blow."

"Divine Thought Manifestation, the more real it is, the more powerful it is..."

Mo Hua had a moment of enlightenment, deep in thought.

Mr. Zhuang paused for a moment before explaining further:

"If you use your Divine Sense to manifest an almost real 'fire,' then this 'fire' can indeed burn another's Divine Thoughts..."

"If you manifest a sword, that sword can also injure someone's Divine Thoughts..."

Mo Hua suddenly understood clearly.

Mr. Zhuang looked again at Mo Hua, his tone becoming slightly solemn as he said:

"What you must learn is to first manifest Spiritual Power, then manifest spells, and ultimately... manifesting Formations!"

Mo Hua's heart gave a slight tremble.

Manifesting Formations!

But after pondering for a moment, he expressed his confusion:

"Master, it seems like... I can already draw Formations in my Sea of Consciousness. Does that count as manifestation?"

Initially, he had drawn a Formation while the little ghost was transforming, and it was this very act that deterred that Little Green-faced Ghost.

"That's just the tip of the iceberg," Mr. Zhuang said.

Mo Hua was surprised in his heart and didn't quite understand.

Mr. Zhuang said with profound eyes:

"Such Divine Sense Manifestation is somewhat superficial. What is manifested is merely the ethereal shadow of Formation Patterns formed by Divine Thought, not real enough, nor is its power strong enough..."

"Another problem is that it's too slow."

"Slow?" Mo Hua was a little taken aback.

Mr. Zhuang nodded, "In the clash of Divine Thought, life and death are but an instant. There's not always an opportunity to draw Formation, stroke by stroke, line by line..."

"Some malicious and brutal spirits won't wait for you to finish drawing the Formation; they'll likely have devoured you by then."

Mo Hua's heart went cold, and he frowned and said:

"If a Formation isn't drawn stroke by stroke, then how should it be drawn?"

Mr. Zhuang's gaze shifted, and with a stern expression, he said:

"Manifest Spiritual Power, control it with Divine Sense, and bring it into being in one thought - Drawing Ground into Formation."

"This way, without the need for pen and ink, with a mere movement of Divine Sense, in a moment's effort, a Formation can be constructed within the Sea of Consciousness..."

Mo Hua gaped in astonishment, came back to his senses, and then furrowed his brows again, seemingly pondering something.

Mr. Zhuang's eyebrows raised slightly, and he gently inquired:

"What are you thinking now?"

Mo Hua spoke carefully:

"Master, have you calculated all of this?"

"Calculated what?"

Mo Hua, with furrowed brows, counted on his fingers and said:

"To learn Formation Visualization, one needs to know Heaven Yan Jue, needs to know Divine Sense Calculation, and also needs to master the Spiritual Pivot Formation..."

"Learning Heaven Yan Jue makes the Divine Sense sharp, forming a foundation for spiritual control;"

"Learning Calculation is essential to deduce the trajectory of Spiritual Power within a Formation, allowing control of Spiritual Power to construct the Formation;"

"And by learning Spiritual Pivot Formation, one can understand the structure of Spiritual Power, discern the essence of Spiritual Power, thereby manifesting Spiritual Power, which also complements Heaven Yan Jue, further strengthening the control over Spiritual Power by Divine Sense..."

The core of Spiritual Pivot Formation is control.

But control is just the surface; only by understanding the structure of Spiritual Power and breaking it down into its strands can one achieve control.

Understanding the structure of Spiritual Power makes it easier to manifest it.

Spiritual Pivot Formation manifests Spiritual Power; Heaven Yan Jue controls Spiritual Power; with Calculation constructing the Formation.

All three are indispensable.

If he lacked any one of them, he would probably be unable to do as Mr. Zhuang said - to draw a Formation with Divine Thought in the Sea of Consciousness and manifest the Formation.

Mr. Zhuang, too, was surprised.

He knew Mo Hua was clever, but he hadn't imagined his mind to be quite so keen.

Mr. Zhuang felt reassured in his heart and smiled slightly as he said:

"It's not that I had calculated; it's just that you had good fortune, choosing Heaven Yan Jue as your Cultivation Technique, then you learned Calculation, and happened to encounter the Spiritual Pivot Formation. With everything in place, I simply continued to teach you accordingly..."

Mo Hua nodded his head.

His admiration for Mr. Zhuang intensified.

Tailoring teaching to the student's capabilities and also to the opportunity.

How profound Mr. Zhuang's knowledge in Tao Cultivation and Formation skills was, went beyond measure.

Mo Hua's bright, admiring eyes were fixed upon him, as Mr. Zhuang felt quite pleased, though his outward appearance remained that of a detached sage.

He retrieved a small booklet from his sleeve and handed it to Mo Hua.

Mo Hua accepted it, noticing the title of six characters on the brochure:

Divine Thought Manifestation Bullet Points

The booklet was compact and thin.

Mo Hua was somewhat puzzled, "Master, is this all?"

Divine Thought Manifestation should be very difficult.

He had thought that such bullet points, if not voluminous, should at least fill a thick book.

"This is enough," Mr. Zhuang said. "Similar to Meditation Technique, Divine Sense Manifestation is just a means, a form, and not an essence."

"It's not what you manifest that's important, it's what you manage to manifest, how much understanding you gain, and how much 'reality' you can achieve..."

"Divine Thought Manifestation is a tool, not the way."

"Manifesting is like a sword, but the power of the sword does not lie in the sword itself, but in the person who wields it."

"If you have ten units of strength, then the power of the sword is tenfold..."

"If you have a hundred units of Strength, then the power of the sword is a hundredfold!"

"How well you learn to manifest depends on your own visualization, practice, and comprehension."

"The more you visualize, the deeper the comprehension, the truer the manifestation, the stronger the power of Divine Thought Slaughter!"

Mr. Zhuang looked at Mo Hua with a serious tone and expectant eyes.

Mo Hua nodded repeatedly, his voice ringing clear:

"Disciple remembers, thank you for the teaching, Master!"

Mo Hua placed the thin Divine Thought Manifestation Bullet Points carefully into his Storage Bag.

Divine Thought Slaughter was crucial.

Mo Hua planned to study it well soon.

He had already made his calculations.

Once he learned to manifest, and had a modicum of success with Divine Thought Slaughter, he could attempt to practice on Zhang Quan's old forebear~

Chapter 463: Opening Illustration (1)

After Mo Hua left, in the quiet chamber, Old Kui slowly became visible again.

He looked at Mr. Zhuang, whose expression was calm, and said discontentedly,

"The things you teach him, why are they all so devious?"

Mr. Zhuang raised an eyebrow, "Devious is about right, better for oneself to be devious than for the enemy to be."

Old Kui frowned, musing to himself,

"If Mo Hua continues to learn like this, I'm beginning to find it hard to understand..."

Super Divine Sense, Divine Thought Slaughter, exceptional talent, Formation Visualization...

Just thinking about it feels incredibly tricky.

And I wonder whether cultivating Divine Sense like this is ultimately good or bad...

Suddenly, Old Kui remembered something, and with a chilling tone, he said solemnly,

"Aren't you afraid he'll follow in your senior brother's footsteps to become the second Gui Tao's person?"

Mr. Zhuang fell silent, his gaze somewhat dim, and after a long time, he responded slowly,

"Who can be certain about the future?"

"Cultivators have long lifespans, and so do their lives."

"In this life, one will meet many people, encounter many things, face many choices; whether or not one can adhere to their original intentions and stay resolute in their Taoist Heart is something he must manage on his own, I... can't accompany him for that long..."

Mr. Zhuang's demeanor was one of melancholy as he sighed,

"He is my little disciple."

"All I hope for is that he can live well, keep cultivating, keep learning about Formations, keep adhering to his own heart, and pursue the Heavenly Dao..."

"To keep living is enough..."

"Even if he becomes the second 'Gui Tao's person'... it's still better than becoming a Taoist who falls into Gui Tao's clutches..."

To become the second Gui Tao's person, at least he would still be alive.

But if he became a "Taoist," that would mean falling prey to Gui Tao, his Divine Sense annihilated, reduced to a puppet.

Old Kui understood, and he too fell silent.

After a moment, he sighed and said no more, gradually disappearing from view.

...

Mo Hua then went back to his room to start learning Divine Thought Manifestation.

His room was not big, but it was well-furnished, delicate and elegant, adjacent to his senior brother and sister's rooms, and with the same layout.

Mo Hua sat cross-legged on the bed and first carefully read through the "Divine Thought Manifestation Bullet Points" given to him by Mr. Zhuang, grasping the general idea.

The key to manifestation was actually visualization.

First, through visualization, one would discern external objects; then inside the Sea of Consciousness, Divine Sense would manifest their physical form.

Having grasped the basic spell point, Mo Hua began attempting to manifest.

He first tried to manifest others and discovered that it didn't work.

Be it his parents, Mr. Zhuang, Junior Brother, Junior Sister, or Elder Yu of Tongxian City, Da'hu, Dazhu, none could be manifested.

So people don't work...

No, that's not right; it's more that people other than oneself don't work.

At least not for now.

If people can't be manifested, what about Monster Beasts?

Mo Hua thought of the Little Demon Cat he had captured, and the Big Tiger it had transformed into, only to find he still couldn't manifest them.

Mo Hua thought about Feng Xi... better not...

If the Little Demon Cat doesn't work, then there's even less hope for a Big Demon.

If Monster Beasts don't work, then what about Spirit Beasts?

Mo Hua then thought of Big White.

He tried, and found he couldn't manifest Big White either.

Mo Hua sighed, realizing that for now he couldn't manifest any living things.

So, he could only try to manifest inanimate objects.

Mo Hua attempted to manifest objects in his room like stools, tables, screens, Formation Pens, Formation Paper, tea cups, and so on.

But to no avail.

Probably because he wasn't familiar enough with them.

Mo Hua thought it over and proceeded to try manifesting the Thousand Jun Stick.

He was very familiar with the Thousand Jun Stick; he had watched Master Chen forge it and had drawn all the formations on it himself. Mo Hua had also used the Thousand Jun Stick to land many a surprise blow.

Mo Hua took out the Thousand Jun Stick, stared at it intently for a while, and memorized its shape, structure, and formations completely in his mind.

Then he closed his eyes, sank into his Sea of Consciousness, and tried to manifest the Thousand Jun Stick.

After a while, a shadowy image of a stick appeared in Mo Hua's hands.

Mo Hua was delighted.

Though it was only a shadow, it still marked significant progress.

Now, within the Sea of Consciousness, he could hit people with a surprise stick as well.

Mo Hua swung it a few times, trying out the moves "Sweeping Thousands of Armies" and "Like a Thousand Pounds," feeling even more adept than when using it outside.

After playing with it for quite a while, Mo Hua reluctantly put away the "Thousand Jun Stick."

He had spent the better half of the day experimenting, confirming that among all external objects and people, he could only initially manifest a nascent form of the "Thousand Jun Stick."

What he needed to attempt next was the manifestation of his own Spiritual Power and Spells, as well as Formations.

Mo Hua first tried to manifest his own Spiritual Power.

He visualized himself, simulating the circulation of Spiritual Power through his meridians, and soon felt a mysterious energy flowing around his body.

Mo Hua was invigorated and concentrated further on visualizing and manifesting.

Several hours later, Mo Hua in the Sea of Consciousness opened his eyes to find that his body was wrapped in a faint Spiritual Power.

This power wasn't actually Spiritual Power.

It was produced by Divine Sense Manifestation.

On the surface, it appeared to be Spiritual Power, but its essence was still Divine Sense.

Although it was Divine Sense, its effects closely resembled those of Spiritual Power.

It was as if it were both real and fake, both solid and void.

There was a profound sense in which one might see a mountain as a mountain, then as not a mountain, yet in the end, the mountain is still a mountain.

Spiritual Power is the foundation of Spells.

With Spiritual Power manifested, Mo Hua began trying to simulate Spells with it.

It seemed as if, within the virtual image of Mo Hua's Divine Sense, he could see the light blue Spiritual Power flowing along the meridians in the Dantian and arms, converging at the fingertips, and eventually forming a Spell.

However, the Spark from the Fireball Technique fizzled out after a few flashes.

The first attempt had failed.

Despite this, Mo Hua was not discouraged.

Chapter 464: Open Map (2)

He tried several times, each time getting a little better.

After countless repetitions, Mo Hua found his Divine Sense was exhausted.

Divine Sense manifested Spiritual Power, without Divine Sense, there was no Spiritual Power, and thus, no ability to use spells.

Mo Hua sat and meditated, and after recovering his Divine Sense, he continued practicing.

After two days of relentless practice, foregoing sleep and food, Mo Hua finally succeeded in casting his first Fireball Technique.

The power was not great; it was just an Ordinary Fireball Technique.

But the significance was different.

He could finally use spells in his Sea of Consciousness!

If any sneaky or evil thoughts invaded his Sea of Consciousness again, he now had a basic means of attack.

Mo Hua's spirits lifted.

After that, he practiced the Water Prison Technique, the Water Passing Step, and the Concealment Technique.

The Water Passing Step was effective.

But as for the Concealment Technique, it was hard to say since in his Sea of Consciousness he could not tell if he was concealed or not; he would have to find an opportunity to test it.

After manifesting these spells, Mo Hua felt a great sense of security.

Now facing danger, he also had means to kill or slaughter.

Next, it was time to manifest Formation.

Mo Hua started with the relatively simple Seven-Pattern Earth Fire Formation.

He first consumed his Divine Sense to manifest Spiritual Power, then controlled the Spiritual Power, and little by little began Drawing Formation according to the shape of the Earth Fire Formation Patterns.

The pale blue Spiritual Power flowed naturally, meandering and twisting on the ground of his Sea of Consciousness, forming the Formation.

But just after Drawing three Formation Patterns, he made a mistake.

Mo Hua's Divine Sense faltered, and he failed to control the trajectory of the Spiritual Power, rendering the Formation useless.

"Controlling Spiritual Power with Divine Sense alone seems indeed to be challenging..." Mo Hua murmured, frowning.

He knew how to Draw Formation, but his Divine Sense just couldn't control the Spiritual Power well enough to make it flow and condense into a Formation according to his will.

Mo Hua tried several more times, making little progress.

And Drawing Formation like this was also very slow.

Mo Hua frowned.

This was not quite what Mr. Zhuang had said...

Had he missed something?

Mo Hua then linked the key points together and reviewed them.

Heaven Yan Jue, Spiritual Pivot Formation, Divine Sense Calculation...

Could it be the Spiritual Pivot Formation?

Mo Hua recalled what Mr. Zhuang had said:

"The core of the Spiritual Pivot Formation is control, but control is just the surface; analyzing the structure of Spiritual Power is the essence of the Spiritual Pivot Formation."

Controlling corpses and objects might just be superficial applications.

Its essence lies in understanding the structure of Spiritual Power.

Mo Hua stopped trying to control Spiritual Power with his Divine Sense to Draw Formation.

Instead, he calmed his mind and contemplated the Spiritual Pivot Formation, using his Divine Sense to penetrate the essence of Spiritual Power.

After the time it took to finish a cup of tea, Mo Hua's mind trembled, and his thoughts became clear.

He realized his Spiritual Power had changed.

The Spiritual Power manifested by his Divine Sense had become more meticulous, as thin as threads.

These Spiritual Threads were finer components under the structure of Spiritual Power.

And these Spiritual Threads seemed to echo and integrate with his Divine Sense, becoming one.

With the mind's intent, the Spiritual Power followed the Divine Sense, as naturally as moving one's arm, forming a flawless union.

Controlling the Spiritual Threads with Divine Sense was as natural as breathing.

Mo Hua was astonished.

He only now realized the fundamental principles of Spiritual Power contained within the Spiritual Pivot Formation were so exquisite.

He had learned the Spiritual Pivot Formation before and even applied the Formation but never deeply grasped the profundity within it.

It was worthy of the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect...

No, or perhaps it should be said, the secret heritage of the once Great Hidden Spirit Sect...

To use such a Formation merely for corpse control was a waste of its true potential.

Mo Hua felt somewhat emotional.

He then tried again, controlling Spiritual Power with Divine Sense, turning Spiritual Power into Spiritual Threads, and using the Threads to Draw Formation.

This time, the flow of Spiritual Power was much more flexible, precise, and swift.

With just a thought from Mo Hua, the Spiritual Threads on the ground quickly coalesced to form a complete Seven-Pattern Earth Fire Formation in just a few moments!

Without pen or ink, with a mere thought, Formation Patterns were created, forming a Formation.

It was fast and convenient.

With this, his Sea of Consciousness seemed devoid of any Formation, but with just a shift in Divine Thought, Formations could be established everywhere!

Mo Hua was so shocked that he couldn't speak.

This was, perhaps, too powerful.

Though it was only a Seven-Pattern Formation, the speed of his Formation Painting was truly unfathomable.

Mo Hua then felt a sense of regret.

This technique could only be used within his own Sea of Consciousness; it was not applicable outside.

"I wonder if there will come a day when I, too, can form formations outside the Sea of Consciousness in an instant with strong Divine Sense..."

Mo Hua couldn't help but indulge in some wistful thinking.

Of course, for now, he could only think about it...

Having mastered the methods of Spell Manifestation and Formation Visualization, the next step was simply to keep practicing and improving.

The power of the Fireball Technique was still insufficient; he needed to practice it more.

And the formations—while he could paint Seven-Pattern Formations quickly, the more difficult Eight or Nine-Pattern Formations would slow him down considerably.

Mo Hua wanted to find some first-tier Nine-Pattern Formations to practice within his Sea of Consciousness.

So engrossed was he that he forgot to eat or sleep, and after one or two weeks of practice, Mo Hua's Divine Thought Slaughter had finally seen some minor achievements.

Next, it was time to test his skills.

Mo Hua took out the Ancestral Master Picture of the Zhang Family.

To be safe, Mo Hua also called over Bai Zisheng and Bai Zixi to protect him during his practice.

"Junior Brother, Junior Sister, you must not look at this picture!"

"No matter what sounds you hear, do not believe them!"

Mo Hua began with these instructions, then continued:

"Later, I will sneak a peek at it and then close the picture..."

"If everything seems normal, then you don't need to do anything."

"But if I become entranced by the picture and fail to close it, help me to close it and then throw the picture on the ground and stomp on it hard a few times."

"If my mind changes drastically while I am looking at the picture, knock me out and then go call Master."

"If the picture undergoes any strange changes, or something tries to come out of it, just burn it immediately! And scatter the ashes!"

...

Mo Hua had considered all possible scenarios and made his instructions crystal clear.

Bai Zisheng and Bai Zixi didn't quite understand, but they nodded anyway.

With everything ready, Mo Hua unfolded the Ancestral Master Picture of the Zhang Family.

As the picture was revealed, Mo Hua's gaze skittered across it like a dragonfly skimming over water, glancing just once.

With that single look, he saw the entirety of the picture.

It was a group portrait, depicting the Ancestral Master teaching.

The high halls were solemn, with smoke from incense curling in the air.

In the center sat an elder with white hair and beard, radiating virtue and commanding respect, teaching and imparting wisdom.

Beneath him, rows and rows of disciples were seated.

These disciples were positioned according to their seniority, ranked from highest to lowest, seated in turn.

All wore white robes, their postures upright and respectful.

It was a solemn and serious image of the Ancestral Master teaching.

But with the same, single glance, the scene in the picture began to change abruptly.

The people in the picture seemed to come subtly to life.

Mo Hua then heard the enticements of an elder:

"You are brilliantly gifted..."

"You have extraordinary talent..."

"Join my sect... let me help you find the Way..."

"Join my sect... let me help you become immortal..."

"Join my sect..."

...

At the same time, the disciples seated below the elder suddenly turned their heads, as if by some unspoken agreement, looking directly at Mo Hua.

They revealed faces that resembled those of zombies.

Mo Hua was slightly alarmed in his heart.

Was this old ancestor of the Zhang Family preaching to zombies?

Or was it that the entire Zhang Family had turned into zombies?

Before he could sort out his thoughts, a zombie disciple seated furthest from the Ancestral Master suddenly showed a ferocious expression, leapt from his seat, and lunged directly at Mo Hua's Heavenly Court, burrowing into Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness.

For a moment, Mo Hua's gaze became vacant, but then it became bright again in an instant.

While the other zombies were snarling and attempting to invade his Sea of Consciousness.

Mo Hua reacted quickly, folding the picture shut.

He trapped a group of zombies within the picture,

And trapped a single zombie within his own Sea of Consciousness.

Chapter 465: Eat and Be Eaten (1)

The Zhang Family zombie disciple, as soon as it entered Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness, was shocked:

"What profound Divine Sense!"

"Innate Supplement!"

Its voice was hoarse and thick, with a bit of air leaking through.

Like a living person corrupted into a corpse.

Then, it couldn't wait any longer and opened its ghastly wide mouth to fiercely suck in a mouthful of the abundant Divine Sense in the Sea of Consciousness.

As the Divine Sense entered, the zombie disciple's eyes shone with excitement.

Pure, rich, and delicious.

This was the taste of top-quality Divine Sense!

The zombie cackled madly.

It couldn't help but indulge ravenously, suddenly consuming with vigor.

As it devoured more Divine Sense, its body gradually became robust, and its stature grew taller by a few inches.

As the zombie absorbed the Divine Sense, Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness also felt a faint pain.

"Is this what it feels like to have your Divine Sense eaten?"

Mo Hua, concealed to the side, watching the zombie, silently said to himself.

There was some pain, a bit of discomfort, but it was quite subtle.

If you weren't paying attention, you indeed wouldn't notice.

Even if you weren't witnessing it firsthand, you most likely wouldn't believe it.

One would only think they were mentally drained, lacking in energy, their spirit scattered, their mood depressed, with many troubles and evil desires lingering in their heart.

One would never think that their Divine Sense was being nibbled away by an evil being.

Mo Hua nodded to himself, remembering this feeling.

"In the future, I must be careful to guard against this!"

The human heart is immeasurable and deceptive, and I may not always be able to detect every change in the Divine Sense.

Therefore, I must step by step familiarize myself with the various signs of changes in the Sea of Consciousness, guard against the insignificant to prevent greater issues and eliminate unknown threats within the Divine Sense.

So that in the future, no evil spirit can stealthily consume my Divine Sense without my knowledge.

Besides this, Mo Hua also verified something else.

That is, the Concealment Technique can be effective within the Sea of Consciousness.

At least this zombie didn't discover him.

Mo Hua slightly furrowed his brows.

But what exactly is this zombie? Is it a person, or is it a zombie?

After observing for a while, Mo Hua had a growing speculation.

This zombie disciple must also be an ancestor of the Zhang Family.

The Zhang Family had practiced Corpse Refinement for generations, their Divine Thoughts merging with the zombie; in their self-awareness, they were both human and corpse. Hence, after death, when the Divine Thoughts were sealed in the painting, it manifested as a zombie.

However, whether it's human or a corpse, Mo Hua had no intention of letting it go.

Mo Hua, concealing his presence, held the Thousand-Jun Stick in his hand and quietly approached the zombie disciple from behind.

This zombie, mouth agape, was feasting merrily.

It had no idea that every move it made was being watched by someone else.

It was also completely oblivious to the impending danger.

As Mo Hua approached the zombie from behind, he lifted the Thousand-Jun Stick high, and with all his strength in both hands, he smashed down fiercely!

"How dare you steal my Divine Sense!"

This blow, immensely powerful, caused the zombie disciple's scalp to deform, and its form to become somewhat ethereal.

The increase in height from consuming Divine Sense was reversed by the stick's blow, shrinking back.

After the strike, Mo Hua was also somewhat surprised.

He hadn't expected his blow with the Thousand-Jun Stick to be so powerful.

And the zombie disciple, with its scalp numbing and heart aching, took a while to recover. Furious, it turned its head and saw behind it stood a small cultivator with handsome eyebrows and bright lips and white teeth.

The zombie disciple was stunned.

Then, it widened its eyes as if seeing a "ghost."

"No way! How can there be someone here?!"

Mo Hua kept a straight face, his expression somewhat dangerous:

"You sneak into my Sea of Consciousness to steal, and you ask how there can be someone? Is my Divine Sense that delicious? I..."

Mo Hua wanted to make a few more threats.

But before he could finish, seeing the danger, the zombie disciple turned tail and ran.

Its ugly face was filled with panic.

As soon as it saw Mo Hua, it knew it was no match.

This small cultivator was young and petite, but his form was crystal clear, and his aura was deep and unfathomable.

This was a sign of an incredibly powerful Divine Sense.

Moreover, it had just taken a hit from the Thousand-Jun Stick.

The power of that stick left it apprehensive.

The more powerful the strike, the stronger the Divine Thought.

The zombie disciple was filled with fear.

If the Divine Sense had not manifested, it could continue to steal. But once manifested, with such a disparity in Divine Sense, it had to flee or perish right there.

The zombie attempted to escape from Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness.

Mo Hua certainly wouldn't let it get away, he stretched out his small hand, and with a backhand gesture, the materialized Spiritual Power condensed into the Water Prison Technique.

Divine Thought shackles appeared out of nowhere, binding the zombie firmly in place.

The zombie disciple struggled desperately to break free, but it simply couldn't.

Its face was full of terror as it said in disbelief,

"A spell?"

How could this be?

Divine Thought can actually use spells?

The old ancestor never mentioned this...

Mo Hua leisurely walked up to it.

The zombie knelt on the ground, pleading in panic, "Junior, please spare my life!"

Mo Hua said, "Spare your life? So that you can go harm others again?"

The zombie disciple swore, "Junior can rest assured, from now on, I will stick to my duty and never harm anyone!"

Mo Hua asked with doubt, "You are a zombie, right? Isn't it your duty to harm people? If you stick to your duty, how could you possibly not harm people?"

The zombie disciple was taken aback and, seeing the playful expression on Mo Hua's face, knew that this little cultivator would never believe its deceit, and said furiously,

"The old ancestor won't let you off!"

Mo Hua's eyes flickered, and with a smile that was not quite a smile, he said,

"Do you think... I will let your old ancestor go?"

The zombie disciple was shocked and pale.

This youngster, was actually, aiming at its esteemed ancestor?

How dare he?

And then, a chill went down the spine of the zombie disciple.

This youngster's Divine Sense was domineering, full of tricks, unpredictable, and could even use spells; with a prepared mind against an unprepared one, the ancestor might be in danger...

The zombie disciple felt both shock and rage.

"No, I must inform the old ancestor, otherwise he will be in peril!"

The face of the zombie disciple suddenly turned ferocious, it bit off one of its own fingers and swallowed it, and then its body began to swell, a malicious aura growing around it, and in a flash, it turned into a green-skinned corpse.

Just like Zhang Quan when he took the Corpse Blood Pill.

"I'll risk my old life to struggle against this little cultivator, then take the opportunity to escape and report to the ancestor. Even if I'm severely weakened and maimed afterward, the ancestor, appreciating my loyalty, will surely protect me."

The zombie disciple thought to itself.

Then, it mustered all its strength to break free from the Water Prison Technique and pounced fiercely towards Mo Hua.

Mo Hua's expression remained unchanged as he lightly raised his hand, and a Fireball Technique began to form.

The fireball was bright red and scorching hot, a false fire condensed by the Divine Sense, yet it looked incredibly real.

At the thought of Mo Hua, the fireball suddenly shot out and struck the transformed zombie's chest.

In a burst of fiery light, before the zombie disciple could reach Mo Hua or exchange even a single round, it was directly hit back into its original form by the Fireball Technique.

It deflated like a punctured balloon, reverted from its transformation, its body caught flame, and it writhed on the ground in agonizing screams.

It was as if real fire was burning on its body.

Spreading along with the pain was boundless despair.

It never expected that this little cultivator's Divine Sense would be so powerful.

The displayed Fireball Technique had such a terrifying potency...

Mo Hua also furrowed his brow, wondering,

"Why am I so strong?"

He pondered for a moment and gradually understood.

In reality, he was in the Qi Refinement stage.

But in the Sea of Consciousness, he was at the Foundation Establishment stage.

This zombie disciple was just an ordinary Walking Corpse, which to him amounted to Qi Refinement level.

He was now using Foundation Establishment level abilities to fight Qi Refinement.

It was like "the big" bullying "the small".

Mo Hua's back straightened up instantly.

"No wonder, I thought to myself why I suddenly became so powerful!"

For Foundation Establishment to win against Qi Refinement was only to be expected.

Mo Hua was pleased for a while, but then felt somewhat unenthused.

This zombie disciple was too weak, failing to bring out his full strength.

It seemed that he would have to pick out some of Zhang Family's ancestors with stronger abilities to practice his skills.

One step at a time, he would progressively advance.

Once he mastered his manifested techniques and fully grasped the Zhang Family zombies' methods, he would then make his move on Zhang Quan's old ancestor.

In that way, it would be entirely foolproof.

Zhang Quan's old ancestor had the highest Cultivation and the strongest evil thoughts, certainly a formidable zombie.

And having lived for so long, it surely had many plots up its sleeve.

Acting against it now still carried some risk.

Moreover, it had so many "disciples and grandchildren"; one could hardly fight off many with two fists, and if a group of zombies invaded the Sea of Consciousness, Mo Hua wouldn't be able to cope.

One must eat one bite at a time.

Having made up his mind, Mo Hua decided to "eat" his first "bite".

This zombie disciple was already useless.

Mo Hua planned to make use of it to the fullest.

He launched a few more Fireball Techniques and directly blasted the zombie into ash.

The ash dispersed, the form and thoughts of the zombie extinguished, turning into gray strands of Divine Thought.

Mo Hua opened his mouth slightly and swallowed them all.

This zombie, which had wanted to devour Mo Hua's Divine Sense, ended up being "eaten" by Mo Hua instead.

Its malignant thoughts also bolstered Mo Hua's Divine Sense.

Chapter 466: Eat More (1)

Mo Hua eradicated the zombie disciple, "ate" its evil thoughts, and then began to sit in meditation to refine them.

Within the evil thoughts, there were some mottled memories.

All were about corpse refinement, corpse raising, and corpse control.

The Zhang Family's legacy throughout the generations was all about such sinister activities, ostensibly selling coffins but secretly practicing corpse refinement.

This disciple was the same.

He was also an ancestor of Zhang Quan.

But his talent was mediocre; he was only in the Qi Refinement Realm, and he hadn't been exposed to zombies for long before the corpse poison seized his heart and turned him into a Walking Corpse.

Fearing exposure, the Zhangs killed him and sealed his Divine Thought in the Ancestral Master Picture.

Just like many other ancestors of the Zhang Family.

While it was alive, it became a Zombie, and in death it remained a Zombie; thus, the evil thoughts it manifested posthumously were also those of a Zombie.

The Zhang Family members themselves were half-human, half-zombie.

As Mo Hua refined its evil thoughts, a cold, putrid, and deathly desire also tainted his Divine Sense.

Mo Hua felt a bloodthirsty desire awaken in his heart.

It was as if he had become a zombie himself, craving flesh and blood, with an urge to consume a living person.

Once the evil thoughts entered his heart, Mo Hua immediately entered a state of Mental Concentration, meditated in stillness, and discarded all worldly desires.

Mo Hua was far from panicked.

As Mr. Zhuang had said, every time evil thoughts intruded, it was a test of one's Taoist Heart.

Whether one can uphold their original intentions and maintain their Taoist Heart amid worldly desires and entanglements of evil thoughts is crucial for a cultivator.

Once the Taoist Heart is breached and the original intentions are extinguished, it's easy to stray and deviate from the Heavenly Dao.

People aren't born resistant to all evils.

The Taoist Heart also needs to be strengthened bit by bit.

Mo Hua planned to start with the smaller evil thoughts, to cultivate his will, enlighten his mind gradually.

Bit by bit, to firm up his Taoist Heart.

Until one day, he would be impervious to all evils.

Even if an Evil God invaded his brain or a Heavenly Demon disrupted his mind, he would remain clear and untainted, like a flawless mirror.

The zombie disciple was quickly refined by Mo Hua.

Its minor evil thoughts were also discarded by Mo Hua.

Mo Hua's Divine Sense had also noticeably increased.

This was the most pronounced increase in Mo Hua's Divine Sense in the past few months.

But it still wasn't enough.

Mo Hua smacked his lips with a sense of incompleteness lingering.

The zombie disciple was only in the Qi Refinement Realm, and its Divine Thought wasn't strong; after refining out the evil thoughts, the Divine Sense obtained was minimal.

That amount of Divine Sense was hardly enough to fill the gaps between his teeth.

Mo Hua felt it was a pity, so he opened his eyes.

Bai Zisheng was staring at him intently and promptly asked when Mo Hua opened his eyes,

"How's it going?"

Mo Hua replied, "It's fine."

Bai Zisheng let out a sigh of relief and then asked,

"What's next?"

Mo Hua thought for a moment and said, "Let me take another look, and you do what I told you earlier..."

"Mhm mhm." Bai Zisheng nodded and said, "Knock you out, call for the master, burn the drawing, and scatter the ashes..."

Although it differed slightly from what Mo Hua had said, it was more or less the same.

Mo Hua then reopened the Contemplation Map, which appeared to be the Ancestral Master Picture on the surface, but was actually the Zombie Image.

He looked at it again.

The same figure in the picture looked back at him with a zombie's face.

Similarly, the zombies left their seats and leaped out of the painting, entering Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness.

This time Mo Hua released two zombies and then closed the drawing again.

These two zombies were still only in the Qi Refinement Realm; regarded as Disciples of the Zhang Family in human terms and only as Walking Corpses in zombie terms.

After leaping into Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness, the two zombie disciples looked at each other, both showing ecstatic expressions.

This Sea of Consciousness was too vast.

The Divine Sense inside was too rich.

Enough for them to feast on for a long time.

They might even be able to evolve to Foundation Establishment directly by feeding here!

Who would have thought that the Sea of Consciousness of this young cultivator would be a paradise for feeding?

But their joy didn't last long.

A Fireball Technique came whizzing in, exploding in an instant.

It blasted one Walking Corpse away, the bright flames burning its body, causing it to suffer and struggle on the ground.

The other Walking Corpse froze.

What was that just now?

Fireball Technique?

Where did a Fireball Technique come from in the Sea of Consciousness?

It quickly found out where the Fireball Technique came from.

Because not far away, a young cultivator with delicate features was staring with profound eyes, revealing neither joy nor anger, casually pointing at it.

Before the Walking Corpse could react, a fireball condensed between the fingers of the young cultivator.

The fireball was incredibly fast, accurate, and vicious.

In an instant, it flew in front of the zombie.

The undead white pupils of the Walking Corpse were filled with the red glow of fire, and then its entire body was also blown away by the Fireball Technique, landing on the ground, enduring the agony of being incinerated.

This pain was very real.

The Walking Corpse almost forgot that it was already dead, no longer possessing a physical body.

It was terrified in its heart.

Who exactly was this young cultivator?

But Mo Hua wasn't interested in wasting words.

Time was limited, so a quick resolution was needed.

This time, he wouldn't play the cat-and-mouse game; Walking Corpses at the Qi Refinement Realm wouldn't probe the depths of the Zhang Family's Ancestral Master.

Mo Hua simply and brutally used the Fireball Technique to obliterate the two Walking Corpses.

After their annihilation, he refined the evil thoughts and strengthened his Divine Sense.

Thereafter, Mo Hua replicated the process, opening the picture to release corpses, bombarding them with fireballs, and refining the evil thoughts.

Although the evil thoughts from the Qi Refinement Realm were not strong, their cumulative effect meant that after "consuming" several Walking Corpses, Mo Hua felt his Divine Sense had significantly increased once more.

But it still wasn't enough.

This time, he set his sights on a few of the higher-ranking ancestors of the Zhang Family.

Those sitting in the front were also prominent, at least among the Zhang Family Elders.

The evil thoughts of Elders should also be stronger.

But how to lure them into his own Sea of Consciousness?

Mo Hua thought for a moment, and his eyes sparkled slightly.

Chapter 467: Eat More (2)

He took out two pieces of paper, one to cover the portrait of the Zhang Family's ancestor, and the other to cover the least important disciples at the bottom.

Only the middle row was left, which seemed to comprise cultivators who looked like elders of the Zhang Family.

Mo Hua randomly picked one, staring straight at him.

Within just a few breaths of time, that "person" also turned his head to look at Mo Hua.

It was another zombie face.

A hooked nose, drooping corners of the eyes, a fierce and sinister face, and an iron-blue complexion.

It was an Iron Corpse!

Upon seeing Mo Hua, it showed a malicious expression, and then a greedy look flashed through its pale eyes. With a swift movement, it dove into Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness.

After entering Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness, the Iron Corpse was taken aback.

Even though it was an elder and had seen much of the world, it was still shocked by Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness.

Then it burst into a wild cackle.

Its laughter was hoarse, its throat damaged, grating and unpleasant to the ear.

Mo Hua, who was hidden to the side, nodded to himself.

It seemed that even the Iron Corpse Elder couldn't discern his concealment...

Mo Hua then tiptoed up behind the Iron Corpse with his stick in hand, raised the Thousand Jun Stick high, and brought it down on the Iron Corpse's head with all his might.

The Thousand Jun Stick struck the back of the Iron Corpse's head.

Mo Hua even heard a "clang" sound.

It was like the noise of iron striking against iron.

His palm, too, tingled slightly from the vibration.

And that Iron Corpse Elder, after being hit, stumbled, its face twisted in a ferocious and somewhat dazed expression, turning around to see Mo Hua, looking even more surprised.

After a moment, it regained its composure, its eyes becoming even greedier.

Looking at Mo Hua was like eyeballing a millennium-old ginseng.

Mo Hua felt somewhat regretful.

It seemed that the Iron Corpse's strength was still considerable.

The sneak attack hadn't done much damage.

This Iron Corpse Elder, with a solid silhouette, wasn't like the common Walking Corpses that would disperse with a single hit.

Even after getting hit by the stick, it only stumbled a few times, showed a pained expression, but sustained no real injuries.

The two stood off against each other, neither making a move hastily.

The Iron Corpse Elder couldn't fathom the extent of Mo Hua's abilities, and despite its covetousness, it also had its reservations.

It scrutinized Mo Hua carefully, glancing around, and suddenly realizing, said in a hoarse voice,

"I was wondering why several disciples entered your Sea of Consciousness but couldn't leave, turns out they fell to your wicked hands!"

Divine Thought Manifestation, profound Divine Sense.

Not a bit inferior to this Iron Corpse Elder itself.

Those disciples of the Zhang Family at the Walking Corpse realm were certainly no match for this young cultivator.

Dying by his hand was nothing to complain about.

Mo Hua remained noncommittal.

The Iron Corpse Elder's expression turned fierce in a flash, "You killed the Zhang Family disciples, what should be your punishment?"

Mo Hua muttered in his mind,

"Not only do I want to kill your Zhang Family disciples, but I also want to kill your Zhang Family ancestors..."

However, outwardly, he simply said with indifference,

"They wanted to eat me, and I killed them, it's their own fault."

The Iron Corpse Elder snorted coldly, "They just wanted to nibble on a bit of your Divine Sense, yet you killed them. For someone so young, your methods are rather cruel."

Mo Hua was stunned, "Have you become so rotten after turning into a zombie that you can even say such a thing?"

The Iron Corpse Elder harrumphed.

In its mind, it was calculating Mo Hua's strength.

This youngster's Divine Thought Manifestation must be an innate talent.

But a clash of Divine Thought isn't that simple.

Even with some talent, how could this youngster compare with the Corpse Path techniques inherited by the Zhang Family for hundreds of years?

He might be able to take advantage of the weaker disciples.

But now that it had entered the fray, this little cultivator would be a grand feast for all the disciples of the Zhang Family!

The Iron Corpse Elder looked at the fresh and lovely Mo Hua, unable to resist licking its lips.

Mo Hua also understood its intentions and scoffed in his mind,

"Who will be whose feast is not yet certain."

The Iron Corpse Elder, unable to contain itself, watched Mo Hua.

It suddenly opened its wide mouth, revealing rows of sharp, ferocious fangs, smeared with stinking Corpse Poison. Its body turned into a streak of green light, lunging straight for Mo Hua with a bite.

Its attack appeared swift, but every move had long been anticipated by Mo Hua.

Mo Hua performed the Water Passing Step, nimbly dodging the Iron Corpse Elder's onslaught.

With a surge of effort, the Iron Corpse Elder attacked relentlessly with various claw strikes from different angles, all of which Mo Hua dodged one after the other.

Mo Hua even stepped on the Iron Corpse Elder's head and smoothly retreated.

The Iron Corpse Elder was both agitated and furious.

This young brat dare to humiliate it?

It made as if to lunge again but realized that Mo Hua, who had put some distance between them, pointed a finger from afar, and a flash of fire appeared.

A fireball whistled toward it.

The Iron Corpse Elder's pupils contracted, only having time to cross its arms over its face for protection.

The Fireball Technique then exploded in front of it.

The sleeves covering its arms were burned away, revealing the iron-blue, corpse-like limbs.

On the burned arms, the flesh was singed black.

And flames were still licking around its body.

The Iron Corpse Elder inhaled sharply.

Fireball Technique?

How was it possible?

How could Divine Sense condense into a spell?

It realized something was wrong...

This youngster didn't just have good luck or a natural talent for Divine Thought Manifestation.

He must have inherited a spell point for Divine Thought!

Manifesting spells within the Sea of Consciousness.

This technique was extremely clever; having parasitized the portrait for so long and having consumed so many cultivators' Divine Sense, it had never seen such a thing before, or even heard of it.

Even the ancestors probably didn't know of this method.

The Iron Corpse Elder felt fear creeping in.

"We need to take a long-term approach..."

Facing this youngster alone would be unwise.

They would need to gather the full strength of the Zhang Family, make other plans, kill this youngster, and then feast on his Divine Sense.

If the opportunity arose, they could even seize his inheritance!

The Zhang Family's power would surely grow immensely!

Chapter 468: Eat More (3)

The Iron Corpse Elder had made up his mind and thus began to think of retreating.

Mo Hua immediately saw through its intentions.

Since it wanted to run, then Mo Hua wouldn't be polite.

He cast the Water Prison Technique with a flick of his wrist to hold the Iron Corpse captive, then launched the Fireball Technique again and again. Huge flames engulfed the Iron Corpse Elder in no time.

A moment later, the fire receded, and smoke billowed in all directions.

With an angry roar, the Iron Corpse Elder stepped out from the fire and smoke.

Its eyes were blood-red, its body huge, and its skin an iron-blue darkening to black, showing clear signs of further corpse transformation. Its overall strength had climbed a notch.

"Brat, you've angered me!"

The Iron Corpse Elder, having undergone corpse transformation, was enraged.

But to Mo Hua, it hardly made a difference.

He still used the Water Prison Technique to control it, followed by bombarding it with the Fireball Technique.

The Iron Corpse Elder had no way to apply its strength, forced to be suppressed by Mo Hua. Sensing the dire situation, it used all its power to resist the impacts of exploding fireballs and rushed towards Mo Hua.

But upon looking up, there was no one there.

Mo Hua had already used the Water Passing Step to withdraw gracefully, regaining the distance, then he used the Water Prison Technique to hold and the Fireball Technique to bomb again...

Amidst the flying sparks, the Iron Corpse Elder's face was fierce, its figure in disarray, its heart filled with fear.

After living for so many years, feasting on so many cultivators, was it truly no match for this young cultivator?

Was it so thoroughly suppressed by his spells that it couldn't retaliate?

Merely like a punching bag, held in place by spells, then hung up and beaten?

The Iron Corpse Elder found it hard to believe.

Mo Hua was also frowning.

It seemed... impossible to kill.

After the Iron Corpse's further transformation into a zombie, its flesh had become too tough.

Relying solely on the Fireball Technique, it could be suppressed, defeated, but killing it was difficult.

If this stalemate continued, there was the possibility that his Divine Sense would be exhausted, the power of his spells would weaken, and it would find an opportunity to escape.

Mo Hua's gaze turned cold, "Need to find a way, to slaughter it."

The Iron Corpse Elder understood this as well.

If it wasn't Mo Hua's match, it could only withstand his Fireball Technique, minimize the damage, and wait for Mo Hua's Divine Sense to be spent to have a chance to escape or even counterattack.

Controlling with spells like this would also consume a considerable amount of Divine Sense.

This brat, can't last much longer...

As expected, shortly after, the Fireball Technique stopped.

The Iron Corpse Elder's heart leapt with joy, but when it looked up, it saw Mo Hua with closed eyes, concentrating, apparently doing something.

The Iron Corpse Elder was taken aback.

What did this brat mean by this?

Was he distracted? Or had he given up?

Or perhaps, was there some issue with his Divine Sense?

Should I flee now, or just rush over and kill him?

During its moment of hesitation, it suddenly sensed something was amiss.

The atmosphere around seemed to have changed.

The Iron Corpse Elder suddenly looked down and saw that, at some point, many faint blue threads of Spiritual Power had appeared underfoot. These threads twisted and turned, moving on their own, connecting into mysterious patterns.

The Iron Corpse Elder's eyes widened.

What was this?

Sensing danger, it tried to flee, but it was too late.

Mo Hua had completed his first Formation.

This was a Golden Lock Formation.

The faint blue Spiritual Power formed patterns on the ground, which then emitted a golden light, solidifying into chains of Spiritual Power that tightly locked the Iron Corpse Elder in place.

After several attempts, the Iron Corpse Elder couldn't break free.

Then, after a while, the second Formation was also ready.

This was a Melting Fire Formation.

The moment the Formation Patterns formed, the faint blue Spiritual Power emitted a blinding red light. The ground turned into a sea of fire, like a blazing furnace, trapping and roasting the Iron Corpse Elder within it.

Fear filled the heart of the Iron Corpse Elder.

A Formation?

This brat was a Formation Master?

But were Formation Masters meant to draw Formations like this?

Without pen or ink, relying solely on Divine Thought, to form a Formation so quickly?

Formations obey the Heavenly Dao, the obsession and killer intent towards Divine Sense is the greatest.

Moreover, it was such a vivid and powerful Formation.

The Iron Corpse Elder's heart trembled.

"It's over, capsized in the gutter."

It was just starving for so long and wanted to come out for a bite to eat, only to be roasted by a formation set up by some unknown brat?

The cultivation world is truly goddamn treacherous!

Such a vicious brat.

Facing death, the Iron Corpse Elder wanted to struggle with all its might one last time.

For a moment, it broke free from the Golden Lock Formation, but was then immobilized by Mo Hua's Water Prison Technique on the spot. Moments later, the spiritual power of the Golden Lock Formation restored itself, turning back into golden locks and securing it firmly once again.

And the Melting Fire Formation, like a furnace, ceaselessly scorched its body.

A dull knife cutting through flesh will eventually finish.

The Iron Corpse Elder fell into despair.

Mo Hua, on the other hand, was sizing up the Iron Corpse Elder and suddenly asked with curiosity,

"The technique of your corpse transformation, was it passed down from your ancestor?"

Through gritted teeth, the Iron Corpse Elder replied,

"What if it was?"

"Do you have any other techniques?" Mo Hua inquired.

The Iron Corpse Elder, seething, remained silent.

"If you have no other techniques, you're going to die here today," Mo Hua "kindly" reminded.

The Iron Corpse Elder was so angry it couldn't speak.

Mo Hua stroked his chin, pondering.

This Iron Corpse Elder seemed to have really run out of tricks, no other techniques left.

Mo Hua felt somewhat regretful and disappointed,

"That's all your ancestor passed down to you?"

The Iron Corpse Elder sneered, "Of course not. My ancestor's techniques are innumerable—how could they be understood by a mere... "

While speaking, it suddenly stopped, followed by a sudden jolt of alarm.

Was this brat tricking him into talking?

What did he mean?

What did he want to know?

Ancestor...

He wanted to understand the ancestor's techniques, could it be... he was after the ancestor's legacy?

The Iron Corpse Elder was filled with fear.

No, it's not possible.

How could he, a mere brat, possibly...

The Iron Corpse Elder paused, his face showing horror.

No, it was possible!

Given the brat's inconceivable abilities in the Sea of Consciousness, he really could plot against the ancestor!

If he succeeded, and understood the ancestor's techniques, the ancestor, the ancestor...

The ancestor would be in danger!

The Iron Corpse Elder's heart trembled.

Seeing his thoughts uncovered, Mo Hua lamented,

"Being an oblivious ghost would have been better for you."

Understanding everything meant he only had to slaughter you now.

Although Mo Hua didn't plan on sparing his life in the first place.

Mo Hua no longer wasted words, focusing on driving the formation to refine the Iron Corpse Elder, who was stricken with terror, and then swallowed it whole.

The Divine Thought of an iron corpse would certainly be much stronger.

After swallowing it, Mo Hua temporarily couldn't refine it completely and estimated that it would take several days to do so gradually.

Occasionally, evil thoughts would bubble up from the depths of his heart.

Mo Hua could only calm those thoughts through still meditation from now on.

After exiting the Sea of Consciousness, Mo Hua opened his eyes and glanced at the Zhang Family's Ancestral Master Picture.

The picture still contained many zombies, several iron corpses, and also Zhang Quan's ancestor.

One by one, come then...

None shall escape!

It's just whether, after finishing them all in "one pot", his Divine Sense will directly reach Thirteen Stripes...

Mo Hua couldn't help but wonder.

Bai Zisheng asked, noticing his state, "Are you... all right?"

Mo Hua came back to his senses and shook his head, "I'm fine."

Yet Bai Zisheng frowned, sensing something amiss, "It seems somewhat off..."

Bai Zixi's eyes, like water, also stared at Mo Hua for a while, then asked puzzled,

"Your face, why does it seem a bit wicked?"

Mo Hua rubbed his cheek, "Ate something not so good, need to digest it a bit."

Chapter 469: Riot (1)

After spending a few days, Mo Hua "digested" the Iron Corpse Elder and purified its malicious thoughts, significantly increasing his Divine Sense.

"As expected of the Iron Corpse Elder, the Divine Sense is comparable to Foundation Establishment..."

Mo Hua felt great joy in his heart.

With the enhancement of Divine Sense and the condensation of spells and formations during the manifestation of Divine Thought in battle, Mo Hua's control of Spiritual Power became even more precise, deepening his comprehension of the Spiritual Pivot Formation.

But that was as far as he could go.

No matter how Mo Hua practiced thereafter, and no matter how much he reflected, he could no longer gain any new insights.

His understanding of the Spiritual Pivot Formation had reached a bottleneck.

Mo Hua thought it over and felt that this shouldn't be his own issue.

After all, studying the Spiritual Pivot Formation, whether in terms of Divine Sense expenditure or understanding of the Laws, had not reached a state of utter exhaustion and extreme difficulty.

The current bottleneck likely lay with the Formation itself.

The Spiritual Pivot Formation in his possession was incomplete.

An incomplete Formation could not fully grasp the fundamental principles of Spiritual Power.

"It seems I need to find a way to obtain the complete Spiritual Pivot Formation..."

Mo Hua silently said to himself.

In the time to come, he still had to deal with the Zhang Family's "zombie" situation.

He planned to "eat" the zombies in the diagram, from the weakest to the strongest.

With the strategy of nourishing warfare through warfare, devouring his disciples and grand-disciples to enhance his Divine Sense, he would eventually take on the zombies' Ancestral Master.

That would be Zhang Quan's ancestor.

However, according to what the Iron Corpse Elder had said, this zombie ancestor had many tricks up its sleeve.

Knowing both your enemy and yourself, you will never be endangered in a hundred battles.

He needed to find a way to fully understand its capabilities to develop a targeted strategy.

Moreover, as for Divine Thought Manifestation, Mo Hua was still not very proficient with it.

Even though he had repeatedly engaged in battle, and the manifestations of spells and formations were quite substantial, Mo Hua was still not quite satisfied.

The manifested Spiritual Power wasn't realistic enough;

The power of the manifested spells was slightly inferior;

And the speed of manifested formations was still a bit too slow...

This level of skill was more than adequate to deal with lesser zombies.

It was just sufficient to suppress the Iron Corpse Elder.

But when facing the Zhang Family's zombie Ancestral Master, Mo Hua lacked confidence.

To the average cultivator, with the Zhang Family's evil thoughts and a whole family of zombies, having consumed who knows how many people, their strength was already extremely formidable.

Being able to suppress Walking Corpses and Iron Corpses was already an achievement.

But Mo Hua believed that he was a disciple of Mr. Zhuang.

If his master had taught him Divine Thought Manifestation, then he must master it exceptionally well; otherwise, he would surely lose face for his master and let down his master's expectations.

Therefore, his Divine Sense had to be cultivated to the extreme.

Divine Thought Manifestation also had to be cultivated to the extreme!

The manifestation of spells and formations required the manifestation of Spiritual Power as a foundation.

Manifesting Spiritual Power required an intrinsic understanding of the nature of Spiritual Power.

The deeper the understanding, the more authentic the manifestation, and the stronger the power.

And the understanding of the nature of Spiritual Power had to do with the Spiritual Pivot Formation.

Thus, apart from "eating" zombies, Mo Hua had to start preparing to find the complete Spiritual Pivot Formation.

Besides, the Spiritual Pivot Formation was related to the traitor of the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect.

Instructor Yan had devoted most of his life to settling this grudge with the Sect.

His lifelong obsession was to recover the Spiritual Pivot Formation and take personal revenge on the traitor who had betrayed and dishonored their ancestors.

Instructor Yan had shown him great kindness.

A drop of water should be repaid with a spring.

If the Black Hand behind the Corpse cultivators in the mine turned out to be the traitor from the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect, Mo Hua wouldn't mind letting the deserving die a fitting death.

...

The clue to the Spiritual Pivot Formation was hidden on Zhang Quan, who was detained at Taoist Court.

During these days, Mo Hua's thoughts had all been focused on capturing zombies.

But he had kept an eye on the news from the Taoist Court.

When Situ Fang and Situ Jin came to present gifts, Mo Hua took the opportunity to subtly inquire about some information.

The gifts from Situ Fang were Formation Diagrams and some Formation Books.

This was previously agreed upon.

It was both an expression of Situ Fang's gratitude and the Situ Family's goodwill.

One can accept rewards for their services.

He had indeed been a great help with the Corpse Walking Stronghold.

Not to mention that the gifts were related to formations.

Mo Hua thus accepted them with peace of mind.

In addition, there were some brushes, ink, paper, inkstones, specialties of the Situ Clan's Spirit Fruits, as well as various types of Spiritual Meat.

They weren't particularly valuable, but they were thoughtful.

Mo Hua accepted those as well.

The Spirit Fruits could be made into cakes for Junior Sister to eat.

The Spiritual Meat could be stewed for Master and Junior Brother to enjoy.

There were also some odd fruits, with unknown flavors, but looking crunchy and crisp, which Mo Hua planned to fry and let Old Kui try...

After receiving the gifts and offering tea, exchanging a few polite words, Mo Hua asked:

"How are things with Zhang Quan?"

Situ Jin hesitated somewhat.

After a moment's hesitation, Situ Fang shook his head and said,

"We haven't gotten anything out of him..."

"Have you used torture?"

"We have," Situ Fang sighed, "We've broken five or six sticks on him, but he just won't speak, not a single word."

Mo Hua wondered, "Doesn't he feel pain?"

Situ Jin frowned and explained:

"It looks like a special cultivation technique that can make the flesh as stiff as a zombie and the senses numb, impervious to pain,"

"What about using other methods?" Mo Hua thought for a moment, then said:

"I remember Uncle Zhang telling me that the punishments of the Taoist Court are plentiful, ranging from pinching fingers to cutting meridians to poisoning eyes..."

"What on earth are you talking about that Zhang Lan told you..."

Instructor Yan grumbled in her heart.

She noted down what Mo Hua said.

Next time she visited the Zhang Family to complain, there would be another "crime" to add to Zhang Lan's list of offenses.

After that, Instructor Yan said helplessly, "We tried, but none of them worked."

"Alright then..."

Mo Hua felt somewhat regretful.

"I will think of another way and ask about it. If Zhang Quan says anything, I will tell you," Instructor Yan said.

"Mhm, thank you, Sister Situ!"

Mo Hua nodded and responded.

After Instructor Yan and Situ Jin left, Mo Hua began to wonder:

"How can we make Zhang Quan confess?"

He wondered if formations could be used for torture...

Before Mo Hua could think of anything, chaos erupted in South Yue City two nights later.

The streets were bustling, sprinkled with light from fires.

There were also noisy shouts from cultivators and dense fluctuations of spiritual power.

Mo Hua heard the commotion, but he was busy catching zombies in his Sea of Consciousness and couldn't afford to be distracted, so he didn't pay it any mind.

The next day, Instructor Yan arrived.

She was injured and looked haggard.

Mo Hua asked with concern, "Sister Situ, what happened?"

Instructor Yan regretfully said, "Zhang Quan is dead."

Mo Hua was startled, "Dead?"

Instructor Yan sighed, "Last night at 1 a.m., some cultivators broke into the prison wearing black robes, moving stealthily. By the time the Taoist Court noticed, it was already too late..."

The Taoist Court had indeed been negligent in its defense.

But the main issue was that they never expected someone would dare to break into the Taoist Court's prison.

This was defiance against the Taoist Court.

If caught, there would be severe punishment and consequences for all involved!

Mo Hua's expression also grew solemn as he asked:

"Did they break into the prison to rescue Zhang Quan?"

Instructor Yan nodded.

Mo Hua was puzzled, "If it was to save Zhang Quan, how come he is still dead?"

Instructor Yan explained, "During the chaotic fight, someone stabbed Zhang Quan with a sword. Then they set a fire that burned down half of the Taoist Prison along with Zhang Quan's body..."

Mo Hua frowned, "Someone stabbed Zhang Quan with a sword... That person must have been at the Foundation Establishment level."

"Yes," Instructor Yan also frowned deeply, "There were Foundation Establishment level individuals among the prison breakers, the Taoist Court, and other sects and clans that came to support when they heard of the chaos at the Taoist Court..."

"In the midst of the chaos, no one knows who killed Zhang Quan or who set the fire."

"This matter... is quite strange," Mo Hua mused.

Instructor Yan nodded, "I suspect the prison break was a feint, and the real intent was to kill and silence him."

"What happened to those cultivators who broke into the prison afterward?" Mo Hua asked.

Instructor Yan replied with resignation, "They all died as well."

Mo Hua opened his mouth in surprise, "All of them died?"

"Yes."

"So... not a single survivor?"

"That's right," Instructor Yan sighed helplessly, "And it's not even certain that those dead bandits were actual robbers."

"Their identities?"

"Still under investigation, but it's doubtful anything will come of it."

Mo Hua murmured with furrowed brows, "So, they all died..."

"Then, the responsibility of the Taoist Court for this incident must be significant," Mo Hua asked again.

Such a prison break should surely lead to a thorough investigation.

After contemplating, Instructor Yan shook her head:

"It's hard to say..."

Indeed, two days later, the matter was brushed aside.

Instructor Yan found Mo Hua, her expression a mixture of anger and helplessness.

Mo Hua learned the outcome of the incident from Instructor Yan.

In the report sent to the Taoist Court by Court Leader Qian of South Yue City, it was written:

"Taoist Calendar year 20,025, beginning of the fourth month..."

Unknown black-robed cultivators attempted a prison break, met with swift suppression from the Taoist Court, convict Zhang Quan died, and the bandits were all executed.

Half of the Taoist Prison was damaged, one enforcement leader killed and ten injured... A request for 2,836 spirit stones for compensation..."

Although there had been a prison break, all the bandits died, and so did the convict.

The Taoist Court paid a price but preserved its dignity.

On the balance, the positives and negatives canceled each other out.

Even if an investigation were pursued, there would be nowhere to go, as all were dead...

At most, there would be some minor reprimands.

Mo Hua was somewhat shocked.

This was incredibly audacious and meticulous.

They committed a brazen act like a prison break, but managed to resolve everything both above and below them.

In the end, a big issue was played down, a small issue disappeared...

Mo Hua's gaze turned speculative.

The big fish behind the scenes had surfaced.

But it had bitten the hook, taken the bait, snapped the line, and slipped away...

Chapter 470: Chapter Corpse Mine (1)

Zhang Quan died, leaving no proof behind.

The Iron Corpse was stolen, and the clues stopped there.

Now, the only option was to start with the traitor from the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect.

Mo Hua thought for a moment, then ran off to ask Instructor Yan:

"Instructor, do you think that traitor is still in South Yue City?"

Instructor Yan's gaze flickered, and he sighed:

"I've been searching for quite some time with no leads. Perhaps he's no longer here..."

Mo Hua shook his head, "Instructor, you're lying."

Instructor Yan was stunned for a moment.

But Mo Hua appeared certain.

Unable to resist, Instructor Yan asked, "How do you know I'm lying?"

"I guessed!"

Mo Hua's voice rang out clearly.

He looked at Instructor Yan with eyes clear and unclouded, the pupils deep and pure, unsullied by even a speck of dust.

Being seen with such a gaze by Mo Hua, Instructor Yan felt he couldn't hide anything.

Even guilt arose in his heart.

Instructor Yan was silent for a long while, his inner struggle evident. Finally, he sighed and spoke up:

"That person is indeed in South Yue City..."

"I didn't tell you before because, first, I didn't want to get you involved, and second, because this is just my speculation. I have no proof and can't be sure."

Mo Hua's eyes brightened as he quickly asked:

"Where in South Yue City?"

Instructor Yan frowned, "I suspect he's with the Lu Family."

The Lu Family!

Mo Hua's gaze shifted as he silently pondered.

The traitor, Shen Cai, had changed both his name and his appearance, likely to hide within South Yue City, and would probably seek the protection of a powerful force.

Being a Loose Cultivator was out of the question.

Firstly, the life of a Loose Cultivator was tough, and he betrayed his Sect not to live a hard life.

Secondly, being a Formation Master with no kin, it would be even more conspicuous to mix among Loose Cultivators, making his identity more suspicious.

If not a Loose Cultivator, then he must find a powerful force to depend on.

If he were to rely on one, it had to be a significant force.

It's easy to enjoy the shade under a big tree, and within the crowd and chaos, it's easier to blend in.

The three major powers in South Yue City: the first is the Taoist Court, the second is the South Yue Sect, and the third is the Lu Family.

The Taoist Court values lineage, and without a clean—at least apparently clean—identity, you can't get in;

The South Yue Sect is a Sect, the Lu Family is a Clan.

Compared to each other, as long as you're capable, you could infiltrate either.

To become an Instructor, an Elder of the Outer Gate or an offshoot, a Guest Elder, or to enter through marriage—there were many options, and the positions were quite high, with good treatment too.

Previously, Mo Hua also guessed if the traitor were to hide, he would be within the South Yue Sect or the Lu Family.

But he was a bit uncertain.

Now, Instructor Yan had also guessed it was the Lu Family...

Mo Hua asked, "Why do you think he's with the Lu Family?"

Instructor Yan replied, "You were right, I did lie to you before..."

"When I was in South Yue City, I saw the handwriting of the traitor's formations. At that time, I told you I couldn't find the origin of this formation; I was lying..."

"I found out..."

Instructor Yan looked grave, "This formation originated from the Lu Family."

"And that mine, the aura of its formations, was familiar yet obscure, with a touch of something sinister..."

"I suspect the formations used in that mine are the Spiritual Pivot Formation."

"That mine also belongs to the Lu Family."

"I rented a house near the mines because I suspected the Lu Family. I wanted to gather some information and find clues to that traitor..."

Instructor Yan appeared somewhat helpless, "But I didn't expect to run into Zhang Quan, to be held hostage by him, trapped in the Corpse Walking Stronghold..."

"You know the rest..."

Instructor Yan poured out everything.

Mo Hua slowly nodded, "Now that you mention it, the Lu Family does seem to be the most suspicious."

Instructor Yan nodded slightly too, then his expression grew despondent:

"The Lu Family's power is too great, owning several mines, with multiple Foundation Establishment cultivators stationed, engaging in mining, brothels, gambling dens, restaurants, occupying the majority of prosperous Jinhua Street. Their relationships in South Yue City are intertwined and complicated..."

"I don't have the ability to investigate the Lu Family, and even if I did, I'm afraid that..."

Instructor Yan heaved a deep sigh.

Mo Hua understood Instructor Yan's difficulties.

With the Lu Family being such a large local force, Instructor Yan, a cultivator from outside, even as a Formation Master, had no way to investigate.

And even if he found out anything, Instructor Yan, not being skilled in Taoist Skills, couldn't do much.

If he went to report to the Taoist Court, claiming that someone from the Lu Family betrayed their master and destroyed their lineage,

Likely, the one being detained would be Instructor Yan himself.

Mo Hua then comforted Instructor Yan:

"Instructor, in fact, Manager Mo is right—you should consider your own lifelong affairs. It's time to find a partner, settle down, and live happily."

Instructor Yan stopped short, somewhat helplessly.

Mo Hua continued, "What goes around comes around. Maybe that person will meet his end on his own one day?"

"These days, just stay here with peace of mind, drink tea with Mr. Zhuang, chat, and discuss formations..."

"As for the rest, let nature take its course; don't take it too much to heart."

Although he said this, Instructor Yan's dilemma wasn't likely that easy to resolve.

But having heard Mo Hua's words, some warmth stirred in Instructor Yan's heart.

For many years, he'd been somber, his temperament somewhat frosty.

The care of others was something he seldom felt.

But almost immediately, Instructor Yan realized something was off and looked at Mo Hua with suspicion, "Are you... planning to do something?"

Mo Hua smiled and shook his head:

"Nothing much."

What he planned to do, he couldn't tell Instructor Yan just yet.

Later, he changed the topic and chatted with Instructor Yan for a bit before heading to the Taoist Court to seek out Situ Fang.

It was inconvenient to talk at the Taoist Court, so the two found a secluded teahouse.

Mo Hua whispered:

"Sister Situ, has your Court Leader ever taken bribes from the South Yue Sect?"

Situ Fang was taken aback, thought for a moment, and nodded.

"Then, has he ever taken bribes from the Lu Family?"

Situ Fang nodded again.

Mo Hua fell silent. He changed his approach and asked:

"So, in South Yue City, is there a sect or clan that hasn't bribed him?"

Situ Fang hesitated and said,

"There might be some, but such forces likely no longer exist..."

Mo Hua found it hard to believe, "He's that greedy?"

Situ Fang said diplomatically, "After all, he is my immediate Court Leader; I shouldn't really judge his right and wrong."

Mo Hua understood.

It meant he was so corrupt that even she had nothing to say.

Mo Hua frowned, "He's so greedy, and nobody does anything about it?"

Situ Fang coughed twice, then said in a lowered voice,

"The Taoist Court has power, and where there is power, there is greed, it's only a matter of how much or how little."

"There are those who aren't greedy, but they're rare as phoenix feathers and unicorn horns."

"Power and money beget each other."

"As long as you have power, people will bring Spirit Stones to your door, you won't even need to lift a finger, and they'll put those stones in your pocket."

"And as long as you have Spirit Stones, naturally, you can use them to exchange for power..."

Mo Hua nodded, then suddenly found something odd,

"Sister Situ, your tone, why does it sound so much like Uncle Zhang Lan..."

Situ Fang expressed disdain, "That's what he told me."

Mo Hua was taken aback.

Situ Fang sighed, "He was worried that I was too straightforward, too naïve, so he told me these words when I first became a Supervisor."

At first, Situ Fang didn't believe it.

But after becoming a Supervisor and witnessing many things, she had no choice but to believe.

Mo Hua pondered for a while, then asked,

"Which family has bribed Court Leader Qian the most?"

"That would definitely be the Lu Family."

"Is the Lu Family the richest?"

"Yes." Situ Fang nodded and sighed,

"Most of the mines in South Yue City belong to the Lu Family, most of the Mining Cultivators in South Yue City work for the Lu Family, how could they not be rich?"

What she probably left unsaid:...and most of the Taoist Court has been bought by the Lu Family...

Mo Hua muttered to herself internally.

Seeing Mo Hua's expression, Situ Fang frowned and then reminded,

"Don't oppose the Lu Family..."

"Powerful dragons do not suppress local snakes; the Lu Family has immense power, deep connections, and complex relationships. Unless the Taoist Court intervenes, such local forces can do a lot of bad things and still cover everything up perfectly once they collude with the local Taoist Court officials."

"It's like trying to remove grass without taking out the roots..."

Her own Situ Family, upon arriving in South Yue City, also abided by the rules.

There may have been conflicts of interest, but they would never tear each other apart.

The problems in South Yue City are deep-rooted.

They were not something the Situ Family could just decide to resolve.

Moreover, Situ Fang was only a Supervisor.

Situ Fang deeply valued her friendship with Mo Hua and feared that he was unaware of the peril within, and that his passion might recklessly entangle him in matters from which he could not extricate himself.

Mo Hua then nodded and said with a smile,

"Don't worry, I know what I'm doing."

After confirming the relationship between the Lu Family and the Taoist Court, Mo Hua took another trip to the Lu Family's mines.

On the surface, the mines of the Lu Family were as noisy and busy as ever.

But Mo Hua noticed that the surrounding Formations had changed.

The Formations were more comprehensive and the guards more vigilant.

Around the perimeter of the mines, many Expose Dust Formations had been set up, and at the gate, even an Expose Shadow Formation had been laid...

These Formations seemed to be guarding against someone like herself...

At the same time, the Cultivators guarding the mines had been replaced.

The Cultivator from the Lu Family named Lu Ming had been transferred away.

The number of Lu Family Foundation Establishment cultivators stationed at the mines had also doubled.

They no longer had beautiful maids fanning them, nor fine food and drink, instead, they sat quietly with focused expressions, occasionally releasing Divine Sense to scan around, as if on guard against something.

"There's a big problem..."

Mo Hua muttered to herself.

With Foundation Establishment cultivators, Expose Dust Formations, and Expose Shadow Formations, it was not going to be easy to slip in.

Mo Hua planned to check it out at night.

But come nighttime, those two Foundation Establishment cultivators were still there.

With a sweep of Divine Sense, Mo Hua could even detect that many corners were stealthily filled with Lu Family Cultivators.

There was no mining at night, yet their vigilance had intensified.

They didn't leave Mo Hua any chance.

"The problem is huge..."

Deciding it was futile, Mo Hua simply waited outside until midnight.

Finally, at 1 a.m., some noises emanated from inside the mines.

Waves of sinister qi drifted over.

However, unlike before, these sounds were very subtle.

The qi inside was also weak and hard to detect.

It was as if it had been deliberately repressed or obscured by formations or something similar.

The intense and dreadful atmosphere that Mo Hua had sensed before, teeming with dark and eerie vibes that sent shivers down one's spine, was completely different now.

The qi from the mines was faint now, and the noises were low.

Even an ordinary Cultivator passing by might not notice anything unusual about the mines.

Mo Hua's expression became serious.

He sat down cross-legged, released his Divine Sense and concentrated on sensing the qi from the mines.

A moment later, Mo Hua opened his eyes, certain in his heart.

He wasn't wrong in his guess.

The qi in these mines was that of zombies!

Previously, he wasn't sure.

But after dealing with Zhang Quan, visiting Corpse Walking Stronghold, stealing the Corpse Controlling Bell, taking the "Zombie Image," and even consuming a few zombies,

Mo Hua was now very familiar.

That deathly qi was the Corpse Qi from zombies.

That rotting stench was the putrid odor from Walking Corpses.

The evil formations were exactly the Spiritual Pivot Evil Formations inscribed on zombies.

Formerly, the dense and chilling qi was because within this mine were countless zombies!

This mine owned by the Lu Family was a Corpse Mine!