

## The Quest 491

### Chapter 491: Little Zombie (1)

Mo Hua intended to deceive Lu Chengyun and Zhang Quan, sneaking into the sacrificial altar of the Corpse Formation. He had to get through two doors.

One was the door to the hall.

The other was that mural within the hall.

The hall's door was manageable, but the mural posed a significant challenge.

First of all, he didn't know what exactly were the hand seals and the incantations that Zhang Quan had used.

And Zhang Quan wouldn't disclose them.

Even if Zhang Quan were to tell him, Mo Hua wasn't certain that by simply imitating the process, the mural would actually open for him.

That zombie mural, like the Dry Ink Screen of the Corpse Walking Stronghold, must be some sort of door lock type of Spiritual Artifact.

If it was a Spiritual Artifact, then there must be a Formation inside.

This sort of Formation wasn't a Five Elements Formation and didn't fall within the scope of Formations that Mo Hua was proficient in.

Even if Mo Hua wanted to solve it, there was nowhere to start.

Even if he could figure it out, Lu Chengyun would certainly know about it.

Just by solving the Expose Dust Formation at the entrance, Lu Chengyun was able to detect it, let alone the secretive door-locking Formation above the zombie mural at the entrance to the altar outside the Corpse Formation.

Forcefully breaking the Formation was out of the question.

The screen within the Corpse Walking Stronghold was smashed by Mo Hua using the Thousand Jun Stick.

But this place was different from the Corpse Walking Stronghold, such a hit-and-run tactic after taking something wouldn't work here.

Moreover, with the Corpse Mine sealed, he couldn't escape.

If he smashed the mural and barged into the altar, even if Lu Chengyun were a pig, he would know that Mo Hua harbored ulterior motives and had deceitful plans.

"What should I do?"

Mo Hua found himself in a dilemma.

How could he bypass the mural and enter the Ten Thousand Corpses Sacrificial Altar?

Whenever he had the chance, he pondered this question.

But after a long time, he couldn't think of any good methods, until one day, when he was behind the mural, he saw Zhang Quan activate a mechanism to close the door of the mural.

Mo Hua was startled.

A mechanism?

This mural has a mechanism?

He previously hadn't even noticed.

Mo Hua took another few glances and discovered that the mechanism was a simple stone sluice gate, unremarkable and overlooked when not in use by Zhang Quan.

Mo Hua furrowed his brows.

It meant entering from the outside was very difficult.

You need to know the method, form the hand seals, recite the incantations, and open the mural to reveal the gaping mouths of zombies.

But exiting from the inside was very simple, just pull down the sluice gate.

It guarded against outsiders but not from within...

Mo Hua thought about it and felt it made sense.

Those who could enter were either Lu Chengyun or Zhang Quan.

Even for Mo Hua, who was somewhat of an outsider, he was under their surveillance, leaving them with nothing to worry about.

Thus, they only needed to guard against people coming in from outside, not those already inside.

Setting a barrier outside was reasonable.

Setting one inside would be superfluous.

Mo Hua, being a Formation Master, had always focused on complex Formations, neglecting the possibility of such straightforward mechanisms.

This was a case of not seeing what was right under one's nose.

Mo Hua nodded to himself, silently reminding himself.

He shouldn't, just because he is a Formation Master, be biased and only focus on Formations.

Complicated problems sometimes have simple solutions.

To get into the Ten Thousand Corpses Sacrificial Altar, someone just had to pull down the sluice gate...

But Mo Hua paused again.

This problem seemed simple, but...

How would he pull the sluice gate?

Who would pull it for him?

He certainly couldn't expect Lu Chengyun to pull the gate open for him.

Mo Hua thought it over and realized that as a Formation Master, in most cases, he could still only use Formations...

This seemingly simple problem seemed like it could only be solved with a complex Formation.

...

Over the next several days, Mo Hua continuously looked for opportunities.

Finally, on this day, Lu Chengyun had to step out halfway through drawing his Formation due to some urgent matters.

Mo Hua immediately stood up, keeping a considerable distance from Zhang Quan.

Zhang Quan frowned and asked, "What are you doing?"

"Keeping away from you," Mo Hua said.

Zhang Quan's eyes darkened, "What do you mean by that?"

"I'm afraid you'll harm me," Mo Hua declared righteously.

Zhang Quan's resentment toward him was no secret, evident even to a blind man.

Zhang Quan snorted coldly, "I'm not that petty."

"Well, that's debatable. Though one may know a person's face, one cannot know their heart. You look deceitful, and I'm sure you're even more so on the inside."

Zhang Quan's gaze turned icy, "Little devil, you better not provoke me."

"So what if I do?"

Mo Hua scoffed and then performed the Concealment Technique right before Zhang Quan, gradually disappearing from sight.

Zhang Quan was taken aback, then filled with surprise.

What on earth was the boy trying to do?

He looked around several times, but Mo Hua was nowhere to be seen.

Even a sweep with his Divine Sense revealed no trace of Mo Hua.

After a long wait, there was no movement at all.

It seemed that he indeed turned invisible just to avoid him and not to be detected.

Zhang Quan cursed inside:

"This brat is damn cautious, not giving me a chance!"

Zhang Quan gritted his teeth and called out to the surroundings:

"Where are you?"

"Come out!"

"I'll heed Brother Lu's words, I won't make things difficult for you, you can rest assured..."

"Come out now..."

...

Naturally, Mo Hua paid him no attention.

At this moment within the Corpse Formation, in a secluded corner, the invisible Mo Hua silently opened a coffin.

The Corpse Formation, although only a Compound Formation, originated from the Large Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses and was vast in scale.

Within the Formation, many coffins were placed.

Above the Formation was a lavish sacrificial altar.

Mo Hua was young and small in stature. By concealing his figure and masking his breath, he could hide behind the coffins and the sacrificial altar without Zhang Quan noticing.

Within one of the coffins, there was a small zombie, which Mo Hua had observed for several days and specifically chosen.

...

This Walking Corpse wasn't too old; it was probably only about seventeen or eighteen years old and had just been refined by Zhang Quan a few days before. The Spiritual Pivot Formation on its chest was still quite new, its Formation Patterns freshly painted.

A seventeen or eighteen-year-old cultivator...

Who knows whether he died a natural death, was killed by a Corpse Cultivator, or was murdered by the Lu Family.

After death, to be turned into a zombie and be used for evil deeds, a puppet to a tiger's will.

Mo Hua sighed softly in his heart.

With limited time, Mo Hua stopped dwelling on the matter and began to calm his mind, making some secretive modifications to the Spiritual Pivot Formation located at the heart meridian of the young cadaver.

Within the Spiritual Pivot Formation, there were some unique Formation Patterns.

This was something Mo Hua hadn't noticed before.

Since the Spiritual Pivot Formations he used to draw were generally of one type.

It wasn't until he saw a complete Spirit Pivot Formation Chart that he realized, after secret observations of Lu Chengyun painting Formation and several comparisons, that there had been some oversights in his earlier understanding of the Spiritual Pivot Formation.

He hadn't been aware of some detailed aspects.

This detail was the Formation Patterns.

Different types of Spiritual Pivot Formations, or even within the same type, have a unique Formation Pattern that sets them apart.

Mo Hua had noticed it before but didn't think deeply about it.

Because this Formation Pattern seemed to have no special meaning.

No matter how it was drawn, it didn't seem to affect the operation of the Spiritual Pivot Formation.

But after some research over these days and comparisons with most of the Spiritual Pivot Formations in the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses, Mo Hua gradually understood.

This Formation Pattern was extremely important; it was the Sequential Formation Pattern used for identifying the identity of the Spiritual Pivot Formation.

Similar to a kind of Formation "code".

The same Spiritual Pivot Formation had the same type of Sequential Formation Pattern, that is, a Formation "code".

The same type of Sequential Formation Pattern had a similar main body, with only slight differences in the details, such as the addition or reduction of strokes or the changes in orientation, to differentiate the sequence.

Only when the Formation "codes" matched, could the Spiritual Pivot Formation control based on hierarchy.

Walking Corpses, Iron Corpses, and the zombies in the Bronze Corpse Coffins all used the same type of "coding" Formation Pattern, with a layered hierarchy defining their weights, which is why they could be controlled systematically.

The Little Tigers that Mo Hua drew were different, though.



Indeed, Mo Hua had originally copied the Formation from the bodies of Walking Corpses and Iron Corpses.

However, Lu Chengyun was using Evil Formation techniques, whereas Mo Hua, on the other hand, used orthodox Formation methods.

Therefore, their Sequential Formation Patterns were different in an intangible way.

Lu Chengyun could control zombies but not Mo Hua's Little Tigers.

While Mo Hua could control the Little Tigers, he also couldn't control the zombies in the Corpse Mine.

Unless... he changed the Sequential Formation Pattern on the zombies.

Changing the Sequential Formation Pattern was like changing the code, essentially changing the authority.

What Mo Hua wanted to change now was the special Sequential Formation Pattern on the young zombie, which was used to differentiate authority and identity.

Mo Hua had only chosen one small Walking Corpse.

The Walking Corpse was not an Iron Corpse.

Within the Corpse Mine, there were numerous Walking Corpses, and there were also many base-level Sequential Formation Patterns in their Spiritual Pivot Formations.

Whether there was one more or one fewer, Lu Chengyun would never notice.

The main reason, of course, was that Lu Chengyun never imagined that there would be another Cultivator capable of learning the Spiritual Pivot Formation.

Let alone make secret modifications to his Formation "code" right under his nose and among the hordes in the Corpse Mine.

Easy for those who know how, impossible for those who don't.

For Mo Hua, altering a basic Spiritual Pivot Formation Pattern was as easy as flipping his hand.

With a flick of his small hand, a few strokes, Mo Hua had changed the Formation Pattern.

Removing this small zombie from the Spiritual Pivot sequence of the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses.

Then he added another Formation Pattern.

This Formation Pattern was the one he used on the Little Tigers himself.

...

Having altered this Formation Pattern, the little zombie now is like a Little Tiger, controlled by the Spiritual Pivot Formation on the Big Tiger that Mo Hua manipulated.

On the surface, it still looks like a zombie.

But within the sequence of the Spiritual Pivot Formation, it's no longer a "little zombie" but rather a "Little Tiger."

After finishing the adjustments to the Formation Pattern, Mo Hua returned to his original spot as if nothing had happened, picked up the pen, and continued to draw the Formation eye of the Ten Thousand Corpses Compound Formation.

He was dragging his feet while drawing this Formation eye, delaying it for quite some time.

Finally, it was also close to completion.

Zhang Quan was still calling for Mo Hua to "come out," but in the blink of an eye, Mo Hua was already back in his place, fully focused on drawing the Formation.

Zhang Quan's expression tightened, "You're not running anymore?"

Mo Hua disdainfully said, "Why would I run? You wouldn't dare lay a hand on me anyway."

Zhang Quan, annoyed, "Then what were you doing just now..."

Mo Hua said with a smile, "I was a bit bored, just teasing you for fun."

Then he curled his lip, "Who knew you'd be so dull, like an idiot, completely unable to find me, it's really no fun."

Zhang Quan was about to fly into a rage.

Lu Chengyun had already appeared at the doorway.

Zhang Quan had to suppress his anger, just about to badmouth Mo Hua to Lu Chengyun, but then he thought, any words he said against Mo Hua, Lu Chengyun certainly would not believe.

And indeed, it seemed Mo Hua hadn't really done anything...

Invisible and toying with himself?

Zhang Quan himself found it too embarrassing to say such a thing.

Zhang Quan could only sullenly shut his mouth.

Lu Chengyun, noticing the conflicting expressions of the two, wasn't surprised, and acted as if nothing had happened.

Yet, within the immense Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses, in a secluded corner, a common coffin contained a small Walking Corpse whose Sequential Formation Pattern had been tampered with.

This was something Lu Chengyun could not possibly know.

That evening, once Mo Hua shook off Lu Chengyun's Divine Sense surveillance, he concealed his form and quietly went to the hall.

The door to the hall was locked.

Mo Hua released his Divine Sense, and seeing no one around, controlled the Big Tiger with his Divine Sense in secrecy.

The Big Tiger had been left in the corner of the hall by him during the day.

Now, under the guiding of Mo Hua's Divine Sense, the Big Tiger leaped to the door, pushed open the bolt, and unlocked the door for Mo Hua.

The doors of the hall were quite simple.

Opening them from the inside would not trigger the Formation.

Mo Hua walked through the doorway, then approached the mural.

Next, he controlled the Big Tiger using Divine Sense, and through the Spiritual Pivot Formation on the Big Tiger, activated the Spiritual Pivot Formation on the little zombie.

The Sequential Formation Patterns matched, their "codes" similar.

The Big Tiger could control the little zombie.

This indirect control was even more covert, less likely to be detected by Lu Chengyun.

After a moment, Mo Hua's Divine Sense stirred.

He could sense the connection with the little zombie's Formation.

Mo Hua then controlled the little zombie, which pushed the lid off the coffin, slowly climbed out, and walked to the entrance, pulling on a gate switch on the wall.

At the same time, on the mural above, the ink merged chaotically, the layers becoming defined and materializing into a half-human, half-corpse face.

This face appeared majestic yet mean, with a greedy gaze, exuding ferocity and horror.

Its wide-open mouth formed the entrance to the mural.

Mo Hua stared at this face for a moment, silently memorizing it, then his eyes brightened, and he stepped into the midst of the Ten Thousand Corpses Sacrificial Altar.

Inside there was the Ten Thousand Corpses Compound Formation, the Golden Sacrificial Altar, the Bronze Corpse Coffin...

During the day, with people watching, he was restrained.

But coming in at this time of night, unnoticed by gods or ghosts, he could do whatever he wanted.

Chapter 492: Daoist Name (1)

In the midst of the Ten Thousand Corpses Sacrificial Altar, blood patterns covered the ground, thousands of coffins were aligned, the candlelight was dim, and the atmosphere was eerily silent.

There was not a single person.

Except for Mo Hua.

After Mo Hua had the small zombie close the gate, the mural behind him twisted and sealed off the way they had come from.

Mo Hua nodded.

This Spiritual Pivot Formation, truly worthy of being an Ultimate Formation, was much more practical than he had initially thought.

He then began to scrutinize the altar.

During the day, with Lu Chengyun and Zhang Quan around, Mo Hua hadn't felt anything peculiar.

But now, at night, on his own, he felt the altar, despite its glittering gold, was much more sinister and odd, not to mention the coffins and zombies within them.

Mo Hua couldn't help feeling a bit nervous.

He calmed his mind and started to do things one by one as he'd planned.

First, he studied the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses.

Although Mo Hua had designed the Formation eye, it only connected with the Formation Pivot to facilitate the flow of Spiritual Power.

He was not clear about the complete picture of the whole Formation.

The Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses was the culmination of many years of Lu Chengyun's efforts.

He hadn't had the opportunity to look closely during the day to avoid offending Lu Chengyun's taboos.

Moreover, according to Mo Hua's understanding of Formation principles, this Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses was likely not just a Compound Formation, but an Evil Path Great Formation!

Mo Hua executed the Water Passing Step, gathering Spiritual Power under his feet, and walked along the walls to the ceiling, dangling his head down to get a better look.

From his elevated position, he could see the entire Formation at a glance.

Taking the Formation eye as the heart vein, the Formation Pivot as the skeleton, and the Formation Patterns as the flesh.

Everything was in correspondence, the beginning and the end interconnected.

Indeed, it was a complete, large-scale Formation.

Mo Hua memorized the overall layout of the Formation in his mind, then walked down to start examining the Formation Patterns in detail.

The surface of these Formation Patterns appeared to be Evil Patterns.

But at their core, they were still an application of Formation principles of the Five Elements such as earth and water.

Earth Series Formations integrated with the flesh of corpses;

Water Series Formations mixed with blood and water.

Further, by incorporating venomous juices of plants into the construction of Wood Series Formations, they harmonize flesh and blood to create the Patterns of the Evil Formation.

Human flesh and blood naturally resonate with Spiritual Power.

Therefore, Evil Formations often use human blood as ink and human flesh as a medium to enhance the effect of the Formation, as well as to lower the difficulty of the Formation.

While this lowers the threshold, the included understanding of the Dao Laws is much shallower.

Mo Hua shook his head.

Such shortcuts, forsaking the fundamental for the trivial, would not lead to mastery of the Dao of Formation.

Nevertheless, to know his enemy as well as himself, Mo Hua still reviewed and sorted through the Formation Patterns, from start to finish.

After sorting them out, combining them with the Formation Pivot, and the Formation eye he had constructed, he made some Calculations to clear the logic of the operation of Spiritual Power and Evil Power within the Formation.

A complete Formation Diagram of Ten Thousand Corpses now emerged in Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness.

Mo Hua transferred the Formation Diagram from his Sea of Consciousness onto paper and then looked down at it intently, falling silent in thought.

A moment later, he sighed,

"It truly is the embryonic form of a Large Formation..."

And it was not that simplistic kind of Large Formation just cobbled together for numbers.

It was a kind of Evil Path Great Formation that had been perfected over several generations, with complete Formation Patterns, a concise Formation Pivot, a robust power from the Formation eye, and an obvious mark of inheritance.

"Evil Path Great Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses..."

Mo Hua frowned.

"Where on earth did Lu Chengyun get this Formation Diagram from?"

"Could it be that the Lu Family, or within this Corpse Mine, there are Demon Cultivators who are well-versed in Demon Path Formations, with genuine Demon Sect heritage?"



But in his time at the Corpse Mine, he had become quite familiar with the place.

He had never seen such Cultivators, nor had he detected any trace of them.

"Could it be a chance encounter with some Demon Path rogue, who then gave it to Lu Chengyun?"

Demon Path rogues...

Mo Hua then recalled the mysterious Taoist that Mr. Zhuang had mentioned, who should not be seen, spoken of, and ideally not even thought about.

"It can't be such a coincidence..."

Mo Hua muttered.

If that were the case...

The Taoist who passed the Evil Pill Recipe for lifespan conversion to the Patriarch of the Qian Family, and the Evil Path Great Formation Diagram of Ten Thousand Corpses to Lu Chengyun, probably also passed some spell points of forbidden Demon Path to some Cultivators with ill intentions...

What was his aim?

To create Taoist Demons?

Are such natural disasters of heaven and earth really something that can be "mass-produced" by human means?

Or does this Taoist have some other, deeper scheme?

Mo Hua frowned in deep thought.

As he pondered, he became somewhat entranced.

All of a sudden, an extremely cold and terrifying sense of dread surged up within him.

A silhouette of a Taoist emerged in Mo Hua's heart.

The silhouette of the Taoist was like black ink.

All around were withered black lines.

However, these lines began to coalesce and take shape.

The face of the Taoist became clearer, and a pair of eyes slowly opened, deep and hollow, inching their gaze towards Mo Hua.

Mo Hua did not know who he was, but in an instant, he knew the Taoist's name:

"Gui Tao!"

The seeker of the Dao who was half-ghost and half-mysterious.

Mo Hua was shocked and quickly calmed his mind to meditate, dismissing all thoughts.

But the more he tried not to think about it, the more involuntarily he did, and the words "Gui Tao" almost slipped from his lips.

Mo Hua had a feeling that once he uttered the words "Gui Tao," he would be immediately discovered by this Taoist.

"Don't recite it, don't recite it!"

Mo Hua kept admonishing himself.

But while he was strongly inhibiting his mind, his mouth suddenly moved on its own and he recited the first character "Gui"...

The Taoist's hollow gaze suddenly sparkled with life, silently turning his head, ready to focus his attention directly on Mo Hua.

A chill went down Mo Hua's spine, and in his desperation, he quickly pinched his own cheek.

The fair little face was marked with two finger imprints by his own pinching.

Mo Hua winced in pain, hissing softly, and managed not to recite the full name "Gui Tao's people."

Since the name wasn't recited, Mo Hua had a moment to catch his breath.

What to do?

In a stroke of inspiration, Mo Hua quickly took out his Spiritual Ink, dipped his finger in the ink, and using his Divine Sense to connect with the Earth Dao Meaning, he began to draw the Thick Earth Formation on the ground.

Once he began Drawing Formation, his Divine Sense became focused, no longer wandering aimlessly.

He wouldn't even think about reciting any names.

And the Earth Dao Meaning he was connecting with also occupied Mo Hua's mind.

A hint of ancient meaning began to diffuse, gradually overshadowing the aura of Gui Tao's people...

...

Meanwhile, in a hillside overgrown with withered trees.

The sitting "Sun Yi" opened his eyes.

His body was filthy, clad in a dirty Taoist Robe that the deceased had worn, his eyes black and vacant, his voice hoarse and sticky:

"Who..."

"...desires to recite my name?"

"So familiar..."

He closed his eyes to sense, then suddenly opened them again, his usually empty gaze carrying a hint of confusion:

"Earth Dao Meaning?"

"Disciple of Earth Sect?"

"How could it be..."

In the Minor Wilderness State Boundary, where did a disciple of the Earth Sect come from, and why would he be reciting my name?

"Something's not right..."

"Sun Yi" stretched out his right hand, with several fingers broken and twisted together in a strange shape as if calculating something.

Some causes and effects began to connect:

"Earth Dao Meaning..."

"Thick Earth Formation..."

"There is a cultivator..."

"A Formation Master..."

"Short in stature... No... Very young?"

And with that, the trail of cause and effect ended.

It remained unclear and undefined.

"Sun Yi's" eyes began shedding tears of blood, his sparse hair gradually turned white, his Sea of Consciousness trembled, and his remaining Divine Sense tried its best at Calculation:

"Without the cover of Dao Meaning, within three breaths, this person would surely recite my name..."

"Then let's remove the cover of the Dao Meaning..."

The eyes of "Sun Yi" bled profusely, as his gray hair fell out one by one, his countenance visibly aging as if his life force was compensating for the insufficiency of his Calculation after his Divine Sense was exhausted.

He counted to himself:

"One..."

"Two..."

"Three..."

Three breaths passed, and in the future he had Calculated, indeed someone had uncontrollably recited his name:

"Gui Tao!"

The voice that recited his name was clear and pleasant.

"Sun Yi" was slightly stunned, his expression surprised, "It's a child?"

Why would a child recite my name?

Who exactly is it?

And what connection do I have with them?

Sun Yi listened more intently, only to find that the voice had changed.

From a child's voice, it gradually became clearer, turning into a young man's voice, then gradually grew deeper, turning into a middle-aged man's voice.

Finally, it became a voice he was all too familiar with and longed for.

The voice was crisp and scholarly.

The words "Gui Tao" turned into two:

"Senior brother."

Sun Yi opened his eyes, and in a daze, he saw a handsome, distinguished cultivator looking at him.

His gaze was crisp, gentle, and his mouth held a smile that was elusive.

It was indeed Mr. Zhuang.

Moments later, everything faded away as if it were smoke.

"Sun Yi" could no longer remember who had recited his name.

He only remembered that one call of "senior brother."

He tried to calculate once more, only to find that the Sea of Consciousness of this body had cracked, his Divine Sense was utterly depleted, and not a single hair remained on his head...

There was nothing left to calculate...

"Sun Yi" sat still for a long time, his expression peculiar, mumbling to himself:

"My good junior brother... what exactly are you hiding?"

"Having fallen to such a state, what is still worth hiding?"

The mountain forest was silent, no one answered.

"Enough..."

"Sun Yi" shakily got to his feet, wrapped in the Taoist Robe of the dead, walking lopsidedly towards the edge of the woods...

"Once I find you, I will know everything..."

Chapter 493: Coveting (1)

In the serene bamboo chamber of South Yue City,

Mr. Zhuang opened his eyes; they had paled slightly and with a hint of helplessness, he said,

"Having a disciple too clever can also be a troublesome matter..."

"Once clever, they think too much, and without caution, they stumble upon matters they shouldn't have..."

Old Kui, who was carving a little tiger out of wood for Mo Hua, paused and frowned at these words:

"Calculated against again?"

Mr. Zhuang shook his head, "Almost." He sighed softly, "Fortunately, the child is clever..."

He knew how to use the Earth Dao Meaning to mask his own aura; otherwise, if that person really saw his face, it would've required more effort.

Lost in thought for a moment, Old Kui said quietly:

"It's been a long time since Mo Hua came back..."

Mr. Zhuang's face was slightly pale, but upon hearing these words, his eyebrows lifted slightly, and he smiled faintly:

"What, do you miss him?"

Old Kui ignored him, silently continuing to carve the little tiger in his hands.

Previously, Mo Hua had come to him, saying he might need a lot of little tigers and asked him to help carve some.

Now he had carved quite a few little tigers, but Mo Hua had not come home.

A moment later, Old Kui sighed, expressing his frustration:



"I've run out of pine nuts, and there's no one to roast them for me."

Mr. Zhuang suggested:

"Why not let Zisheng roast them for you? He's my disciple and, by extension, your junior; it's only right for him to render such a service."

Old Kui was somewhat disdainful, "Disciples of the Bai Family are only good for waving around blades and spears, nothing else."

"You sure are picky..." Mr. Zhuang shook his head.

Old Kui paid him no mind, only thinking about when Mo Hua would return.

But he couldn't figure it out, so he asked Mr. Zhuang:

"How much longer?"

Mr. Zhuang pinched his fingers and cast his gaze toward the distant mines, his eyes flickering as he slowly said:

"Soon, I think..."

Mr. Zhuang's expression was profound.

"He has mastered the Formation."

"That item is almost refined."

"Corpse Qi is spreading, Heavenly secrets are sullied."

"This calamity facing South Yue City is not minor; it remains to be seen how the child will handle it..."

Old Kui nodded.

Mr. Zhuang looked again towards the mines outside the city.

Above the mines were the mining cultivators, toiling in their wretched fate.

They knew nothing and still toiled diligently every day.

Mr. Zhuang lamented, "Whenever a great calamity befalls the heavens and the earth, it's always the cultivators at the very bottom who suffer the most..."

"You're being sentimental again."

Old Kui's voice sounded wooden.

Mr. Zhuang laughed at himself:

"No helping it, I'm getting old."

Old Kui looked at Mr. Zhuang, his eyes revealing deep regret and melancholy.

He said nothing and continued to lower his head, carving the little tiger.

Stroke after stroke, his technique was skilled, and the wood shavings fell as the little tiger's form became naturally defined.

Then, the bamboo chamber became suddenly quiet.

After a while, Old Kui suddenly said, "I'll kill your senior brother."

Mr. Zhuang was taken aback.

"Kill him, and you could live a few more years," Old Kui's voice was cold and sharp.

Warmth surged in Mr. Zhuang's heart; a serene smile appeared on his refined face.

"Thank you."

Then, with a hint of apology, he said:

"You've helped me so much, and my days are numbered; I'm afraid I won't be of help to you..."

Old Kui shook his head, "Even if you disregard the feelings of the Sect, I could use Heavenly Puppetry to kill him, and if you live a few more decades, you might still be able to help me."

Mr. Zhuang was silent for a short while, then shook his head and sighed:

"He can't be killed anymore..."

Old Kui frowned, "Is Planting Devil in Taoist Heart truly that troublesome?"

Mr. Zhuang stated calmly, "He entered the Demon Palace, became a Taoist, and took the Taoist name 'Gui'. The Divine Thought legacy he received, if cultivated deeply, is nearly on par with a Heavenly Demon."

"He was cautious in the past, even the Pavilion Elders couldn't do anything against him."

"Now, with his Planting Devil in Taoist Heart nearing completion and his Divine Thought taking the 'Gui' path, it is full of trickery and ever-changing; he can't simply be killed with cultivation or Taoist Skills..."

Old Kui also fell silent, his aged eyes hiding indeterminate emotions.

"Without trying, how would you know?"

Mr. Zhuang sighed, "You could try, and he might die, but it's uncertain who would die in the end, and whether he truly died would be unknown to anyone..."

Old Kui's brows furrowed tightly, "Planting Devil in Taoist Heart isn't considered the ultimate legacy of the Demon Sect, is it?"

Why was it so terrifying?

Mr. Zhuang's face showed a complex expression, "Planting Devil in Taoist Heart isn't, but my senior brother, he's a cultivator of the utmost Divine Thought..."

"In this world, who knows who could kill him..."

Mr. Zhuang looked helpless as he slowly closed his eyes.

Suddenly, the innocent and cheerful face of Mo Hua appeared in his mind.

Mr. Zhuang was slightly startled, then his gaze became elusive; after a long contemplation, he muttered:

"It's still early..."

"Just don't get killed, surviving is enough..."

...

In the Lu Family's Corpse Mine, within the Ten Thousand Corpses Sacrificial Altar.

Not until the Thick Earth Formation was complete, his Divine Sense clear, and the eerie aura had dissipated without a trace, did Mo Hua finally breathe a sigh of relief.

At the same time, his heart was filled with lingering fear, and cold sweat had seeped out on his back.

"How strange..."

He hadn't spoken his name, nor mentioned his Taoist title, but just by thinking more profoundly, he was sensed by that Taoist, and even the image of him arose in his mind.

His body also felt slightly beyond his control.

To litigate his Taoist title, to convert to his Taoism.

Exactly what kind of method was this? Could it be some form of Divine Thought Technique?

Mo Hua dared not think further.

He buried the words "Gui Tao's people" deep in his heart, trying as much as possible not to touch upon or think deeply about them.

Meanwhile, Mo Hua also felt somewhat dejected.

He had previously believed that with his Divine Thought Technique fully accomplished, he could dominate in conflicts at the level of Divine Sense.

Yet, he hadn't expected to be detected simply by exercising his thoughts.

In the face of Gui Tao's elusive shadow, he felt utterly at a loss, incapable of resistance.

Mo Hua exhaled:

"The path of Tao Cultivation still requires caution, one must not be arrogant or complacent."

"There are mountains beyond mountains and heavens beyond heavens."

"The methods of high-realm great cultivators penetrate the heavens and the earth, beyond the wildest imagination, completely unfathomable to someone who is merely a small Qi Refinement cultivator like me."

"One must never become cocky!"

Mo Hua silently reminded himself several times, then nodded.

Then another thought occurred to him:

If such a shadow is a technique of Divine Thought,

Could he learn it in the future?

To refine the ultimate in Divine Thought, to Prove the Dao with Supreme Divine Sense.

Could he then, like this Taoist, employ inscrutable methods that leave others unable to guard against?

Right now, he was only in the Qi Refinement stage, with merely twelve patterns in his Divine Sense.

But if one day his Divine Sense became strong enough, and he mastered numerous Divine Thought Techniques, could he directly confront this "elusive shadow"?

If possible, would silently reciting "Gui Tao's people" and baiting his "elusive shadow" to come mean that...

He could directly "consume" it?

Eating its elusive shadow, could that enhance his Divine Sense as well?

After refining it, might he even comprehend some Divine Thought Techniques?

...

Mo Hua had only entertained the thought briefly when his Sea of Consciousness suddenly trembled, and a desiccated shadow of the Taoist appeared.

Mo Hua jumped, quickly collecting his thoughts.

In his mind, he silently chanted, "I'm not thinking anything, I'm not thinking anything..."

It was unknown how much time passed before his Divine Sense became clear and the shadow dissipated.

Only then did Mo Hua finally breathe easy.

He dared not indulge in such wild fantasies anymore but instead earnestly forgot all those recent thoughts, continuing to investigate the Formation and sacrificial altar before him...

...

Meanwhile, in a remote desolate forest.

Sun Yi suddenly sensed something, pausing abruptly.

He then sneered, "You dare to come again?"

"You think I wouldn't know if you're thinking of my name in your heart?"

He sat down cross-legged, took a Blood Pill, and recovered his aura. Just as he was preparing to perform his Calculation, his heart suddenly quivered.

He felt a palpitation.

This palpitation came out of nowhere, vanished quickly, and seemed as if the Heavenly secret was stirring, birthing some malevolent Divine Thought.

It had fixed its gaze on him with ill intent, and it appeared to include a shade of "covetousness"...

What did it mean?

Who could, or who would dare, covet him?

Sun Yi felt a twinge of anger.

He wanted to trace it back.

But this Divine Thought was as faint as a notion, extremely subtle.

Like a fishhook thrown onto the water surface, barely stirring a ripple before sinking into the quiet depths, lurking in silence.

The surface of the water returned to calm, leaving no trace.

As if someone had buried that thought deep inside their heart.

And the heavens had their cycles, with all cause and effect already silently, secretly turning...

Sun Yi's gaze grew profound, empty, but no longer indifferent; it now bore a layer of frost:

"Who is it..."

The deep mountain was silent, with the eerie cries of a strange beast in the distance.

Long afterwards, Sun Yi turned and continued on, limping along his preset path, his voice croaky with a hint of hatred and terror:



"Don't let me find you..."

"Otherwise..."

His words were unfinished when they were swallowed by the deep, mysterious silence of the mountains.

#### Chapter 494: Planning (1)

Mo Hua was still studying the Ten Thousand Corpses Compound Formation.

The Formation eye of the Ten Thousand Corpses Compound Formation was designed by him personally. Mo Hua had mastered it, so he spent most of his time on the Formation Pivot and Formation Patterns.

After some research, Mo Hua more or less understood the function of the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses.

The Ten Thousand Corpses Compound Formation, as well as the unaltered Large Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses, served similar purposes but varied in scale.

This Formation primarily had two uses:

The first was for large-scale Corpse Refinement.

Within the Formation, numerous coffins were embedded as Formation media, maintained by Formation Patterns, coordinated by the Formation Pivot, and powered by the Formation eye, thus enabling "mass production" of Zombies.

The second was to enhance Corpse control.

With the Spirit Pivot Formation at its core, a whole set was constructed, centered around the Bronze Corpse, with the Iron Corpse as the pivot and the Walking Corpse as the foundation, establishing the Spirit Pivot Sequence Formation Method.

Layer upon layer of cohesive control.

This required quite a solid foundation in Formation knowledge.

Though Lu Chengyun's schemes were not righteous, he had genuine talent and skill in Formation.

It's just that he didn't apply his thoughts to the Righteous Dao.

Mo Hua shook his head.

He had almost finished his research on the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses, and next in line was the altar.

The golden altar shone brightly.

The Beast Gold Incense Burner emitted curling smoke.

The Emerald Candle Holder was exquisite and luxurious, and the candlelight flickered.

However, this candlelight was somewhat eerie, and the wax on the candles, which resembled corpse fat, seemed to have been made from who knows how many people's deaths.

On the altar were placed Five-Color Spiritual Flowers, gold-bordered banners, and Jiao Dragon Patterned Lanterns.

In front of the altar was presented the Spiritual Meat of pigs and sheep.

This Spiritual Meat was quite precious.

The Mining Cultivators outside fighting tooth and nail might not taste such luxury even once in their lifetimes.

Mo Hua sighed softly.

The items displayed on the altar, covered by a yellow cloth, were strangely shaped, resembling sculptures, Monster Beasts, or even desiccated corpses.

Even Divine Sense couldn't probe them.

It was impossible to distinguish exactly what they were.

"Should I lift it and take a look?"

Mo Hua's hand reached halfway, then stopped.

He hesitated within his heart.

If he were to lift it, could there be any danger?

And would Lu Chengyun discover it?

What if what was presented was a dangerous entity such as a Zombie or Monster Beast, where unveiling would mean Unsealing?

Although he could potentially escape using the Water Passing Step or Concealment Technique, suppressing it using his Cultivation would probably be impossible.

If this dangerous entity made a commotion, it would certainly alarm Lu Chengyun.

And if inside was not some dangerous entity but something like the "Contemplation Map" with evil thoughts and ghosts attached to wooden sculptures or stone carvings, then he would still be in danger.

Ever since encountering Gui Tao's people and their "Gui Shadow," Mo Hua had become much more humble.

He no longer felt his Divine Thought manifestation could kill with abandon.

It was better to be cautious when dealing with matters.

Especially with unknown dangers, it was best not to act rashly without deep knowledge.

Mo Hua was somewhat itching with curiosity,

He really wanted to know what exactly lay under the yellow cloth on the altar.

But he didn't dare to rashly uncover it.

Mo Hua was conflicted for a moment and finally had to let it go.

Better to be safe than sorry.

Inside the Corpse Mine, it wasn't like South Yue City; there was no master to bail him out, no fellow disciples to help him.

It was better to be "cowardly" if possible.

Reluctantly, Mo Hua shifted his gaze from the altar and turned it back to the center of the Ten Thousand Corpses Compound Formation, to the Bronze Coffin above the Formation eye.

This Bronze Coffin's Spiritual Pivot Formation contained the ultimate Sequential Formation Pattern.

If the Formation assumed its designated importance, the Zombie within the coffin would possess the highest authority upon its refinement, capable of commanding Iron Corpses of the Foundation Establishment Stage and thereby wielding control over all the Walking Corpses in the entire Corpse Mine.

Lu Chengyun, through the Spiritual Pivot Formation, would achieve grand mastery in Corpse control.

He would not only be the Family Head of the Lu Family but also the Zombie supreme in the Minor Wilderness State Boundary.

Mo Hua propped his chin, scheming thoughts bubbling within:

"What if I were to destroy this Bronze Coffin?"

"Or what if I collapsed the entire Ten Thousand Corpses Compound Formation?"

"Just be done with it once and for all..."

"Cut off Lu Chengyun's ambitions directly."

"Let his century's worth of efforts go down the drain, his hard work turned to ash..."

Mo Hua thought it over and then shook his head slightly.

Calculations would take time.

Laying out a Reversed Spirit Formation also required time.

Lu Chengyun, wary as he was, might not provide him such an opportunity.

No...

Mo Hua furrowed his brow and thought again.

There was still a chance, as long as he was patient, an opening would eventually present itself.

Lu Chengyun, as Family Head, had numerous affairs to attend to and could not possibly watch this place all the time.

A moment's negligence would give Mo Hua the opportunity to trigger the Reversed Spirit Formation Collapse—then with a "boom," Lu Chengyun's century-long foundation would be destroyed...

"But what if the collapse were to happen..." Mo Hua continued to ponder.

"Would the Corpse Mine collapse as well?"

Would he still be able to escape?

So, should he set up the Reversed Spirit Formation first, find a way to flee, and then use puppets to induce the Formation Collapse?

But this was deep inside the mine.

If a collapse occurred, it could potentially result in an unpredictable explosion and cave-in, possibly leading to a chain reaction. Not just the Corpse Mine, but the entire mountain might be annihilated.

By that time, not only will the Ten Thousand Corpses Compound Formation collapse, but also the Corpse Mine will cave in, the corpse cultivators will die, and even the poor mining cultivators within nearby mines will lose their lives due to spiritual power shocks and mine collapses.

Evacuate the mining cultivators in advance?

Mo Hua pondered for a moment and felt that it still wouldn't work.

The mines belonged to the Lu Family. Evacuating the mining cultivators inside would certainly alarm the Lu Family.

Once the Lu Family became suspicious, action would not be so convenient.

Moreover, the power of the Great Formation's dissolution was immense.

But this was a Compound Formation, perhaps its power wasn't as exaggerated as he thought.

At most, it would collapse the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses and destroy the bronze coffin.

But once the bronze coffin was destroyed...

The highest Sequential Formation Pattern of the Spiritual Pivot Formation would cease to function.

Would the other zombies lose control as a result?

Once the zombies lost control, they would instinctively crave flesh and blood, choosing people to devour. With their large numbers, they would cause a Corpse Tide, spread Corpse Poison, and all of South Yue City would face catastrophe.

Mo Hua himself could escape.

Even if he were infected with Corpse Poison, he had ways to deal with it.

But what about those poor Loose Cultivators?

If they couldn't escape, they would become food for the zombies.

Even if they were just bitten and had no Pills to cure them, the spread of the Corpse Poison and its erosion into their veins would cause them to undergo Corpse Transformation, becoming walking dead...

Mo Hua tried to consider every aspect.

It seemed that no matter what he thought or did, there would always be some oversight, making it very difficult to cover all bases.

Things were getting problematic...

Mo Hua sighed.

"What about tampering directly with the Formation on the bronze coffin?"

Mo Hua looked at the bronze coffin before him.

He often observed this coffin during the day, and even when Lu Chengyun was drawing the Spirit Pivot Evil Formation, he would peek from the side.

An outer coffin and an inner casket.

Lu Chengyun's Formation was drawn on the inner bronze casket within the coffin.

It wasn't drawn directly on the bodies of the zombies.

But what exactly was inside the bronze casket, and whether there were any zombies at all?

If so, what level of zombie were they?

Walking corpses, Iron Corpses...

Logically, what should follow would be Copper Corpses, Silver Corpses, and Golden Corpses...

Bronze coffin... could it be a Copper Corpse inside?

But judging from Lu Chengyun's tone, it didn't quite seem the case.

If it were a Copper Corpse, it should be quite powerful, perhaps with the cultivation of Foundation Establishment Late Stage.

Could Lu Chengyun, who was only at the Foundation Establishment Initial Stage, suppress a refined Copper Corpse?

If he couldn't suppress it and still attempted refining, wouldn't that be seeking death?



Those who are backfired by Corpse Refinement would definitely be devoured completely by the zombies, leaving no bones behind.

Lu Chengyun was shrewd; he surely wouldn't make such a foolish mistake...

But if it wasn't a Copper Corpse, then what type of corpse was it?

After much deliberation, Mo Hua suddenly realized a fundamental question:

He didn't even know the differences between Walking Corpses, Iron Corpses, Copper Corpses, Silver Corpses, and Golden Corpses...

Aside from hearing these names from his elder martial sister, he had absolutely no understanding of Corpse Refinement!

He was a complete layman.

Just like a cultivator who doesn't understand Formations pondering issues of Formation based on experience.

He was also just speculating on the categories of Corpse Refinement based on imagination.

It's very easy to assume things when a layman tries to consider an expert's problems.

Is there a distinction in quality among refined corpses?

Are gold, silver, copper, and iron grades, or types?

What are the effects and taboos of different corpses?

He understood all of this vaguely...

Dealing with ordinary Walking Corpses and Iron Corpses, his superficial knowledge might suffice.

But Lu Chengyun was clearly using a more "high-end" method of Corpse Refinement, and half-baked experience might not reveal anything...

And so Mo Hua was concerned again.

Practice brings true knowledge.

But he certainly couldn't just learn Corpse Refinement and then refine corpses himself just to understand these things...

Mo Hua thought about it and felt that it was impossible for him to actually refine corpses.

But it might be necessary to steal some books on Corpse Refinement from corpse cultivators and read them when he had the time, to understand both himself and the enemy.

The cultivation world is perilous.

Cultivators need to possess various kinds of knowledge to survive in the cultivation world.

Some things can be left undone, but not unknown.

Otherwise, once you face a "knowledge barrier," no matter how intelligent you are, it's useless, and you might even outwit yourself, sealing your own fate, dying without knowing how you died.

Mo Hua nodded slightly, then attempted to open the bronze coffin.

The bronze coffin was divided into an outer coffin and an inner casket; inside the casket was Corpse Refinement.

He would only open the coffin and not the casket; like Lu Chengyun, the risk should be minimal.

But Mo Hua had not anticipated that he wouldn't even be able to open the outer coffin.

The entire bronze coffin seemed to be sealed shut.

After several attempts, Mo Hua failed to open it and couldn't tell whether the bronze coffin was sealed by a Formation or locking mechanism.

Mo Hua sighed.

This trip yielded some gains, but they were less than he had hoped for.

He had thoroughly studied the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses.

But as for what was offered on the altar or what was sealed in the bronze coffin, it was still unclear.

"It seems... I need to think of another way..."

Mo Hua's gaze shifted slightly as he silently mused.

Chapter 495: Corpse Studies (1)

Mo Hua stealthily slipped out of the Ten Thousand Corpses Sacrificial Altar.

Before leaving, he painstakingly checked over everything again to confirm he hadn't left any traces that would be discovered by Lu Chengyun or Zhang Quan...

The little zombie lay nicely in the coffin.

Big Tiger remained well hidden within the hall.

The Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses, the Golden Altar, the Bronze Coffin, there were no evident traces.

Mo Hua relaxed his mind, then concealed his form and quietly departed.

The next day, Mo Hua returned to following Lu Chengyun as if nothing had happened, entering the Ten Thousand Corpses Sacrificial Altar to finalize the Formation eye of the Ten Thousand Corpses Compound Formation.

After entering the altar, Mo Hua observed closely and noticed that Lu Chengyun was as usual, seemingly unaware of anything, which secretly relieved him.

Lu Chengyun was the Family Head, entangled in mundane affairs and beset with numerous issues. He had to secretly construct the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses, control the progress of the formation's setup, coordinate with Corpse cultivators, and personally draw the Corpse Gate Evil Formation.

Indeed, he was very busy.

And these days, being occupied with his own matters, he hardly paid any attention to Mo Hua anymore.

It seemed as though Mo Hua had vanished from his view.

Sometimes when Mo Hua spoke to him, he would be lost in thought, paying little to no attention.

Mo Hua appeared somewhat unhappy on the surface, feeling slighted, but inside he was overjoyed.

He wished for nothing more than for Lu Chengyun to disregard him...

Besides Lu Chengyun, there was Zhang Quan.

Zhang Quan hated him.

But he was Formation Blind, not understanding formations, and his Divine Sense wasn't strong.

He was very easy to deceive.

Mo Hua could be invisible right beside him, and he wouldn't notice.

As for formations, it went without saying—Mo Hua could make mistakes right in front of him, mess them up, draw them in complete disarray and error-filled...

He could even sketch a completely different formation, and with Zhang Quan's knowledge of formations, he might not be able to detect any problems.

Mo Hua shook his head slightly.

Really, one must read more books, learn more about Tao Cultivation knowledge.

Otherwise, you could be played for a fool without ever realizing...

Having gone unnoticed, Mo Hua felt at ease.

In the days that followed, Mo Hua turned his attention to the Corpse cultivators in the Corpse Mine.

He wanted to know exactly what kind of corpse was sealed within the Bronze Coffin.

But being an amateur with insufficient knowledge of Corpse Refinement, he found it difficult to determine.

He could only start with those who were "experts" on the subject.

These Corpse cultivators were clearly the "experts."

Mo Hua used a small trick and stole some books on Corpse Refinement from several Corpse cultivators.

For example: "Basic Necromancy Method", "Corpse Blood Cultivation Method", "Detailed Explanation of Corpse Refinement", "General Discussion on Corpse Refinement", "Heavenly Craft of Necromancy", "Origin and Flow of the Corpse Gate", "Corpse Classification Theory"...

The categories were diverse, including cultivation techniques, general discussions, miscellaneous essays, historical records, anecdotes...

Mo Hua's eyes were opened wide.

To think that these Corpse cultivators could research so many aspects out of merely Refining Corpses.

The Cultivation World was truly vast and complex.

Mo Hua took the time to start reading these Corpse Path books.

But after just a few days, he felt uncomfortable in body and mind.

The books were filled with bloody and strange content; the accompanying illustrations were cruel and ugly, nauseating to behold.

Mo Hua felt somewhat helpless.

"Corpse Refinement is really not something for normal people to study..."

"Which normal cultivator would be interested in Corpse Refinement?"

Mo Hua couldn't help shaking his head.

But he still had to endure the disgust and continue reading.

However, after reading quite a bit, he was still only halfway enlightened, with many parts being confusing and unclear to him.

"It seems I lack talent in the art of Corpse Refinement..."

Mo Hua accepted this fact with some resignation and a trace of relief.

He skimmed over these books for an overview and no longer forced himself to study further. Instead, he wrote down some of his questions, preparing to "consult" a Corpse cultivator.

This Corpse cultivator needed to be honest, obedient, and somewhat dim-witted.

Otherwise, it wouldn't be easy to get information out of him.

Mo Hua "scouted" among the Corpse cultivators in the Corpse Mine for several days and suddenly recognized a familiar face.

A young member of the Lu Family with a somewhat harsh face, Lu Ming.

Mo Hua's expression shifted slightly.

Lu Ming...

He was the one who, when the disappearance of the five Mining Cultivators was first investigated, accompanied Mo Hua to the Lu Family Mine to show the way, encountered horrific corpses, vomited until he was dizzy, and under Mo Hua's "intimidation", divulged some of the Lu Family's secrets—that Lu Family Cultivator—Lu Ming.

Lu Ming had lost the arrogant demeanor he once had.

His complexion, like other Corpse cultivators', was pale as paper, his expression lifeless and hollow with not a hint of vitality. He didn't talk much, blindly following orders given by others and acting like a living Walking Corpse.

Mo Hua observed Lu Ming for a few days.

It seemed he'd only recently arrived and was a newcomer here, one of the lower-level Corpse cultivators.

He spent his days learning to Refine Corpses and performing menial tasks, obeying orders from others.

At night, he would "lie down like a corpse" on his bed, his expression dull, not knowing what he was thinking about.

Lu Ming was still quite approachable for questioning.

Mo Hua had asked him several questions before.

After nightfall, Mo Hua stealthily left his room and went to Lu Ming's stone chamber, silently watching him.

The stone chamber was quiet, with no one else around.

Lu Ming lay on the bed with a numb expression that suddenly twisted into one of pain. He clasped his head with both hands, coiled up on the bed, and muttered to himself:

"...Why am I so unlucky?"

"To think it's Corpse Refinement... I'm done for..."

"I'll never get married in this lifetime..."

...

After wallowing in misery for a while, he then fiercely pounded the wall, complaining:

"It's all because of that brat!"

"All his fault!"

"His fault..."

"What are you blaming me for?" Mo Hua asked aloud.



In the silent stone chamber, a voice suddenly emerged, eerie and childlike.

Lu Ming was scared out of his wits.

He flurried about in a panic and sat up, only to see on the chair by the wall, a small figure gradually becoming visible.

Chapter 496: Necroscience (2)

"Ah—"

Lu Ming's shout was abruptly cut off as he quickly covered his mouth with both hands.

The cry came to an abrupt halt and was not discovered by other Corpse cultivators.

Mo Hua picked up the teapot on the table, poured herself a cup of tea, sniffed it, found that it was of poor quality but devoid of blood or fishy smell, just regular tea, so she took a sip, smacked her lips, and then asked Lu Ming,

"What are you blaming me for?"

The voice was crisp and familiar.

Lu Ming, with his nerves somewhat settled, looked closely and recognized that it was Mo Hua, then slowly relaxed.

It was a person, a "familiar face", not a ghost, nor a corpse.

Lu Ming leaned back against the wall, gasping for breath.

Seeing Mo Hua, Lu Ming was somewhat surprised, but not entirely unexpected.

He had seen Mo Hua before in the Corpse Mine.

Any Formation Master who had real talent and skill would be wooed by the Lu Family.

Mo Hua was no exception.

But he still hadn't anticipated that Mo Hua's status could be so high, to the point of being able to enter the Corpse Mine, not be required to engage in Corpse Refinement, be treated extremely well, and even be able to chat and laugh freely with the Lu Family Head.

Even many Elders of the Lu Family did not enjoy such treatment.

What he didn't understand was why Mo Hua would sneak into his room unnoticed.

Lu Ming wanted to ask, but didn't dare.

A Cultivator who was favored and well-treated by the Family Head, no matter how young, was not someone he, once a mere disciple of the Lu Family and now a small Corpse cultivator in the Corpse Mine, could question.

He also didn't dare not to answer the questions Mo Hua asked him.

Lu Ming hesitated, then murmured,

"If it weren't for you... I wouldn't have been... sent in here..."

Mo Hua took another sip of tea, nodded, and understood.

Back in the mines, Lu Ming had told her some affairs of the Lu Family.

Even though he later reported this matter to the Lu Family Head, his actions were still considered loose-lipped.

Thus, he was punished and sent to the Corpse Mine to become a Corpse cultivator.

Lu Ming wasn't too bad as a person, but not too good either.

He probably couldn't accept something like Corpse Refinement, but he had no choice but to accept it due to his circumstances.

So, he went about his days with a numb expression, like a Walking Corpse, only daring to vent some of his emotions when alone at night.

Mo Hua thought for a moment, then suddenly asked,

"How is your Corpse Refinement coming along?"

Lu Ming was taken aback, not knowing why Mo Hua would ask such a question, but still reluctantly answered,

"Average..."

"Have you refined a corpse yet?"

"Not yet... I've only followed other Corpse cultivators, learning some of the knowledge of Corpse Refinement..."

Mo Hua's eyes lit up slightly, "How well have you learned?"

"Alright..."

Lu Ming said evasively.

Mo Hua took out a small piece of paper, coughed, and said seriously,

"Then I shall test you."

Lu Ming was startled, "Why?"

Mo Hua frowned, "I'm testing you to see if you have the desire to improve. If you learn well, I will speak well of you to the Family Head, and maybe get you promoted in the future."

Mo Hua bluffed casually.

Lu Ming was somewhat baffled by the trickery, but still asked,

"Why?"

Mo Hua clicked her tongue, "We have met once before, and it's because of me that you entered the mine and became a Corpse cultivator..."

"I wouldn't care if I didn't know, but now that I do, I naturally want to find a way to give you some benefits, to compensate you."

"Oh..."

Lu Ming found it logical, yet it also seemed... illogical.

A fleeting acquaintance, speaking well of him for no reason?

Lu Ming was still somewhat puzzled.

He wanted to ask "Why" again, but before he could, Mo Hua interrupted him.

Mo Hua, with a stern face, said imperiously,

"You answer when I ask, no need for so much idle talk!"

Lu Ming, intimidated by Mo Hua's demeanor, felt a bit guilty and slowly nodded.

Mo Hua then began reading from the small piece of paper.

The paper listed some Corpse Refinement "knowledge" he hadn't understood, such as:

"How are the grades of Zombies classified?"

"What is the relationship between grade and rank?"

"What types of Zombies are there, and what abilities do they possess?"

And so on...

Lu Ming, not understanding why, answered honestly,

"The grade of Zombies is divided into both grade and rank."

"'Grade' refers to First, Second, Third, Fourth Grade, equivalent to Cultivators at the levels of Qi Refinement, Foundation Establishment, Golden Core..."

"'Rank' is the hierarchy of zombies, which is divided into 'Golden', 'Silver', 'Bronze', 'Iron', and the lowest, the Walking Corpse..."

"There is a distinction between the grade and rank of zombies, they are related, yet independent of each other."

"Like with Monster Beasts and other categories, a zombie's strength is based on its 'grade'."

"First Grade Walking Corpse, Second Grade Walking Corpse, Third Grade Walking Corpse... each possesses strength corresponding to the initial stages of major boundaries."

"Above the Walking Corpse is the Iron Corpse, and with each rank ascended, there is a qualitative change in the zombie's abilities."

"Their flesh becomes harder, their Corpse Poison more potent, and they even possess some special Corpse Path abilities..."

Mo Hua was still somewhat confused and didn't understand very well, so he asked seriously,

"Give me an example to simply explain the relationship between a zombie's grade and rank."

Lu Ming felt as if he was being quizzed by an Instructor. His heart tightened, and after pondering for a long time, he finally spoke,

"A zombie's hierarchy is based on 'grade' as the foundation and 'rank' as the level..."

"A First Grade zombie generally only has two ranks, Walking Corpse and Iron Corpse..."

"A First Grade Walking Corpse is just a basic Qi Refining zombie."

"A First Grade Iron Corpse, in terms of Cultivation, should be comparable to the peak of the Ninth Level of Qi Refining, but with its copper head and iron arms, it can match some Cultivators at the initial stage of Foundation Establishment."

"Second Grade zombies start at least as Walking Corpses, typically are refined into Iron Corpses, but at most can become Copper Corpses..."

"A Second Grade Walking Corpse has strength comparable to a First Grade Iron Corpse. However, due to their rotting flesh, they are at a disadvantage in actual combat."

"A Second Grade Iron Corpse is quite powerful, equivalent to the middle phase of Foundation Establishment, and can easily defeat First Grade Iron Corpses from the initial phase of Foundation Establishment."

"And a Second Grade Copper Corpse, with its thick Corpse Qi and body as sturdy as bronze and iron, is equivalent to the late stage of Foundation Establishment and is very strong."

Mo Hua suddenly understood.

He had previously thought that all Iron Corpses were the same, all possessing Foundation Establishment strength.

But Iron Corpses are also divided by grade.

A First Grade Iron Corpse is only comparable to Foundation Establishment.

A Second Grade Iron Corpse is at the middle stage of Foundation Establishment, stronger than the strength of Cultivators at the initial stage of Foundation Establishment.

Seen this way, the Iron Corpses in the Corpse Mine cannot be generalized.

The two tall Iron Corpses guarding the door must be Second Grade Iron Corpses.

The rest of the Iron Corpses are a mix of First and Second Grade.

The overall strength of the zombies under Lu Chengyun's command is much stronger than Mo Hua had imagined...

Mo Hua frowned.

He glanced at Lu Ming, then said, "Continue."

Lu Ming nodded, "Furthermore, there's Third Grade, but we haven't been able to refine them, so the records aren't very detailed..."

"Third Grade zombies start at Walking Corpse at a minimum, but at most can be refined into Golden Corpses."

"Above Fourth Grade, the minimum is still Walking Corpse, and it's said it might even be possible to refine a real Celestial God Zombie..."

...

Lu Ming explained in detail to Mo Hua.

Mo Hua roughly understood.

All zombies are based on 'grade'."

The zombies that are refined all start at Walking Corpse, but their limits differ.

The higher the 'grade,' the higher the 'rank' limit becomes."

For First Grade, the limit is Iron Corpse, Second Grade limit is Copper Corpse, and Third Grade limit is Golden Corpse...

The Corpse Refinement methods in the Corpse Mine, derived from the Zhang Family and passed down for hundreds of years, should be more or less accurate even if there were some discrepancies.

So, what kind of corpse lies within that bronze coffin?

A Copper Corpse, comparable to the late stage of Foundation Establishment?

Foundation Establishment middle phase is one thing, but a zombie of the late Foundation Establishment phase, even if refined, couldn't be controlled by Lu Chengyun.

This does not quite fit with Mo Hua's previous speculation.

"Are there any special kinds of zombies?" Mo Hua asked again.

Mo Hua remembered that both "Origin and Flow of the Corpse Gate" and "Corpse Classification Theory" mentioned some specially functioning zombies, which although categorized by 'grade,' do not fall within the usual 'rank' categories.

"There are."

Lu Ming nodded seriously,



"There are some special zombies with unique functions, their use is specific, and their strength is not ranked by 'Gold, Silver, Bronze, Iron'."

"For example, a Puppet Corpse is essentially a flesh and blood puppet, not human, not considered a corpse, but a puppet made of materials similar to wood or stone."

"There are also companion corpses..."

"Turning people into human puppets, retaining the appearance, skin, and figure, soaked in the Spirit Water of Flowers and Plants, with no foul smell, skin cold yet tender as if alive."

"Many Cultivators would pay a high price for them."

"And there are also burial figurine corpses..."

"Killing a person and refining them into a burial figurine zombie."

"These types of zombies are typically used for accompanying burials."

"Not only the Demon Path, but in the past the Righteous Dao also made use of them."

"Thousands of years ago, some Sect Leaders or Supreme Elders from the Great Sects or Clans would 'grant death' to some close Cultivators upon their own death, refining them into burial figurine corpses for the purpose of accompaniment."

"However, such acts are not very humane and have been gradually phased out by the Taoist Court over the past thousands of years..."

...

Mo Hua listened with a frown.

Human puppet-like companion corpses?

Burial figurine corpses used for accompanying burials?

When Cultivators become twisted, they truly become horrifying...

Chapter 497: Corpse King (1)

The intricacies of Corpse Refinement are so plentiful...

It seems that outsiders see the excitement, while insiders know the manifold ways.

Mo Hua's thoughts stirred slightly, and he spoke again in a deep voice,

"Then let me test you once more, suppose... I refined a corpse that can be used to command a multitude of zombies, what should this type of 'corpse' be called?"

"To command a multitude of zombies..."

Lu Ming furrowed his brows, thought for a while, and then said with some uncertainty, "I can't quite remember..."

Mo Hua said, "It's an open book exam; you can consult the texts."

Lu Ming was somewhat bewildered, "Open book?"

"Mhm." Mo Hua nodded, with a demeanor that showed he was lenient, not wanting to trouble you if you couldn't answer, and would even let you look it up in a book.

Lu Ming felt a little touched.

He immediately took out several books on Corpse Refinement from his storage bag, searched through them a few times, and then hesitantly said,

"There are... a few kinds..."

"There is one called 'Corpse Bell', which involves embedding a Corpse Controlling Bell within the zombie's body to control other zombies..."

"There's one called 'Lantern Corpse', where the corpse is used as a lantern, burning ointment to lead the way..."

"And there is one, called 'Corpse King'..."

"Corpse King?"

Mo Hua's expression showed a trace of surprise.

Lu Ming, somewhat unsure of himself, asked, "Is there something wrong?"

"Right," Mo Hua nodded, "it is the Corpse King, you've answered correctly."

If it can command thousands of zombies, then what Lu Chengyun refined must be none other than a Corpse King...

Corpse King...

Mo Hua pondered for a moment, then asked,

"Let me test you once more, how is this Corpse King refined, and what effects does it have once created?"

Lu Ming flipped through the books and then said,

"It seems to be more complicated than the normal Corpse Refinement..."

"The corpse selected for refining a Corpse King has to be particular; ordinary ones won't do."

"The multitude of zombies it commands should ideally have subjugated to it in life, under its control..."

"This way, after death, when turned into zombies, the residual instinct to submit makes them easier to control by the 'Corpse King'..."

"The chances of controlled zombies going rogue or rebelling are thus much reduced."

After pondering, Lu Ming gave an example,

"In the past, a powerful Corpse Cultivator obliterated a Sect, refined the Sect Leader into a Corpse King, then turned the Sect disciples into zombies."

"As a result, these 'disciple' zombies were naturally under the control of the 'Sect Leader' Corpse King..."

"There are also records stating that small nations in the Southern Barbarian Land were slaughtered by Demon Cultivators..."

"The monarch was killed and turned into a 'Corpse King', and the people of the nation were massacred and then transformed into zombies, thus turning the entire nation into a Corpse Kingdom..."

Mo Hua's face remained unchanged, but inwardly he couldn't help but sigh.

An entire Sect, even a whole nation of cultivators...

All had parents and kin, yet met with a terrible fate, not even finding peace in death.

Demon practitioners indeed wrought much slaughter.

In their selfish and unscrupulous practice of cultivation, nothing was off-limits...

Lu Ming continued,

"This type of monarch has the right qualifications to become a 'Corpse King', an excellent corpse prototype for refining a Corpse King."

"But such means are the methods of powerful practitioners of the Demon Path; ordinary Corpse Cultivators with their crude methods of Corpse Refinement couldn't possibly do it..."

...

Mo Hua asked some more details, and Lu Ming answered them one by one.

Pleased, Mo Hua nodded approvingly and praised,

"You have studied diligently; this puts my mind at ease. Tomorrow, in front of Lu Family Head, I will speak well of you, promote you, so that your Corpse Path prospers and you stand out from the crowd..."

"Don't disappoint my expectations..."

As Mo Hua thought about Instructor Yan's manner, he put on a look of 'earnest instruction' on his face.

But Lu Ming wore a troubled look, hesitating to speak.

Mo Hua spoke displeasedly, "What? You're still not satisfied?"

"I... I..." Lu Ming stammered, not daring to say it.

After an internal struggle, he finally pleaded earnestly, "Gentleman, could you perhaps... speak to Lu Family Head and let me out?"

"What do you mean?" Mo Hua asked in a grave voice.

"I..." Lu Ming replied with a bitter smile, "I don't want to become a Corpse Cultivator..."

Mo Hua deliberately frowned, "How can you be so ungrateful?"

Lu Ming grew anxious and quickly waved his hands,

"I wouldn't dare..."

Mo Hua 'hmphe'd', "Lu Family Head treats you so well, providing you with opportunities to become a Corpse Cultivator, to learn Corpse Refinement. This is your blessing, as well as your chance as a disciple of the Lu Family to contribute your efforts to the family. Yet you don't know how to cherish it?"

Lu Ming felt like crying without tears:

"Once I become a Corpse Cultivator and enter the Demon Path, my whole life is over..."

He wouldn't be able to find a partner, fulfill filial duties.

No matter how high his cultivation, he could only hide in the shadows, deal with corpses all day, and would be hunted by the Taoist Court, shunned by society, and who knows, one day he might be exposed and then "eliminated in the name of justice."

Thinking of this, Lu Ming regretted so much that his gut turned green.

Mo Hua nodded slightly.

This Lu Ming, although a bit slow, still had some sense.

Pretending to be hesitant, after much contemplation, Mo Hua slowly exhaled a sigh,

"Alright, meeting you is also a kind of fate. If you're unwilling to be a Corpse Cultivator, I won't make it difficult for you."

"But it's probably impossible to persuade the Family Head to let you leave..."

"Once you're out, you'll surely leak the secrets of this Corpse Mine."

"Just stay here peacefully..."

Lu Ming's face was ashen.

Without escaping, sooner or later, he would end up refining corpses.

If he succeeded, he would be inseparable from the zombies.

Should he fail, the zombies might lose control and devour him—it was entirely possible.

It was over...

A chilling sense of dread filled Lu Ming's heart.

Suddenly, he glanced at Mo Hua, who appeared calm and collected despite his young age. Even amidst the dread of the corpse mines, he seemed utterly composed, stirring a glimmer of hope in Lu Ming's otherwise bleak heart.

He quickly got up and kowtowed to Mo Hua, saying,

"I beg young master to save me!"

Mo Hua was slightly taken aback, then asked in confusion,

"Why should I save you?"

Mo Hua leisurely took a sip of tea before continuing,

"Promoting you is but a trivial matter, a mere word for me. I could mention it offhand and owe a favor, which is no big deal."

"But saving you is much more troublesome, and I might even offend the Lu Family Head."

"What's in it for me?"

Mo Hua's words left Lu Ming speechless.

Lu Ming was somewhat dazed.

Indeed, with no blood or affection between them and a rather shallow relationship, why would this young gentleman save him?

What did he have?

He didn't have many Spirit Stones, he wasn't a young maiden in her twenties, his cultivation wasn't high, his talent wasn't great, and even if killed for Corpse Refinement, he wouldn't make for a high-quality zombie...

A chill went down Lu Ming's spine, and he didn't even realize it.

On ordinary days, he might occasionally bully others on account of his position, feeling good about himself, but he hadn't expected that when a real problem arose, he would turn out to be so worthless...

Without any means, without any capability at all.

Mo Hua added, "If you can offer something beneficial, I'll consider, just consider, whether to save you or not."

A bitterness enveloped Lu Ming's heart.

What could he offer?

This young gentleman was of no ordinary status, with unfathomable means.



What benefit could catch such a young master's eye?

But with his life at stake, he was unwilling to give up and, holding onto a thread of hope, said,

"I am willing to pledge my life in service of young master, to climb mountains of swords and descend into seas of flames if that's what it takes!"

Mo Hua's eyes brightened.

He had been waiting for those words.

First, Mo Hua expressed his disdain, "You, with your low cultivation and status, who is neither proficient in Taoist Skill nor Corpse Refinement, a mere disciple of the Lu Family, would be of little use to me, even if you served me."

These words struck Lu Ming with such embarrassment he couldn't lift his head.

Mo Hua feigned contemplation, then sighed,

"However, who can blame me for being young with a kind heart? I'll test you. Do a small favor for me, and if you succeed, I'll save you once."

As if revived from a dead end, Lu Ming's expression lit up with immense joy, and he hastily said,

"Please, young master, give your commands!"

"Help me inquire about the Lu Family Old Ancestor and the affairs of the Lu Family Head..."

Lu Ming was taken aback, "What about them?"

Mo Hua's large eyes shifted, and he whispered,

"Help me inquire about the Lu Family Old Ancestor and the affairs of the Lu Family Head..."

Lu Ming was taken aback, "What about them?"

"Anything will do," Mo Hua said. "Gossip, anecdotes, rumors... whether substantiated or hearsay, gather them stealthily and report them back to me..."

Lu Ming felt doubtful and a bit frightened as he quietly asked,

"Why, why do you want to know these things?"

Mo Hua's face stiffened, solemnly responding,

"I want to confirm whether the Lu Family Head is a bad person or not..."

Lu Ming gaped, "Bad... a bad person?"

"Yes!" proclaimed Mo Hua, "In this world, the worse a person is, the more they can achieve."

"Now that I'm working for him, naturally the worse he is, the better."

"The more wicked he is, the more he disregards kinship, shameless, thick-skinned, and unscrupulous; the greater his chances of success..."

Lu Ming was bewildered.

For a moment, he wasn't sure whether the young gentleman was praising or cursing the Family Head...

"Do you understand?" Mo Hua asked Lu Ming.

Lu Ming feigned understanding and nodded.

"Good, go ahead and do it," Mo Hua nodded, "but be discreet, do not get exposed, and remember, this matter has nothing to do with me. I am just a kind-hearted, innocent person who wants to help you escape suffering."

Lu Ming nodded, "Yes, young master!"

Afterward, he went to gather information.

When Mo Hua had time, he would also release his Divine Sense to keep an eye on what Lu Ming was doing.

Lu Ming wasn't very bright, and Mo Hua feared he might botch the task.

Fortunately, although he was inquiring, he wasn't overly deliberate.

Sometimes he just needed to start a conversation, letting other corpse cultivators chat among themselves while he eavesdropped.

Being of low status himself, a recognized Lu Family disciple, no one suspected him; in fact, nobody even cared about him.

A few days later, Lu Ming reported back to Mo Hua with the information he had gathered.

He had news about the Lu Family, the Lu Family Old Ancestor, and also about Lu Chengyun...

The matters involving the Lu Family Old Ancestor were more or less the same as those Mo Hua had heard from Qinglan.

Harsh, greedy, extravagant, and unpredictably temperamental.

Not only did he exploit the mining cultivators harshly, but he was also especially cruel to his own disciples, frequently resorting to beating and berating them while living lavishly and treating others stingily.

Aptly resembling his nickname "Capitalist Lu."

Indeed, there are only mistaken names, not mistaken nicknames.

And from Lu Ming's words, Mo Hua learned some rumors concerning the relationship between Lu Chengyun and the Lu Family Old Ancestor...

Chapter 498: Beast (1)

Lu Ming began by talking about the Lu Family Old Ancestor.

Though he was a disciple of the Lu Family, he was quite peripheral, young, and inexperienced. These deep secrets he neither inquired about nor knew of, and as he spoke about them now, he found it somewhat difficult to begin:

"To say this is a bit disrespectful, but... the Old Ancestor's behavior was extravagant and, well, somewhat... lecherous..."

Mo Hua was aware of this.

Many brothels on Jinhua Street were built by "Capitalist Lu" purely for his indulgence and pleasure.

But there were things even Mo Hua didn't know...

Lu Ming whispered, "It's said... the Old Ancestor... he didn't even spare the women of his own family..."

Mo Hua was taken aback, "Women of the family? The Lu family?"

Lu Ming nodded somewhat ashamedly.

"And then?"

Lu Ming found it hard to continue and hesitated for a while before he lowered his voice and said:

"It's rumored that in the Lu Family, any female disciple who was beautiful, whether from the main line or a side branch, married or not, would be... tainted by the Old Ancestor..."

Mo Hua's eyelids twitched in reaction.

How could someone do such things?

He shouldn't be called "Capitalist Lu," but rather "Beast Lu"...

"Of course, these are just rumors... Not necessarily the truth."

Lu Ming tried to defend his Old Ancestor's reputation, though he didn't sound very confident:

"The Old Ancestor was a harsh man, others held grudges against him, and might spread false, unspeakable rumors out of resentment..."

Yet Mo Hua felt that there was a high likelihood these rumors were true.

There is no smoke without fire.

Flies don't land on an egg without cracks.

Clearly, the Lu Family Old Ancestor was that cracked, smelly egg that the flies were attracted to.

"And then?"

Mo Hua asked again.

He wanted to know what exactly was the relationship between the Lu Family Old Ancestor and Lu Chengyun that would make him go against all objections and promote Lu Chengyun, a son-in-law who had married into the family, to the position of Family Head.

Lu Ming said, "This matter has to start with Miss Zhu."

"Miss Zhu?"

"Lu Zhu, she is the Old Ancestor's great-granddaughter from the main line," explained Lu Ming, "the Old Ancestor dotes on this great-granddaughter immensely."

Lu Ming then whispered:

"It's said that Miss Zhu isn't actually the Old Ancestor's great-granddaughter, but his biological daughter..."

Mo Hua's face crumpled with an expression of "this is too disgusting to see."

This was simply too beastly...

Lu Ming too felt embarrassed and retorted weakly:

"Of course, this is also just a rumor..."

"What happened after that?" Mo Hua asked, suddenly wondering, "This Miss Zhu, she isn't Lu Chengyun's partner in Tao Cultivation, is she..."

Lu Ming nodded, "Yes, she is."

"Not only that," Lu Ming said in a shocked tone, "the Family Head... is actually a son-in-law who married into the family."

It was incredible that their prestigious Lu Family, with such a strong hold over South Yue City, had a son-in-law as the Family Head.

Lu Ming still found it hard to believe to this day.

If he hadn't been in the Corpse Mine, associating with shady people and hearing about things that were not to be seen in the light of day, he would still be unaware.

Mo Hua nodded slightly, his expression not showing any surprise.

Lu Ming exclaimed in astonishment, "Gentleman, did you already know this?"

Mo Hua remained indifferent and noncommittal, simply saying:

"Go on."

Lu Ming looked at Mo Hua, whose unfathomable depths seemed even more profound.

He knew about such secret affairs...

Lu Ming paused, then resumed his "it is said" tone:

"It's said... Miss Zhu happened to meet the Family Head outside of South Yue City one day and fell for him at first sight."

"Traveling together, chatting joyfully and agreeing on so much, Miss Zhu then did everything she could to make the Family Head marry into the family and become her husband..."

Mo Hua shook his head.

This story was both melodramatic and cliché.

He'd heard it countless times when listening to storytellers in Tongxian City.

Rapists often used this trick to deceive women.

And profligate playboys who lured respectable women also used this method.

Yet, it was a highly effective tactic, almost always successful in ensnaring its target.

Lu Chengyun, with his seemingly gentle and carefree demeanor, turned out to be a "pretty boy" who rose to power by latching onto a woman.

He must have spent a lot of effort in seducing Miss Lu.

The timing, location, the words spoken, even every gesture, were probably meticulously planned out and rehearsed by him...

Lu Chengyun's image plummeted in Mo Hua's mind.

Lu Ming continued, "Miss Zhu conveyed her feelings to the Old Ancestor."

"The Old Ancestor didn't agree, feeling that though the Family Head was handsome, he had unsavory intentions and wasn't a suitable husband."

"Spoiled by the Old Ancestor's indulgence, Miss Zhu had a willful personality; she had to obtain whatever she wanted and thus relentlessly pressured the Old Ancestor until he consented to have the Family Head marry in."

"Refusing to eat, taking poison pills, cutting off her own meridians... she used all sorts of unbearable methods..."

"Left with no choice, the Old Ancestor had to agree, unable to withstand Miss Zhu's persistence."

"After the Family Head married in, he took the surname Lu, and the Old Ancestor even gave him a name, calling him Lu Chengyun."

Lu Chengyun...

Mo Hua stroked his chin thoughtfully.

Was the Lu Family Old Ancestor mocking him?

This name seemed to have positive connotations: riding the clouds to ascend, gracefully reaching the realm of immortals, the pursuit and hope of one on the path of Tao Cultivation.



But given Lu Chengyun's circumstances, it took on a different nuance.

Lu Chengyun, being a son-in-law, did the term "riding clouds" imply that he had climbed up in life by clinging onto the Lu Family?

In his bones, the Lu Family Old Ancestor probably still despised Lu Chengyun, using this name to remind him to never forget the fact that he became a son-in-law, dependent on the Lu Family...

One harboring ill intentions, and the other being sarcastic.

These two truly were cut from the same cloth.

Mo Hua asked further, "How many people in the Lu Family know about this?"

Lu Ming shook his head, "Very few. I had been in the Lu Family for so long before I entered the Corpse Mine, and I had never heard even a whisper of it..."

Chapter 499: Beast (2)

Mo Hua mused, "It seems they found a way to silence the matter..."

"Yes," Lu Ming nodded. "It was Miss Zhu..."

"Miss Zhu doesn't allow anyone to mention the matter of the Family Head marrying into the clan."

"Those in the know have all been silenced, forbidden to speak of it to outsiders. The personal maids and attendants have all been replaced as well."

"To outsiders, they only say that the Family Head is from a collateral branch of the Lu Family, whose parents died early, but who has great talent, which is why the Old Ancestor had him marry Miss Zhu."

Mo Hua expressed his doubts: "Is it permissible to marry within the clan if they share the same surname?"

Lu Ming nodded, "Within the same clan but different branches, beyond three generations, the blood relation is diluted. After verifying the family tree, marriage is possible."

Mo Hua slowly nodded, then asked:

"How did Lu Chengyun, a man who married into the family, become the Family Head?"

"Because of the mines."

Mo Hua's gaze sharpened slightly, "The mines..."

Lu Ming said, "Miss Zhu is wholeheartedly devoted to the Family Head. With her support, the Family Head quickly gained some actual power and began to manage some mines..."

"At first, there wasn't much of a difference, but after a while, the profit from the mines managed by the Family Head was nearly one-tenth more than the other mines of the Lu Family..."

One-tenth more...

Mo Hua's gaze turned icy.

For no reason at all, how could someone make one-tenth more than the others?

Mo Hua thought of the zombies in the mines.

Initially, he only suspected, but now he was almost certain.

Lu Chengyun practiced Corpse Refinement indeed for mining!

It's likely that from the moment he was in charge of the mines, Lu Chengyun secretly refined zombies and used them to mine...

Others used the living for mining.

Lu Chengyun would use the living to mine by day and the "dead" by night, which naturally yielded higher profits for the mines.

He also used this to gradually gain actual power within the clan.

To the clan, profit was the most tangible thing.

If Lu Chengyun could use zombies for mining and double the mine's profits, even the Lu Family Old Ancestor must have looked at him with new respect.

As for the means used by Lu Chengyun.

Given the character of the Lu Family Old Ancestor, even if he knew, he may not care.

"So, Lu Chengyun became the Family Head because of the high profit from the mines?"

Lu Ming nodded slightly, "It seems so."

"It seems so?"

Mo Hua's gaze shifted slightly, noticing that Lu Ming hesitated to continue, and said:

"Is there something else you want to say?"

Lu Ming hesitated somewhat, his brow furrowed, and he slowly said:

"I also heard a rumor..."

Mo Hua nodded, signaling him to go on.

Lu Ming said, "It is said that the Old Ancestor... indulged in excesses, depleted his vitality, damaged his foundation, and then was mortally wounded by a sneak attack from an enemy."

"Before his death, the Old Ancestor wanted to decide on the next Family Head."

"At first, the clan proposed, and the Family Head decided by the Old Ancestor was actually not Lu..."

Lu Ming felt it disrespectful to directly call the Family Head by name, but seeing that Mo Hua showed little reverence for Lu Chengyun, he braced himself and continued:

"...it was not Lu Chengyun, but rather... Elder An from within the clan."

"Elder An was in the initial stage of Foundation Establishment, not yet 150 years old, young and strong, with sufficient experience, acted in a steady manner, and held high prestige. Everyone unanimously thought that Elder An would become the Family Head."

"But unexpectedly, something happened, and right before his death, the Old Ancestor suddenly changed his mind."

"He stubbornly insisted on making Lu Chengyun the Family Head, and no one's opposition mattered."

Mo Hua frowned.

Did Lu Ming strike some deal with the Lu Family Old Ancestor?

What kind of deal could there be right before death?

Given Capitalist Lu's selfish and profit-driven nature, this deal should not involve the interests of the Lu Family but be concerned only with his own benefits.

Mo Hua's gaze turned cold.

He thought of the bizarre thing on the golden altar, covered with yellow cloth and offered spiritual meat by an incense burner, which looked like a mix of human, demon, and zombie...

A chill began to creep into Mo Hua's heart.

"What about that Elder An?" Mo Hua asked again.

"Gone missing..."

"Dead, or just missing?"

Lu Ming shook his head, "I've only heard that he went missing. It's said that after Lu Chengyun became the Family Head, Elder An, feeling marginalized and dissatisfied, never returned from an errand he went out on."

"Some also speculate that the Family Head killed Elder An."

"But with no evidence, the matter just faded away..."

Mo Hua nodded.

So, this Elder An must have died.

Lu Chengyun, seemingly gentle, was actually vengeful, and would undoubtedly eliminate any threat, killing Elder An.

He would likely not just kill him but also use his body for Corpse Refinement.

Within those iron coffins of the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses, the remains of Elder An are probably placed.

That was it.

That was all the information Lu Ming had gathered.

The rest were just minor, insignificant details, unrelated to the whole situation.

Mo Hua took out a blanket and handed it to Lu Ming:

"I'm honoring our agreement, I'm saving your life."

"But don't even think about escaping anytime soon. You won't get far, and you'd better stay put for a while."

"This blanket has a Formation on it that can conceal your presence."

"Should anything unexpected happen within these Corpse Mines, find a corner, cover yourself with this blanket, and stay put."

"After the storm passes, look for your chance to slip away."

"Survival will be up to your own fortune."

"This is as much as I can help you with."

Lu Ming clutched the blanket, feeling nervous, and couldn't help asking, "What... what kind of unexpected event?"

"Don't ask; knowing too much could cost you your life."

Lu Ming shuddered with fear and expressed his concern:

"But is this blanket truly useful?"

"The Formation on it is my work; of course, it's useful."

Mo Hua responded confidently.

Looking at Mo Hua's small face, Lu Ming felt inexplicably reassured.

Mo Hua reminded him again:

"Forget about learning Corpse Refinement, and don't go refining any either. If you happen to kill someone and refine a zombie and fall into demonhood, I won't be able to save you. It's possible that one day, out of necessity, I might even have to slaughter you..."

Lu Ming nodded repeatedly.

After leaving Lu Ming, Mo Hua made another trip to the Ten Thousand Corpses Sacrificial Altar.

It was deep into the night now, and no one was at the altar.

Mo Hua still controlled Big Tiger, opened the doors of the hall, and used the small zombie to open the door of the mural, arriving before the golden sacrificial altar.

This altar was glittering with gold, extravagantly luxurious.

Mo Hua had not paid attention before.

Now that he thought about it, all these things were very much in line with the tastes of the Lu Family Old Ancestor.

Could it be that...the one enshrined upon this altar was none other than the Lu Family Old Ancestor?

And the cruel and ferocious half-human, half-corpse face on the mural, could it also be him, "Capitalist Lu"?

It's a good thing I didn't lift the yellow cloth.

Otherwise, there might indeed be danger.

But without lifting it, how can I confirm my guess?

Mo Hua was in a quandary.

At that moment, there was a disturbance at the mural by the entrance.

Mo Hua's heart tightened, "Someone's coming?"

Who would visit the altar at this time?

Zhang Quan or Lu Chengyun?

Mo Hua made the small zombie lie honestly in the coffin, then, with Divine Sense scanning the surroundings, finding no trace of anyone, he concealed his form and reduced his breath to the bare minimum, stealthily hiding behind the altar.

Soon, the ink on the mural began to ripple, forming an entrance.

A cultivator clad in brocade robes, with a gentle face, walked in.

It was indeed Lu Chengyun.

Chapter 500: The Ungrateful Wolf (1)

Lu Chengyun walked into the altar and opened the bronze coffin to start drawing the Formation.

As the Family Head, Lu Chengyun was busy on normal days. If something came up during the day and he got delayed, he would return to the altar at night to draw the Spirit Pivot Blood Formation.

Mo Hua, seeing that he hadn't been discovered, let out a slight sigh of relief.

It seemed that Lu Chengyun's Divine Sense was indeed weaker than his own. Without vigilance, he easily failed to see through his concealment.

However, he couldn't afford to be careless and give himself away.



Otherwise, should Lu Chengyun discover him sneaking into the altar in the dead of night, no amount of explanations would make him trust him again.

He would likely kill him and refine him into a small zombie.

Mo Hua conscientiously hid behind the altar.

Lu Chengyun was still drawing the Formation.

He couldn't possibly imagine that at this moment, another person was in the altar.

In the silent altar, there was only the extremely faint sound of the brush wet with ink and the rustling of strokes.

Once Lu Chengyun began drawing Formation, he would be completely engrossed.

Mo Hua used his peripheral vision to sneak a peek at him.

Lu Chengyun didn't notice.

Mo Hua nodded slightly.

The Spiritual Pivot Formation was very difficult to draw.

Drawing the Spiritual Pivot Formation required intense concentration, a large consumption of Divine Sense, and all thoughts to be focused on the Formation Patterns, so he wouldn't get distracted by anything else.

But Mo Hua didn't dare to be too brazen. He simply gathered his spirit and focused his mind without any emotion, devoid of murderous intent or any miscellaneous thoughts, using a vacant and tranquil gaze to secretly watch Lu Chengyun drawing the Formation.

With Divine Sense that was empty and clear, he was less likely to be detected.

The Formation Lu Chengyun was drawing, although also an Evil Formation of the Spiritual Pivot, differed from his daytime techniques.

Lu Chengyun was suspicious by nature.

Despite thinking Mo Hua couldn't understand or learn it, when drawing the Spiritual Pivot Formation in front of Mo Hua, he still held back.

He included some unnecessary Formation Patterns and altered the structure of the Formation Pivot.

Certain sinister techniques also had differences in the details.

Mo Hua suddenly understood.

Previously, when he watched Lu Chengyun drawing the Formation and noticed oddities in the Patterns, he thought Lu Chengyun had made a mistake, or that the methods of the Evil Formation were different from the standard ones.

Only now did he realize.

Lu Chengyun had been misleading him all along.

"Truly cunning..."

What Lu Chengyun didn't know was that Mo Hua had already learned most of the Spiritual Pivot Formation beforehand.

Later, when Lu Chengyun demonstrated the Spirit Pivot Formation Chart in front of Mo Hua, in just those few moments, Mo Hua had memorized the remaining parts of the Spiritual Pivot Formation.

He didn't need to watch him draw, because Mo Hua had already learned it.

Mo Hua watching him draw the Formation was purely to learn and improve, to check for any oversights and see if he left any back doors, not because he actually wanted to learn from him.

Lu Chengyun's petty tricks were like casting flirtatious glances at the blind—a completely futile effort.

Mo Hua furrowed his brows again.

Lu Chengyun's carefulness was a wake-up call for him.

The Soul Pivot Ultimate Formation was Lu Chengyun's core secret.

He planned to use the Spiritual Pivot Formation to control the Corpse King and command the horde of zombies.

The Spiritual Pivot Formation was his lifeline.

He would never teach it to anyone, including Mo Hua.

Promises of teaching him the Spiritual Pivot Formation were nothing but empty words.

Mo Hua felt a chill in his heart.

Up to now, Lu Chengyun probably believed that in the entire Minor Wilderness State Boundary, he was the only one who knew the Spiritual Pivot Formation.

The complete set of Spiritual Pivot Sequences could also only be understood by him alone.

He was the king among kings, controlling the Corpse King.

Therefore, the fact that Mo Hua had learned the Spiritual Pivot Formation could absolutely not be known by Lu Chengyun.

Once he found out that Mo Hua had mastered the Spiritual Pivot Formation and could destabilize his control over the Iron Corpses and Walking Corpses by altering the Sequential Formation Pattern,

He would definitely kill him!

Under no circumstances would he spare his life.

No matter how talented he was or how useful to him—none of it would matter.

"Even if I were his father, I guess it wouldn't matter—he would still find a way to kill me..."

Mo Hua silently mused.

Someone who could kill his master and ancestors and refine corpses certainly couldn't be expected to have any conscience...

Mo Hua took the opportunity to observe Lu Chengyun's technique in drawing the Formation again.

At this moment, there were no outsiders in the altar, and Lu Chengyun no longer kept secrets; he devoted himself fully to drawing the Evil Formation of the Spiritual Pivot.

He was still using a Bone Pen, dipped in human blood, to draw on the bronze sarcophagus.

His eyes shone with a green light, as if he was using some sinister type of Divine Sense.

Thanks to this, Lu Chengyun was drawing skillfully, and the speed was not slow either.

Mo Hua was somewhat surprised.

Indeed, the techniques of the Evil Formation were useful.

A Formation Master who couldn't realize it fully on his own, unable to complete the Formation Patterns, would use some unconventional means to help himself draw the Formation.

Human skin, human blood, human bones, and so on.

Cultivators are naturally attuned to Spiritual Power.

Using human materials for drawing, serving as a medium for the Formation, could reduce the difficulty of drawing the Formation and increase its power.

But these were merely methods to lower the threshold.

Simply put, it was cheating.

Mo Hua nodded to himself.

This Lu Chengyun, in terms of Formation skills, was still not as good as himself.

After all, he, Mo Hua, had drawn the Spirit Pivot Formation earnestly without cheating!

"It seems that I am still very impressive..."

Mo Hua felt a smidgen of self-satisfaction in his heart.

Lu Chengyun was still working on the Drawing Formation.

From the corner of his eye, Mo Hua continued to stealthily watch him.

As he watched, Mo Hua began to ponder another question with a hint of confusion:

How exactly did Lu Chengyun refine the Corpse King?

If the offering on the altar was the corpse of the Lu Family Old Ancestor, "Capitalist Lu," then what was sealed within this bronze sarcophagus?

Lu Chengyun was drawing the Spiritual Pivot Evil Formation on the bronze sarcophagus.

Over and over again.

It must be that during the Corpse Refinement, he was deepening the Formation continuously.

But with the corpse laid on top, where was the Formation he was intensifying on the coffin applied?

Or could it be that the Corpse King was somewhat special?

Was this a unique method of Corpse Refinement?

As Mo Hua was contemplating, Lu Chengyun had finished a Formation, his Divine Sense exhausted, and he took a break.

In the empty altar space, Lu Chengyun meditated to recover, and after just a short while, he suddenly furrowed his brows, abruptly opening his eyes with a piercing look, and coldly said:

"Are you watching me again?"

Mo Hua jumped in fright.

"Was I discovered?"

Lu Chengyun abruptly turned his head, his gaze icy cold, locking onto the altar.

Mo Hua curled up his small body, calming his mind, concealing his breath, and remained silent.

At the same time, Lu Chengyun slowly got up, walked to the altar, and with a sneer said:

"You just won't rest in peace, will you?"

Mo Hua was momentarily stunned.

Won't rest in peace? He's not talking about me?

That is to say, Lu Chengyun hadn't discovered him...

Mo Hua slowly exhaled in relief.

"Watching me again... won't rest in peace... the altar..."

Mo Hua instantly understood.

Lu Chengyun thought the Lu Family Old Ancestor was watching him!

The one offered upon the altar was indeed the Lu Family Old Ancestor, and this Old Ancestor, having been duped by Lu Chengyun, indeed died with his eyes unshut.

"Old undying thing!"

In the midst of the altar, where there was no one else, Lu Chengyun ripped away his cultured and genteel facade and suddenly became fierce and hysterical.

"Greedy fool!"

"Old beast!"

"You looked down on me because of my marital entry into the family?"

"You belittled me!"

"In front of all the Elders, you cursed me as a dog raised by the Lu Family, an ungrateful cur..."

Lu Chengyun's face revealed a sneer, "But the Spirit Stones I mined with Corpse Refinement, you still took them, didn't you?"

"The 'dead meat' fetched by this hound of yours, you old beast, you still ate it, didn't you?"

"Never content in your greed..."

"Even as your death approached, when I deceived you, saying you could attain transcendence through Corpse Transformation, living a thousand years, you actually believed it?"

"The Heavenly Dao is constant, there are limits to life and death, how could they be so easily deceived?"

"Thinking you could become immortal as a Zombie? Dream on!"

After cursing a good deal and venting his emotions, Lu Chengyun then laughed coldly and darkly.

"Come to think of it, I should thank you."

"Thank you for incestuously birthing that bad and stupid daughter."

"Thank you for your greed, which allowed me to become the Family Head of the Lu Family."

"Otherwise, even if I had learned the Spirit Pivot Formation, I couldn't have built the Corpse Mine, couldn't have constructed the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses, couldn't have refined the Corpse King..."

"This Corpse Mine was built with the manpower of your Lu Family, this Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses was also made with your family's wealth."

"Now, it all serves as a bridal gown for me!"

Lu Chengyun couldn't help but let out a gloomy laugh.

"You never imagined, did you..."



"In life, you wielded great power, I listened to you, labored for the Lu Family, submitting to your word as law."

"But in death, refined into a Zombie by me, you have to listen to me, becoming my servant, under my command, forever without the chance of revolt."

"The Lu Family still bears the name Lu, but it's no longer the 'Lu' of Lu Tianliang, it's the 'Lu' of me, Lu Chengyun!"

Having finished speaking, a slight tremble passed over the altar.

Below the yellow cloth, the Corpse Qi was intense.

It seemed as if a violent energy surged within it.

The Lu Family Old Ancestor was dead, this violence merely the remnants of primal consciousness, the residue of Divine Thought.

Lu Chengyun was not only unafraid but was also overjoyed and laughed:

"Good!"

"The angrier you are, the more intense the Corpse Qi, the more the refined corpse aligns with my desires!"

The Corpse Qi surged, then seemed to contain a reluctance that gradually subsided.

Lu Chengyun sneered softly:

"Your time is up, once refined into a corpse, controlled by the Spiritual Pivot Formation, you can only be my servant, forever at my mercy."

After that, Lu Chengyun "hmphe," brushed his sleeves, and left the altar to return to the bronze sarcophagus to meditate and recover his Divine Sense.

His words, without omission, were all overheard by Mo Hua, who was hidden behind the altar.

Mo Hua sighed inwardly and couldn't help but admire:

Lu Chengyun was indeed a "talent."

The Lu Family Old Ancestor truly picked up a "gem."

Lu Chengyun and the Lu Family, such a perfect match, a white-eyed wolf entering a den of wolves, truly a match made by heaven.