

The Quest 501

Chapter 501: Stealing "Food" (1)

"Capitalist Lu" was filled with vile deeds, chose a fine son-in-law, appointed a good Family Head, and even after his own death, he couldn't rest in peace and was turned into a Zombie.

It could be said that he reaped what he sowed, thoroughly deserving it...

Mo Hua thought to himself in silence.

After Lu Chengyun finished cursing the Lu Family Old Ancestor, he sat aside to meditate and regulate his breath.

With no way to sneak out unnoticed, Mo Hua had no choice but to hide behind the altar, waiting patiently for Lu Chengyun to leave so he could seize the opportunity to slip away secretly.

However, Lu Chengyun meditated for quite a long time, and his Divine Sense still had not fully recovered...

Mo Hua was getting anxious on his behalf.

"Is Divine Sense recovery really that slow?"

A brief period of meditation would suffice for me, yet this Lu Chengyun, like a turtle in meditation, has been sitting for half an eternity and his Divine Sense has hardly recovered at all—this is excessively slow...

Could it be an issue with the Meditation Technique?

Mo Hua frowned and pondered further.

I learned the Meditation Technique from Mr. Zhuang; meditating in a serene state, hence my Divine Sense recovers quickly.

Lu Chengyun does not practice meditation, harbors too many schemes, and even has a filthy mind, so is that why his Divine Sense recovers so slowly?

Is it just Lu Chengyun that is this slow, or is it that all Formation Masters take this long to recover their Divine Sense?

This was a question Mo Hua had not really compared the answers to before.

"It seems the Meditation Technique taught by my master is indeed a fine thing..."

Gratitude towards Mr. Zhuang arose in Mo Hua's heart once more.

After a while more of breath regulation, Lu Chengyun finally opened his eyes, appearing somewhat restless and agitated.

Yet, his Divine Sense had only recovered by a small fraction.

Mo Hua was puzzled.

"What is Lu Chengyun trying to do?"

How could he work on Formation Painting with his Divine Sense not fully recovered?

To Mo Hua's surprise, Lu Chengyun did not proceed with Formation Painting but rather took out a scroll from his Storage Bag.

The scroll was somewhat wrinkled, bore creases, and carried footprints that had not been fully wiped away.

Mo Hua recognized it instantly.

Because the footprints on it were from his own stepping.

It was Zhang Quan's Ancestral Master Picture!

It was a depiction of a Zombie Image, and also a Contemplation Map!

The scroll was indeed in the hands of Lu Chengyun!

Zhang Quan, that unfilial wretch who "forgot his ancestry," actually gave away his ancestral portrait, causing me all this trouble in search.

Mo Hua inwardly criticized, then stealthily speculated.

Zhang Quan treasured this Ancestral Master Picture like a precious gem and was probably reluctant to part with it, agreeing only to lend it.

There must be some sort of deal between him and Lu Chengyun.

And in this deal, Zhang Quan definitely profited handsomely, otherwise, he certainly would not have lent out the painting.

This is a Contemplation Map, which can strengthen Divine Sense.

Zhang Quan may not be aware of its use, but Lu Chengyun most definitely is.

Mo Hua then grew stunned.

The purpose of a Contemplation Map is to strengthen Divine Sense...

But how does it strengthen one's Divine Sense?

I "ate" it directly because if I didn't "eat," I would be "eaten"...

But other Cultivators, lacking a Taoist Stele in their Sea of Consciousness and not versed in Divine Thought Slaughter, should be incapable of "eating" it.

If they can't "eat," then what should they do?

Would they not be "eaten"?

Or perhaps, what is the orthodox method of using a Contemplation Map?

How do other Cultivators use the Contemplation Map to augment their Divine Sense?

...

Mo Hua was filled with confusion for a moment, and then he cautiously peeked out his head to observe Lu Chengyun, wanting to see exactly how he would proceed, to learn from it.

Outside the altar, within the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses.

Lu Chengyun first took out an Incense Burner and placed three sticks of incense on it.

Afterward, with all due respect, he opened up the Zhang Family's Ancestral Master Picture, clasped his hands in prayer, bowed, then suspended the painting. Amid the drifting incense smoke, he sat cross-legged, maintaining a proper posture, gazed at the image, let his soul wander into nothingness, and quietly contemplated.

The aura of the man and the painting gradually merged into one.

Lu Chengyun seemed to have fallen into a profound, indescribable state of gradual enlightenment.

His Divine Sense, too, was gradually nourished, slowly restored, and subtly increased.

"Strange..."

Mo Hua furrowed his brows.

This painting seemed genuinely capable of contemplation, and indeed, after contemplation, it truly nourished Divine Sense.

This was different from my experience...

Mo Hua recalled.

The first time I saw the Landscape Taoist Child Painting, the Taoist Child turned into a little demon, burrowed into my Sea of Consciousness, wanting to devour me.

The second time, upon seeing the Zhang Family Ancestral Master Picture, the Ancestral Master turned into a Zombie, lunged into my Heavenly Court, again with the intention to devour me...

There was no chance for me to contemplate and comprehend...

Why is that?

Why can Lu Chengyun respectfully burn incense, utilize the Contemplation Map, and enhance his Divine Sense properly?

Yet my only choices are to "eat" or be "eaten"?

There's another question:

This Lu Chengyun, when he contemplated the Contemplation Map, did he not realize that these seemingly virtuous ancestors of the Zhang Family were actually zombies?

He saw it, but he didn't care.

Or is it because he simply didn't see through them, so he didn't know at all?

In his eyes, is this just a dignified and solemn picture of the Ancestral Master teaching his disciples?

Something is quite odd...

Mo Hua pondered carefully:

The evil thoughts in the Contemplation Map, wanting to "eat" oneself but not Lu Chengyun...

Is it because I saw through their true nature?

Or is it because my innate Divine Sense is powerful, a great supplement for them?

Or is it simply because they bully the weak and fear the strong, seeing that I am young and wanting to "eat" me?

Mo Hua furrowed his brow, feeling that all three reasons might be possible...

Seeing through their true nature, being a great supplement for Divine Sense, and being easy to bully.

If I were those malevolent spirits, I would also choose a child like myself to "eat"...

The good are bullied by "ghosts".

Mo Hua sighed helplessly.

...

Meanwhile, Lu Chengyun, absorbed in contemplation of the Contemplation Map, seemed oblivious to the outside world.

Mo Hua was then considering whether to slip away now or later.

But as he thought about it, he hesitated again.

Why run when the Contemplation Map is right in front of him?

Lu Chengyun keeps it close to his body.

If I don't try to snatch it now, who knows how long I'll have to wait for another chance?

But how to snatch it?

Force won't work.

I'm no match for Lu Chengyun.

Stealing... probably won't succeed either.

Lu Chengyun is neither a fool nor a piece of wood.

My Concealment Technique may fool him, but to steal something up close would be to not see him as a person.

"What to do?"

Mo Hua thought hard but couldn't come up with a good plan, ultimately giving up in resignation.

Suddenly, an idea sparked in Mo Hua.

Can't snatch, can't steal... but can "steal" a taste!

The map is in Lu Chengyun's hands and I can't take it back for the time being, but skimming off some interest, catching a few zombies for a feast, should be no problem.

Mo Hua peeked out his head stealthily again.

Where he was, blocked by Lu Chengyun, he couldn't see the whole of the Contemplation Map, only a part of it.

But Mo Hua was very familiar with the map.

Even with just this part, he could roughly infer the scene depicted in the Contemplation Map.

Lofty halls, dignified and solemn.

The Ancestral Master's teachings resonating, with an aura of immortality pervading.

The disciples following his teachings, passing them on, mouth to mouth.

Meanwhile, Lu Chengyun was focused, as if he had comprehended the profoundness from these teachings and felt the Great Dao, subtly and intuitively enhancing his Divine Sense.

But Mo Hua knew better.

This was not any "resonating teachings", but rather some hollow nonsense.

Casual words like "Dao," "fate," "truth"...

Seemingly mystical, but actually empty and meaningless, absolutely nothing at all.

Lu Chengyun was merely indulging in self-intoxication.

However, Mo Hua couldn't care less about him. The more Lu Chengyun was immersed in it, the better. Hopefully he would be brainwashed by the zombie ancestors of the Zhang Family and never come out—that would be for the best.

Mo Hua busied himself with his own matters.

His gaze swept quickly over the Contemplation Map, deciding whom to choose, and finally set his eyes on an Elder of the Zhang Family.

This Elder, sitting in a corner, while the rest were reverently echoing the teachings of the Ancestral Master, was somewhat distracted, mumbling something inattentively, just going through the motions.

Even without it, no one would notice.

"It's you!"

Mo Hua stared intently at it.

The Elder, mumbling a scripture, suddenly paused, as if sensing something, and turned its head slowly. In its murky eyes, it saw Mo Hua.

As Mo Hua had predicted, changes began to unfold.

Under Mo Hua's gaze, the Elder started to reveal its true form.

Mo Hua's eyes, clear and bright like daylight, scorched the Elder's visage, causing its skin to peel off gradually, revealing the true face of a zombie.

The zombie Elder was both angry and pleased.

Angry that an impudent brat dared to pry into its true appearance.

Pleased that this brat's Divine Sense was profound, surely a delicious treat!

A Qi Refinement child with a youthful face, was it not at its mercy to slaughter?

With drooling anticipation and an insatiable hunger, the zombie Elder leapt up, jumping out from the picture and into Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness.

It rejoiced, thinking a banquet of Divine Sense awaited.

But little did it know that it was leaping into an abyss from which there was no return...

Chapter 502: Golden Lock Three Lotus Earthfire (1)

In Mo Hua's pale and void Sea of Consciousness.

The face of the Iron Corpse Elder, ghastly and zombified, was filled with disbelief.

How could a Qi Refinement cultivator possess such abundant Divine Sense?

Without a word, it took a fierce inhalation.

Sweet, pure, crystal-clear, with an endless aftertaste, and even carrying a thread of profound and mysterious Taoist Meaning.

The Zombie Elder immediately widened its eyes.

Premium Divine Sense!

It had never tasted such delicious Divine Sense in its life.

And here, the Divine Sense was so plentiful, enough for it to feast on for a long time.

If it could consume all of this youngster's Divine Sense and digest it, its Divine Thought would surely become more condensed, and its strength would skyrocket.

Even the Ancestral Master would hold it in higher regard...

With an ugly face and brimming with excitement, the Zombie Elder was about to take another bite when it was unaware of Mo Hua, who was watching it coldly from hiding.

"You've eaten my Divine Sense, now vomit it all out!"

Mo Hua brought his fingers together and launched a Fireball Technique, which flew swiftly and reached its target in an instant.

The Fireball Technique surged with Spiritual Power.

Manifested from Divine Thought, the bright red fire Spiritual Power entwined like threads, twisting together, carrying terrifying burning force.

The Fireball Technique exploded instantly upon the Zombie Elder's body.

The flames charred its clothes manifested from Divine Thought, eroding its true form.

The thread-like fire Spiritual Power seeped into every pore, like a red-hot blade slicing through its flesh.

The Zombie Elder's expression drastically changed.

"What is this thing?"

A Spell?

It suddenly underwent Corpse Transformation, growing in size, its veins bulging, cold Corpse Qi spreading around it, dispelling the scorching flames on its body.

But even so, it was severely wounded.

"Who?"

The Zombie Elder shouted angrily.

Yet within that anger was a hint of panic.

Mo Hua gradually revealed his shape on the side, small and delicate, with a cold little face, yet his aura seemed unfathomable.

Seeing Mo Hua, the Zombie Elder was shocked.

In this Sea of Consciousness, with thick and heavy aura capable of manifesting one's self and casting Spells – this wasn't an ordinary brat...

It had made a miscalculation.

The boy's youthful appearance was deceptive; in reality, he was a tough nut to crack...

The Zombie Elder respectfully said,

"Young friend, my sudden intrusion was impolite."

Mo Hua kept a straight face, ignoring him.

The Zombie Elder's gloomy gaze flickered as it negotiated,

"However, there is a reason for my action..."

"To be frank with you, young friend, I've been starving for over a month, without a single drop to drink. Might you, as the host, extend your hospitality and show some kindness to this elder by letting me consume a bit of Divine Sense to stave off my hunger, after which I will leave."

Its ugly face pleaded, eyes devious.

Mo Hua said nothing.

A Zombie indeed, with such thick skin.

Mo Hua didn't want to waste any more words.

He was sneaking a bite, time was limited, and he needed a decisive victory using a lightning-fast approach to avoid being discovered by Lu Chengyun and complicating things.

Mo Hua raised his hand and cast another Fireball Technique.

Seeing that Mo Hua was implacable, the Zombie Elder couldn't help but fly into a rage,

"Shameless lad, abusing your power to bully others too much!"

It wanted to dodge, but the Fireball Technique was both fast and accurate, and in the moment, it couldn't evade, so it had to endure the attack.

The Fireball Technique exploded, and flames enveloped the Zombie Elder's body, charring its skin and causing its figure to fade slightly.

Meanwhile, Mo Hua clenched his small hand.

The Water Prison Technique's thread-like energy directly transformed into hundreds of threads, tightly binding the Zombie Elder, and then the threads condensed into a barred cage, securing it firmly.

The Zombie Elder's expression changed dramatically as it frantically struggled to break free.

But before it could escape,

Mo Hua pointed his finger and moved his Divine Thought, beginning to manifest the Golden Lock Formation below its feet.

Starting from the Formation eye, golden Patterns spread outward like a peony blooming, covering the ground, and within a few breaths, they solidified into a shining golden Formation.

Above the Formation, the light was brilliant.

Spiritual Power formed chains locking the Zombie Elder in place.

The Zombie Elder was greatly frightened.

What kind of technique was this?

A Formation?

Was this really happening inside the Sea of Consciousness?

Wasn't combat in the Sea of Consciousness all about clashing of Divine Thought? How could someone use a Formation?

But it wasn't over yet.

Mo Hua clasped his hands together, closed his eyes to focus, and stimulated his Divine Sense to the extreme.

Outside the Golden Lock Formation, a sudden burst of red light and fire Spiritual Power slithered about like divine brushstrokes, at the same time forming three Earth Fire Formations.

The intersection of the three Earth Fire Formations was right where the Golden Lock Formation bound the Zombie Elder!

This was a Compound Formation designed by Mo Hua himself.

Named the Golden Lock Three Lotus Earthfire Compound Formation.

It was a small-scale compound killing formation constructed based on the understanding of trapping and killing techniques within the Five Elements Slaughter Demon Great Formation.

It trapped the enemy with the Golden Lock Formation.

Outside the Golden Lock Formation were three Earth Fire Formations, resembling three fiery lotuses. Upon explosion, the power of the three Earth Fire Formations overlapped at the site of the Golden Lock Formation, to injure ghosts and evil spirits.

Once the formation was complete, the Zombie Elder's eyes revealed terror.

"Plea..."

It wanted to beg for mercy, but Mo Hua didn't bother wasting words with it.

"Explode!"

Mo Hua ordered crisply.

The three-tier Earth Fire Formation exploded instantaneously.

Three fiery lotuses bloomed, and scorching spiritual power spread.

The roaring flames engulfed the Zombie Elder.

After a short while, the flames dissipated. The Zombie Elder's hands and feet were burnt to a crisp, leaving no "human" shape, its figure extremely dim, evidently heavily wounded.

A combination of spells and formation in a single move had directly smashed the Zombie Elder to pieces.

Mo Hua nodded to himself.

The power of the Golden Lock Three Lotus Earthfire Compound Formation also left him rather satisfied.

What was important was that it integrated trapping and killing the enemy into one.

Trap first, then kill.

As long as he was capable of killing the enemy, they would certainly be killed; there was no escape.

The Zombie Elder was barely clinging to life. Although it wasn't killed, it couldn't escape either.

It cast a glance of disbelief at Mo Hua.

Just who was this little devil to be so terrifying?

With spells and formations emerging in quick succession, in just a few exchanges, an Iron Corpse Elder of the Foundation Establishment level, was bewilderingly subdued and didn't have the strength to fight back!

Was it truly going to be wiped from existence today?!

Filled with fear and reluctance, it mustered the last bit of its energy and said in a hoarse voice:

"You... dare to kill an elder of the Zhang Family, our... ancestors won't let you go..."

Mo Hua smiled broadly, his grin innocent and pure:

"Coincidentally, I also have no intention of letting your ancestors go."

The Zombie Elder's eyes suddenly widened, "You..."

Before it could finish speaking, Mo Hua sent it to its death with a few Fireball Techniques.

The ferocious Zombie Elder was blasted into green smoke by Mo Hua.

Using formations, Mo Hua trapped the green smoke, to refine it when he had the time.

The timing wasn't right now, with Lu Chengyun still outside.

Mo Hua exited his Sea of Consciousness, opening his eyes, his mind clear.

Lu Chengyun was still there, contemplating the Contemplation Map, completely unaware of everything that had happened.

There wasn't much change on the Contemplation Map, except that in one corner of the seating area, one of the Zhang Family ancestors was missing.

Mo Hua tried to summarize the battle.

It turned out there wasn't much to summarize.

It was simple—his Divine Thought manifested spells and formations, trapped an Iron Corpse Elder of Foundation Establishment rank, and then slew it.

A combination of spells and formations, seamless and smooth like drifting clouds and flowing water.

The strong overpowering the weak.

It looked like the weak bullying the strong, but in reality, it was the "strong" bullying the "weak".

Everything went according to plan without any twists.

Yet, Mo Hua felt a small sense of satisfaction in his heart.

Without a doubt, his ability for Divine Thought Slaughter was very strong.

The affair with Gui Tao's people was purely an accident.

Gui Tao was unfathomable, with unknown realm and means, not someone who could be judged by common sense.

Apart from him, normal ghosts and ghouls shouldn't be a match for him in the Sea of Consciousness.

He just had to be more careful, that's all.

Silence reigned within the altar.

Having secretly "consumed" an Iron Corpse Elder, Mo Hua was content and didn't plan on making another move just yet. He quietly hid his presence, lurking behind the altar, waiting for Lu Chengyun to leave.

An hour later, Lu Chengyun finished his contemplation, feeling his Divine Sense replenished, his face full of joy.

The Contemplation Map was indeed a treasure for Formation Masters.

After contemplation, it could nourish the Sea of Consciousness, enhance Divine Sense, and also improve understanding of the Great Dao.

Lu Chengyun caressed the Ancestral Master Picture, unable to part with it.

He carefully stowed the Ancestral Master Picture, but upon doing so, he suddenly paused.

This picture... why does it look so correct...

He inspected it carefully again, furrowing his brows.

It seemed like someone was missing from the picture?

"Where did he go?"

Lu Chengyun felt puzzled.

He continued to stare at the picture for a while, still unable to resolve his confusion.

Did he see wrong?

Or could it be that because he had contemplated it multiple times, it was too often, causing damage to the picture, which is why it wasn't displaying completely?

Lu Chengyun nodded to himself, thinking that must be the case.

This picture was in his possession, only to be seen and contemplated by him.

If there was an issue, it certainly had to be his own.

Lu Chengyun felt a bit of heartache, and then his gaze slightly darkened, a shadow of a sly smile crossing his face, he murmured:

"Looks like I need to find a way to feed someone to this picture..."

Chapter 503: Zombie Mining (1)

Lu Chengyun's voice was very soft, but Mo Hua still heard it.

Looking for someone to feed the Contemplation Map wasn't an uncommon thing; Zhang Quan had done it before when they were at the Corpse Walking Stronghold.

But Lu Chengyun's smile was too gloomy, which aroused Mo Hua's suspicions.

If it was just a matter of killing someone to feed the Contemplation Map, it shouldn't be a big deal for Lu Chengyun. His expression should have been indifferent so as not to reveal the look he had now.

Mo Hua touched his small chin.

Looking for someone to feed the map?

Whom would he want to find?

"Mining Cultivator? Corpse Cultivator?"

"Zhang Quan, and... me?"

Mo Hua jolted with fright.

Thinking about it, it seemed to make sense.

Each evil spirit that jumped into his Sea of Consciousness said that his Divine Sense was a great tonic, so using it to feed the Contemplation Map was naturally the perfect fit.

Could it be that Lu Chengyun had ill intentions right from the start?

Mo Hua pondered to himself.

Although it was just his speculation, he couldn't let his guard down...

After his Divine Sense had recovered, Lu Chengyun drew the Spirit Pivot Evil Formation again, and at 6 A.M., he sealed the Bronze Coffin and rose to leave.

After Lu Chengyun left, Mo Hua waited for the time it took to drink a cup of tea, making sure Lu Chengyun was far away and wouldn't come back anytime soon, before he quietly left the sacrificial altar and approached the Bronze Coffin.

The Bronze Coffin was sealed again.

Mo Hua walked around the coffin, tapping and knocking, but still couldn't figure out how to open the coffin or how it had been sealed.

He felt a bit of regret.

He had not paid attention to how Lu Chengyun opened the coffin when he came.

Nor did he remember to see how he sealed the coffin when he left.

Now unable to open the Bronze Coffin, he had no way to find out the secrets inside.

"Next time then..."

Mo Hua muttered to himself and then also quietly left the Ten Thousand Corpses Sacrificial Altar.

After returning to his room, Mo Hua immediately hopped onto the bed, crossed his legs in meditation, and his Divine Sense dived into his Sea of Consciousness.

Inside the Sea of Consciousness, there was a vast whiteness.

Within this vast white space, there was a Golden Lock Formation, locking a wisp of blue smoke.

It was the Thought Body left behind after the Iron Corpse Elder had been blasted to death.

Mo Hua seized the time, manifested the Melting Fire Formation, and roasted the wisp of blue smoke bit by bit, burning it until it was purified into pure Divine Thought, which he inhaled.

Like this, he "roasted" and ate.

Until he roasted the entire wisp of blue smoke and swallowed it whole.

Bloodthirsty, greedy, and evil thoughts emerged in Mo Hua's heart.

Mo Hua, well-accustomed to this, meditated in tranquility, his mind clear as a mirror, unstained, discarding and plucking out these miscellaneous and evil desires one by one.

The evil thoughts gone, a pure stream of Divine Thought surged into Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness.

Mo Hua's Divine Sense grew a bit stronger.

This slight enhancement moved Mo Hua's Divine Sense further up from the peak of the twelve Stripes, infinitely close to the thirteen Stripes, yet still falling just short...

Mo Hua opened his eyes and sighed.

It was so hard to increase Divine Sense.

He had "eaten" the Divine Sense of a Foundation Establishment, yet he still couldn't enhance his Divine Sense to thirteen Stripes.

Could it be that this Foundation Establishment's Divine Sense was too weak?

After refining it again, the Divine Sense left was reduced further, so it simply wasn't enough to "satisfy" him?

Mo Hua blinked.

Could it be that he would need to "consume" Zhang Quan's Ancestral Master to make his Divine Sense reach thirteen Stripes?

But how to consume it?

Mo Hua's eyes turned slyly, and he began to hatch a plot...

Zhang Quan's Ancestral Master Picture, preciously held close and treasured by Lu Chengyun, wasn't going to be easily obtained...

So he would need to find a way.

It's possible that he wants to use me to feed the map...

Lying on the bed, Mo Hua kicked his legs back and forth while carefully scheming...

As he thought, he suddenly remembered that it had been quite a while since he last communicated with his Junior Sister.

Some matters needed to be discussed with Junior Sister and Junior Brother beforehand.

Mo Hua hurriedly got out of bed, took out a piece of paper, and spread it on the table.

Then he began to record some key clues.

Like the relationship between Lu Chengyun and the Lu Family.

The deal between Lu Chengyun and the Lu Family Old Ancestor.

The Lu Family Old Ancestor being refined into a zombie.

Some details about the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses... and so on.

...

Mo Hua carefully put away the note; at night, he stealthily located Little Tiger and stuffed the note into its mouth, instructing it to crawl outside and deliver the message to Junior Sister.

The next day, Little Tiger crawled back, holding another note in its mouth.

This paper was smooth and fine, with a faint gold pattern, commonly used by Junior Sister, which Mo Hua recognized at a glance.

The return of the note meant that Little Tiger's message had been delivered.

Mo Hua nodded and opened the note, eager to see what Junior Sister had written.

However, upon unfolding the note, he saw that it contained only four simple words:

"Not coming back yet?"

And there was a small face drawn at the end, with eyebrows slightly furrowed.

Mo Hua was taken aback.

Only then did he realize that without knowing it, he had already spent a considerable amount of time in the Corpse Mine.

Junior Sister and Junior Brother must be worried about him, hence their impatience.

As for his master and Old Kui... they probably weren't in a hurry.

After all, his master's foresight was unquestionable; he probably knew everything he was doing.

He just wondered how they were getting on with their meals.

Was there anyone brewing tea for his master, anyone frying pine nuts for Old Kui...

And Big White, he wondered if Junior Brother had been feeding it good fodder.

And Instructor Yan...

...

Mo Hua contemplated for a moment and then suddenly felt a longing for his master and the others; he also thought it was about time to figure out a way to leave the Corpse Mine sooner.

Moreover, although Lu Chengyun was outwardly cultured and genteel, inwardly he was double-dealing. Although he was polite to him, he probably harbored bad intentions.

It would be good to extricate himself earlier and stop playing his game.

Mo Hua then replied with a note, which read:

Chapter 504: Zombie Mining (2)

"It's soon, very soon!"

Behind him, there's a little tiger's head drawn, looking very much like a tiger.

Mo Hua used his Divine Sense to lead and let Little Tiger deliver the message."

Then he began to consider what he should do before returning.

The Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses, the Bronze Coffin, the Corpse Mine...

All of these must be destroyed, otherwise they will surely leave an endless curse. Continue reading at empire

The Corpse Cultivators in the Corpse Mine, who kill and refine corpses, also need to be completely eradicated.

The Zombies inside must be properly dealt with as well, best if they can all be burned to prevent them from consuming flesh and blood and allowing the Corpse Poison to spread, poisoning South Yue City...

"But just how many Zombies are there in this Corpse Mine?"

Mo Hua knew there were many, but he couldn't count exactly how many.

The ones in the Stone Palace and those within the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses should only be a part of them.

The Corpse Mine is bigger than the Corpse Walking Stronghold, and the formations inside are more complex. With Lu Chengyun watching over, he was hindered, so there were many places he couldn't explore.

And outside the Corpse Mine, there are more mineshafts, and the number of Zombies inside them might be even greater...

Know yourself, know your enemy.

Without finding out how many Zombies there are, it is impossible to make a move.

Even a Foundation Building Cultivator, if surrounded by hundreds or thousands of Walking Corpses and unable to escape, would undoubtedly die.

Not to mention, there are numerous Iron Corpses inside the Corpse Mine.

Even if the Taoist Court were to deploy Taoist Soldiers to suppress the Corpse Mine, without knowing the internal situation, it would be difficult to conduct operations.

After thinking it over, Mo Hua decided to first take a look at the mineshafts outside.

Outside the Stone Palace, there is a mineshaft, separated by a large gate.

On this gate, there is a bloody Evil Formation.

And at the same time, there is a key.

This key is something Mo Hua discovered later on.

The key, made of bones, was placed on one of the Corpse Cultivators guarding the gate.

As for the formation, Mo Hua couldn't touch it for the time being – afraid to startle Lu Chengyun – but the key could be stolen.

Mo Hua seized the opportunity when the gate-guarding Corpse Cultivator was preoccupied with refining corpses and unable to be distracted, manipulating Little Tiger to steal his key, and then stealthily used the key to unlock the great door of the Stone Palace.

Outside the great door lies the mineshaft.

Dark, damp, gloomy, the air is heavy with Corpse Qi, yet it's also extremely noisy.

Mo Hua stepped out of the Stone Palace and walked along the mineshaft for a while, and then came upon a massive mining pit.

It was just as Mo Hua had guessed, and yet also different.

Walking Corpses were indeed mining, but there were far too many...

The pit is extremely vast, and within it, densely packed, were all Walking Corpses.

They are dressed in tattered clothes, their skin putrefied, each one holding a mining pick, mining in there!

They are dead, yet they are doing the work of the living.

Most of them were miners in life, after death refined into corpses, they are still miners, even busier and more tireless than when they were alive.

Countless Zombies mining...

This noisy spectacle seemed like something from the world of the living, yet also from the netherworld.

The Cultivators in the mines, while alive, are driven by life to numbness as if they're zombies.

The Walking Corpses in the mine, clearly dead, but slaving away for the Lu Family as if they were still alive.

For a moment, the daytime scene of Mining Cultivators laboring and the nighttime Zombies mining overlapping in Mo Hua's mind, confusing, seeming both real and unreal.

He suddenly couldn't distinguish what was the true reality.

Mo Hua was utterly shocked and stood still for a long while.

In that instant, he seemed to have a vague enlightenment about life and death in this world, as well as the underlying 'path' of people at the most basic level.

At the same time, another troublesome fact lay before Mo Hua.

There were far too many Zombies in this Corpse Mine!

Within this enormous pit alone, there appeared to be tens of thousands of Walking Corpses.

And according to the formations around," he estimated that the mineshaft was even larger than he had imagined, which meant that there were several mining pits within the mountain.

Each mining pit was filled with countless Walking Corpses...

Just thinking about it made Mo Hua's scalp tingle.

These Walking Corpses, if they were to break out of the Corpse Mine and form a Corpse Tide, using Corpse Poison to infect further, I'm afraid not just South Yue City would be annihilated, but even the whole of the Minor Wilderness State Boundary might suffer the doom of all living beings.

The Minor Wilderness State Boundary would become Minor Wilderness "Corpse" Boundary.

Mo Hua stopped reading.

There was not much time left, and he again quietly slipped back.

The gate leading outside was a natural boulder guarded by two Second-Grade Iron Corpses, surrounded by thick mountain walls.

In a short time, he could not free himself; he could only go back first and plan ahead for the long term.

When Mo Hua returned, that Corpse Cultivator guarding the gate had yet to finish refining the corpse.

Mo Hua again controlled Little Tiger to return the key and then went back to his room, frowning in contemplation.

This Corpse Mine was larger than he had thought.

There were also more Walking Corpses in the mine than he had expected.

With so many Walking Corpses, how about Iron Corpses?

How many Iron Corpses were there?

Within the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses, Mo Hua had counted there were roughly twenty-four iron coffins.

This meant there were twenty-four Iron Corpses.

Inside the Stone Palace, in some of the secret chambers, there were also traces of Iron Corpses' presence; Mo Hua roughly estimated there to be seven or eight.

There were also some Iron Corpses in the outer mines.

So, by this count, were there at least forty-plus Iron Corpses throughout the Corpse Mine?

Among the Iron Corpses, mixed First and Second Grade, the First Grade was slightly weaker, equivalent to weak Foundation Establishment, while the Second Grade was significantly stronger and could be considered at the Foundation Establishment Middle Stage.

All together, were there nearly forty-plus Foundation Building cultivators?

A chill ran down Mo Hua's spine.

Forty-plus Foundation Builders was an immense force, not only for South Yue City but even when considering the whole Minor Wilderness State Boundary, it was a leading power...

This strength was sufficient to look down upon the entire Second-Grade Prefecture Border...

Suddenly, Mo Hua felt a little shocked and confused.

Where did Lu Chengyun get so many corpses to refine this many Iron Corpses?

To refine an Iron Corpse, one needed at least the peak of the Qi Refining Ninth Level and the corpse of a Foundation Establishment Stage cultivator.

Taking into account the success rate of Corpse Refinement, even more corpses would be needed to refine Iron Corpses.

It's one thing to find those at the peak of Qi Refinement, but where did he get the corpses of Foundation Building Cultivators?

Even if he killed for them, he couldn't have killed so many...

Where did he get so many Foundation Establishment corpses?

Mo Hua suddenly thought of the Lu Family Old Ancestor.

In the Spirit Pivot Sequence of the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses, the Lu Family Old Ancestor was the "Corpse King," with the highest sequence position.

The Corpse King needed to command hordes of corpses.

Thus, the corpse used to refine the Corpse King was very particular; it had to be either a Sect Leader, a Family Head, or a ruler...

Those under its command were either Sect Disciples, Clan Disciples, or citizens of a country.

The Lu Family Old Ancestor was the "Corpse King."

According to the principles of Corpse Refinement, those who are submissive to it should be...Lu Family cultivators?

It's unlikely to be Mining Cultivators...

Among the Mining Cultivators, there were almost no Foundation Building Cultivators.

Moreover, although the Mining Cultivators were exploited by the Lu Family Old Ancestor, most harbored resentment; their grudges did not dissipate after death, and if refined into zombies that submitted to the Lu Family Old Ancestor, they could easily lose control.

It could only be the Lu Family...

Were most of these Iron Corpses refined from the corpses of Lu Family cultivators, or rather, the corpses of Lu Family Elders?

But Lu Chengyun was the Family Head, and although he could kill one or two Elders, killing so many would definitely cause problems and arouse suspicion from the Lu Family.

He wouldn't do such a thing, cutting off his own roots.

So where did these corpses come from?

Elder corpses...

Mo Hua's brow furrowed tightly.

Suddenly he realized something, and a great alarm struck his heart:

"This Lu Chengyun, he couldn't have dug up the Lu Family's ancestral graves..."

Chapter 505: Ambition (1)

After the Clan cultivators die, they are buried in the ancestral tombs.

Within these tombs lie the graves of generations of Family Heads, Elders, and cultivators with profound cultivation.

The Lu Family is no exception.

Within the tombs of the Lu Family, there inevitably lie the corpses of Foundation Building cultivators.

Could it be that Lu Chengyun truly desecrated the Lu Family ancestral tomb and used the bodies of past Family Heads and Elders to refine Iron Corpses?

Mo Hua couldn't help but take in a cold breath.

This Lu Chengyun really dared to think and act...

For the sake of Corpse Refinement, he even dug up the Lu Family's ancestral tomb.

If the Lu Family Old Ancestor hadn't already died, he would probably be angered to death by this...

Mo Hua frowned once more.

But now this was going to be troublesome.

Over forty Iron Corpses, tens of thousands of Walking Corpses.

If they directly confronted Lu Chengyun, there would be no chance of victory.

If they called for help with "shaking people"...

The Situ Family had a strong foundation, but they definitely couldn't mobilize enough cultivators to match these zombies.

The Taoist Court in South Yue City was in cahoots with the Lu Family.

If they didn't make a mess of things, that would be a stroke of luck.

The largest sect in South Yue City, South Yue Sect, also had an intimate association with the Lu Family.

Even if the South Yue Sect wasn't colluding with the Lu Family and was willing to oppose them, they would definitely not be a match for these zombies.

Apart from that, they could only hope for the Taoist Court to dispatch the Taoist Soldiers to suppress the Corpse Mine...

But the mobilization of Taoist Soldiers wasn't that simple.

There were too many procedures, applying is difficult, and the military expedition of the Taoist Soldiers was also quite costly.

Moreover, having too few soldiers would be useless, and the military force and financial resources needed to suppress the Corpse Mine would certainly not be a small number.

The Taoist Court had the strength, but whether they were willing to pay the price was another matter.

For a Second-Grade Prefecture border, a poor and remote Little Immortal City, spending a lot of Spirit Stones and mobilizing numerous Taoist Soldiers — the military expenses were certain to exceed the input...

And their opponents would be zombies.

Iron Corpses with bronze heads and iron limbs, Walking Corpses fierce and unafraid of death, consuming flesh and blood incessantly, along with contagious Corpse Poison...

If an all-out war truly broke out, the casualties of the Taoist Soldiers would inevitably be extremely heavy.

The Taoist soldiers Court might not be willing to take the risk.

And if they were defeated, not only would the Taoist Soldiers suffer heavy casualties, but South Yue City would also be instantly engulfed by the Corpse Tide and become a city of death...

Engulfed by a Corpse Tide...

Imagining that scene, Mo Hua sighed.

Life as a Mining Cultivator is already hard. If they were to become Walking Corpses, with parents and children, flesh and blood tearing at each other, life would be worse than death, death without closure... it would be too tragic...

Was there anything he could do?

Mo Hua pondered in silence.

Formation Collapse...

He had considered it before, but it was not very appropriate.

It could easily detonate the mines and affect the Mining Cultivators.

If the "Corpse King" was destroyed and the horde lost control, the danger could be even greater.

At the same time, his master had also told him, unless absolutely necessary, not to collapse a formation, and even if he did, to ensure no one saw.

Collapsing the Corpse Mine would create too much commotion and would definitely expose his own secrets, and it would also bring trouble to his master.

Mo Hua shifted his thoughts and contemplated:

"If collapse isn't an option, then targeting the 'Corpse King' is the only way."

Capture the ringleader first in order to capture all his followers.

Lu Chengyun could control the Corpse King using the Spiritual Pivot Formation.

Since he could control it with the Spiritual Pivot Formation, so could I.

If I could truly control the "Corpse King," I could settle the crisis at the Corpse Mine without bloodshed, and even use the "zombies" to kill others, cutting down Lu Chengyun.

"But how to control the Corpse King?"

Mo Hua thought deeply:

To control the Corpse King, one needs to draw a Formation, and to draw a Formation, the bronze coffin has to be opened...

But even if a Formation is drawn, how can it be kept hidden from Lu Chengyun?

Lu Chengyun is not Zhang Quan.

Zhang Quan has no understanding of formations, but Lu Chengyun is well-versed.

He is a genuine Foundation Establishment cultivator, a true First-Grade Formation Master, and his formation strength far exceeds that of an ordinary First-Grade.

Only slightly less than my own.

I should be able to outmatch him in formations.

But to deceive him completely and meddle with the Formation he's actively drawing right under his nose, that would be a fool's dream.

Unless he's not only blind but also an idiot.

Lu Chengyun is clearly neither.

A blind idiot could not possibly marry into the Lu Family, become its Family Head, and even dig up the family's ancestral tomb...

After pondering for a long time, Mo Hua couldn't think of a good solution and felt helpless.

"Forget it, let's first figure out a way to open the bronze coffin..."

Let's see what's inside the bronze coffin first.

However, he needs to pay attention to both ends of the matter.

While he was busy, preparations had to be made outside as well. Explore stories at empire

Mo Hua wrote a letter first, handing it to Little Tiger to pass on to his junior sister.

The letter detailed the specifics of the Corpse Mine, including a map of the mine, the structure of the Stone Palace, the cultivation methods of Corpse cultivators, and the astonishing numbers of at least forty Iron Corpses and tens of thousands of Walking Corpses.

And it urged them to make preparations early.

It would be best if they could gather a group of Cultivators and, before the Corpse King's refinement was complete, root out the Corpse Mine to prevent future troubles.

Although Mo Hua felt this was unlikely, he had to mention it beforehand.

As for whether so many Cultivators could be assembled, that was beyond his control.

What followed was the opening of the bronze coffin.

The secret to opening it lay with Lu Chengyun.

Whenever Mo Hua had the time, he still sneaked into the Ten Thousand Corpses Sacrificial Altar, waiting inside for Lu Chengyun, wanting to see just how he would open the coffin.

But Lu Chengyun was very cautious and his actions were concealed.

Mo Hua watched several times yet still could not see clearly.

He could only roughly guess that to open this bronze coffin, one needed a key and a Formation, both were necessary.

But he could not steal the key nor see the Formation.

Just as Mo Hua was at a loss, unexpectedly, in the middle of the night, Zhang Quan and Lu Chengyun showed up at the altar together.

The two were also whispering to each other.

Mo Hua's spirits lifted, and he listened intently.

"...The Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses will soon be completed..."

"The Formation eye is ready..."

"Refining Spirit Stones to form Spiritual Power, then contaminating it with the evil Blood Qi to transform into Evil Power... That's what will activate the Formation..."

"How long will it take?"

"Soon, just a matter of days."

"Lu Family Head is justly renowned for his strategies," Zhang Quan complimented with a laugh.

Lu Chengyun chuckled, "Brother Zhang gives too much credit. Without the coffin you refined and the ancestral Corpse Refinement technique, how could I possibly construct this Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses?"

They were discussing the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses?

Mo Hua mused to himself and scrutinized them covertly.

Lu Chengyun then glanced at the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses, speaking with some emotion:

"I also must thank that young gentleman..."

"Using the Righteous Dao Formation to construct the eye, and the Evil Dao Formation to transform the energy, I only had such a thought initially, but I didn't expect it would really be feasible..."

"And this Formation eye is vast and complex in structure. I didn't expect that young gentleman would actually manage to build it despite stumbling along; his talent is indeed exceptional..."

"This Formation eye is quite difficult..." Lu Chengyun exclaimed with a sigh.

But Mo Hua listened with some confusion.

Difficult?

He just held back his skill, intentionally drawing it slowly, but he didn't expect that Lu Chengyun would actually find this Formation eye difficult...

What was difficult about it?

He found it rather simple...

Mo Hua shook his head.

Although Lu Chengyun was praising his own work, Mo Hua felt no sense of accomplishment from such praise for the Formation eye of a mere Compound Formation...

Zhang Quan, who felt somewhat resentful, said sarcastically:

"The talent is decent, but he's quite sneaky..."

Knowing that Zhang Quan held grudges, Lu Chengyun shook his head slightly and did not respond but turned his gaze back to the eye of the Ten Thousand Corpses Compound Formation with complex emotions.

This Formation eye was almost taking the shape of a Large Formation eye...

The embryonic form of a Large Formation...

Such talent, it's truly terrifying.

Lu Chengyun silently exclaimed in his heart, then his gaze turned solemn, and with a slight smile on his lips, he murmured softly:

"It's a pity..."

On the other side, Zhang Quan was looking towards the bronze coffin, eyes filled with longing, and couldn't help asking:

"Lu Brother, how much longer until the 'Corpse King' emerges?"

Lu Chengyun came back to his senses, also with a gleam in his eye, "Soon..."

"Once the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses is complete, the torrent of Evil Power will surge, nourishing the bronze coffin. In less than a month, this 'Corpse King' will be refined and the coffin can be opened..."

Zhang Quan was so excited that he trembled, and he couldn't help but exclaim:

"Excellent! Excellent!"

He walked a circuit around the bronze coffin, and said with excitement:

"Without the Corpse King to command, we Corpse cultivators can only control one or two Walking Corpses at a time, even with the refinement of the Corpse Controlling Bell, at most three."

"But once the Corpse King is refined, it can command all the Iron Corpses!"

"Releasing ten of them, or even dozens of Iron Corpses, coupled with tens of thousands of Walking Corpses, we will be able to move unobstructed across the Minor Wilderness State Boundary, wreaking havoc in all directions!"

"Beneath the level of Golden Core, there will be no rivals."

"We could cover the sky with one hand, no, we, will be the sky of this Minor Wilderness State Boundary!" Zhang Quan declared, ambition aflame, his voice trembling with excitement.

Lu Chengyun, on the other hand, was much calmer. He shook his head and said indifferently:

"Brother Zhang, your words are mistaken. This Corpse King will only stay in the Corpse Mine and will not venture out unless absolutely necessary, let alone wreaking havoc..."

Zhang Quan frowned, "Stay here for what purpose?"

Lu Chengyun stated flatly, "This is a mine, it will naturally stay here to mine."

Zhang Quan found it somewhat unfathomable, "To mine?"

Lu Chengyun nodded slightly.

Zhang Quan was incredulous, bursting out in frustration:

"After all the painstaking efforts, after pouring our hearts and blood into this, after scheming for a century, killing so many and refining so many corpses, are we just to have them mine here?"

Chapter 506: Covering the Sky with One Hand (1)

"Indeed!" Lu Chengyun nodded.

Zhang Quan's face was full of anger.

Lu Chengyun glanced at Zhang Quan indifferently, "What do you want to do?"

Zhang Quan suppressed his anger, his eyes brimming with ambition, as he said coldly:

"What else can we do?"

"With the Corpse King lying dormant, and the Walking Corpses mining, isn't it just like letting a fierce sword gather dust?"

"Once the Corpse King emerges, it should naturally command the horde, be invincible, and dominate the state boundary!"

"With the Corpse King, with so many Iron Corpses, and with so many Walking Corpses."

"The entire Minor Wilderness State Boundary, no, perhaps even several neighboring state boundaries, which power could be our opponent?"

"Wherever the Zombie army goes, corpses will float everywhere."

"Those who resist, annihilate them utterly!"

"Without any effort, we'll first occupy South Yue City, then step by step dominate the Minor Wilderness State Boundary, and gradually nibble away at the neighboring Second-Grade Prefecture Border..."

"We refine corpses and kill, then kill and refine more corpses!"

"Round and round it goes, we will endlessly expand our strength!"

"We could use this to establish a powerful Demon Corpse Sect, glorifying our ancestors, unequaled in one realm."

"By then, you and I will be the Ancestral Masters who established the sect, so what's the position of a mere Family Head to us?"

...

As if envisioning this scene, Zhang Quan's face turned crimson, his eyes red with blood vessels, his expression excited.

However, Lu Chengyun remained unmoved, instead letting out a cold laugh and scoffing:

"Naive!"

Zhang Quan's face darkened as he looked at Lu Chengyun with hostility.

Lu Chengyun didn't care, instead he spoke indifferently:

"Your Zhang Family, although it has inherited the Corpse Path for generations, with some renown, is in the end a small clan, passing down from one generation to the next, a few people at best, which is why your vision is limited, and your pattern is small..."

"Dominate the state boundary, establish a sect, build a Demon Sect?" Lu Chengyun showed a mocking expression, "You think this is child's play?"

"A single Second-Grade Corpse King and a few dozen Iron Corpses, what dominance can they claim?"

"Do you think the Taoist Court is a vegetarian?"

"The Taoist Court unifies the Nine States, some Demon Path giants that have existed for ten thousand years still choose to hide and secretly plan, not daring to come forward. With our family's humble base, and these first and second grade zombies, what state can we take, what dominance can we claim?"

"Are we worthy?"

Zhang Quan's face turned blue, then red.

Lu Chengyun shook his head and sighed:

"You only know about corpse refinement, knowing so little about the Cultivation World, not understanding the strength of the Taoist Court."

"If we act in secret, establish a Corpse Mine, raise some Walking Corpses, without showing off or leaking our presence, the Taoist Court might not bother with us."

"Even if they want to intervene, they might not be willing to pay the price, to clash with us to the point where both fish and net are destroyed."

"But if you make a big show of it, waving the banner of inheriting the Corpse Path, of establishing a Demon Sect, then you would have crossed the Taoist Court's red line!"

"The Taoist Court would stop at nothing to annihilate us!"

"Once word gets out, not three days would pass before hundreds of Foundation Cultivation Taoist Soldiers would arrive, bearing silver spears, clad in golden armor, in vast formation, coming to our doorstep to kill."

"They would utterly destroy you and me, along with all the Walking Corpses and Iron Corpses in this mine, reducing them to ashes!"

"Forget one Corpse King; even ten would be useless!"

"A Corpse King is just that, not a Big Demon, Great Ghost, or some Grand Calamity that comes once in a millennium. With what right and boldness could we provoke the Taoist Court and cross their taboo?"

"Are you stupid, or do you think you have too long a life?"

Lu Chengyun spoke without a hint of politeness.

Zhang Quan was unable to utter a word, feeling a surge of anger bottled up inside him, he indignantly said,

"But we can't just... only do mining..."

Lu Chengyun's gaze darkened. "That's why I say your vision is too limited."

Zhang Quan was taken aback.

Lu Chengyun let out a cold laugh, "What's wrong with mining?"

"What do you exchange from mining?"

"You exchange for Spirit Stones!"

"In this world, who doesn't need Spirit Stones? Who would think they have too many Spirit Stones? Without Spirit Stones, how can you cultivate immortality, how can you seek the Way?"

Zhang Quan frowned, deep in thought.

Lu Chengyun said indifferently,

"The cultivators of South Yue City, alive, they mine for my Lu Family, and even in death, turned into zombies, they still have to mine for my Lu Family!"

"In life or in death, they are all slaves to my Lu Family!"

"By day the living mine, by night the dead mine."

"This mine will keep producing, and my Lu Family will have an endless supply of Spirit Stones!"

"Spirit Stones are the foundation!"

"With these Spirit Stones, bribe the Taoist Court Officials, bribe all sides of power, raise them like 'pigs,' make them greedy, make them foolish, make them insatiable, make them only able to rely on us, the Lu Family, to survive. Only then can we truly have unbridled power within this Minor Wilderness State Boundary!"

"What's the use of being dominant?"

"Becoming a demon? What good will that do?"

"Under the unification of the Taoist Court, demon cultivators who dare to stand out have long since died without a place to be buried!"

"The true Demon Path is learning how to cling to the Taoist Court, monopolize industries, earn Spirit Stones, suck the blood of the cultivators in the state, enslave them with power and status, oppress them with identity, and extort them with Spirit Stones..."

"Without relying on murder, without relying on Corpse Poison, without relying on Demon Skills..."

"Openly and honorably eat their flesh, drink their blood, and strengthen oneself!"

"Even if the Taoist Court were to investigate, they wouldn't be able to find a thing."

"The local Taoist Court Officials are our people; the local sects are of the same alliance as us; the local clans look up to our breath;"

"Those miners below us, insignificant and weak, are trampled under our feet. They dare not speak, and even if they did, no one would believe them..."

"This is the way to use Spirit Stones!"

"This is the real hand that covers the sky!"

Lu Chengyun spoke resolutely, his gaze profound. Continue reading stories on empire

Zhang Quan's expression flickered uncertainly.

Mo Hua, hidden behind the altar, listened with his heart pounding.

Within the Ten Thousand Corpses Sacrificial Altar, there was silence.

After a moment, Lu Chengyun said indifferently:

"Brother Zhang, do you understand now?"

Zhang Quan came back to his senses, his eyelids twitching, he nodded, seeming to understand but not quite understanding.

Lu Chengyun nodded slightly, then said with a deep meaning:

"With these zombies, if you command them to kill, the Taoist Court will kill us."

"But if you command them to mine, earn Spirit Stones, give them to the Taoist Court, even to the Taoist Court..."

"Not only will they not kill us, but they will also wish for us to kill more people, refine more corpses, mine more, and deliver more Spirit Stones..."

"Times have changed, even cultivating in the Demon Path isn't all about fighting and killing..."

"Brother Zhang, think about it well..."

After Lu Chengyun finished speaking, he patted Zhang Quan on the shoulder and turned to leave.

In the center of the sacrificial altar, only Zhang Quan remained.

Of course, there was also Mo Hua.

Mo Hua hid behind the altar, profoundly shocked, his back soaked with cold sweat.

This Lu Chengyun was even more sinister than he had thought.

And his schemes were even more terrifying.

If he truly succeeded, he would play both sides of good and evil, bribing everyone.

Then this corpse mine could truly become like an ancient tree that has spread its roots far and wide, deeply entrenched in this mine, with interests as its roots, connecting top to bottom, firmly rooted and difficult to eradicate...

Mo Hua inhaled a cold breath, but just then, he heard a voice.

"Nonsense!"

Mo Hua started.

It was Zhang Quan's voice.

After Lu Chengyun had walked off into the distance, Zhang Quan then angrily said:

"Utter nonsense!"

"To abandon the role of a great Demon Sect ancestor and instead submit to the Taoist Court, fawning over the Court Official, flattering all sorts of powers, becoming their dog, it's really nonsensical!"

"Letting zombies mine continuously?"

"Can they even be called zombies if they don't eat people or drink blood?"

"It's simply a disgrace to our Corpse Path ancestral masters!"

"What's even more infuriating is that the spirit stones earned from mining are to be sent out?"

"Really, once a dog, always a dog!"

"And to think he said I had a small vision? I see that you, as the Family Head for too long, have been blinded by wealth and luxury, narrow-sighted, timid and skittish!"

"To scurry like a rat and live like a dog for hundreds of years, how can that compare to the grandeur of the Demon Path?"

"To establish the Demon Gate, to promote the Corpse Path, to honor our ancestors, to leave a legacy of infamy in the annals of the state boundary, to be renowned among fellow corpse cultivators, even if it is but a transient splendor, and in the end to be suppressed by the Taoist Court so that not even my bones remain, would still suffice!"

Zhang Quan's expression was passionate, his gaze resolute.

...

Mo Hua fell silent.

This Zhang Quan had his own ideas...

And also... a belief and pursuit for the Corpse Path?

Mo Hua found it hard to judge at that moment.

After Zhang Quan cursed Lu Chengyun for a while and calmed his emotions, a moment later, he smirked coldly and whispered low:

"Lu Chengyun..."

"Corpse refinement is not for you alone to dictate... "

"...Once the Corpse King has been refined, you will no longer have a say..."

"I am not as timid and hesitant as you are."

"I will certainly bring forth the Corpse King, let Iron Corpses massacre the city, turn South Yue City into a field of walking corpses, plunge the Minor Wilderness State Boundary into purgatory, make all cultivators of this world lose their courage at the mere mention, let them know what true corpse cultivation is!"

Zhang Quan's voice was icy, and after he finished, he snorted coldly and then left.

A glint flashed in Mo Hua's eyes, chilly and sharp.

Zhang Quan, Lu Chengyun...

Though their methods differed drastically, neither was a good sort.

Whichever of them took control of the Corpse King, the outcome would not be good.

One would create a land strewn with floating corpses; the other's poison would reach far and wide.

Mo Hua then thought of Zhang Quan's angered expression and his recent words, spawning a thought.

Did Zhang Quan not get along with Lu Chengyun, and, judging by his intentions, did he also aspire to control the Corpse King?

To control the Corpse King would surely require opening the bronze coffin.

In that case, would this not present an opportunity for him?

Mo Hua's eyes flickered.

He spent all his free time thereafter tracking Zhang Quan.

When Zhang Quan was alone, he was indeed sneaky, even setting up a Formation to watch with Divine Sense, clearly preparing for something.

Mo Hua, cautious not to startle the snake, did not dare to spy too closely.

But he knew that Zhang Quan was sure to be up to something.

He was acting just like Mo Hua himself did when planning mischief.

Indeed, a few days later, one night, while Lu Chengyun was busy with clan affairs and had left the corpse mine, Zhang Quan snuck out as well.

Mo Hua quickly made himself invisible, left his own room, and went straight to the Ten Thousand Corpses Sacrificial Altar to wait for him.

In less than the time it takes to drink a cup of tea, Zhang Quan entered the altar.

Mo Hua still hid behind the altar, secretly watching him.

Seeing no one around, Zhang Quan, sneaky and a little on edge, removed a bronze coffin nail from his Storage Bag.

Mo Hua's eyes lit up, and he immediately understood.

"So it's the coffin nail!"

This coffin nail was both a key and contained a Pattern.

Normal coffin nails are for sealing coffins, but this one was for opening them.

Zhang Quan took out the nail, measured along the coffin lid, found a spot three inches from the edge, and nailed it into the bronze coffin.

Then, a flicker of aura appeared on the bronze coffin.

It seemed that something had been unlocked.

Zhang Quan was overjoyed and instantly lifted the lid, revealing the inside of the coffin, which was adorned with a Blood Formation.

Zhang Quan then took out a dagger, sliced open his palm, and allowed his blood to flow into the grooves of the coffin.

Once the grooves were filled with blood, Zhang Quan took out a Corpse Controlling Bell.

This Corpse Bell, neither stone nor wood, nor bronze nor iron, was pitch-black, with Pattern lines as sinister as those on the bronze coffin inside.

Zhang Quan rang the Corpse Bell.

The sound was muffled and strange, like a zombie whispering.

After ringing the bell for a while, Zhang Quan continued with the blood feeding ritual, then rang the Corpse Bell again, taking bizarre steps around the bronze coffin in reverse.

Feeding blood, ringing the bell, walking in reverse.

He chanted under his breath.

Though Mo Hua didn't quite understand, based on his prior research and what he had learned from Lu Ming about corpse refining, he guessed this to be a special Corpse control method within the Corpse Refinement arts.

Indeed, after seven rounds of blood feeding, seven rings of the bell, and seven reverse circuits,

The sound of a heartbeat emerged from the bronze coffin.

This was the heartbeat of the dead.

Distinguishable from the heartbeat of the living, it was sinister and eerie.

Just listening to it made Mo Hua feel uncomfortable, his own heart feeling slightly suffocated.

Fortunately, this heart only throbbed faintly for a moment and then stopped.

Zhang Quan, however, was thrilled.

He resealed the coffin, retrieved the coffin nail, looked around to be sure no one was there and that he hadn't left any other traces, then snorted coldly and left the vast, empty altar.

Behind the altar, however, Mo Hua peeked out his head.

Chapter 507: Coffin Nail (1)

"Coffin nail..."

Mo Hua ran to the front of the bronze coffin, remembering the position measured by Zhang Quan, and indeed found a small groove at the edge of the coffin lid.

The groove was closed.

One must insert a bronze coffin nail to open the bronze coffin.

Inside the groove, Formation Patterns were carved, but since it was closed, the patterns were hidden, so Mo Hua hadn't noticed them at first.

How to open it?

Ordinary coffin nails are used to seal wooden coffins.

But this bronze coffin, contrary to typical practice, uses coffin nails to open the coffin.

This coffin nail is the key.

Lu Chengyun should have one in his possession.

And it seems that Zhang Quan also has one.

Mo Hua furrowed his brow.

Lu Chengyun was suspicious by nature; he would definitely not keep two keys for something as important as the Corpse King's coffin.

The key in Zhang Quan's hands must have been kept secretly by him.

Mo Hua surveyed the bronze coffin once more.

This bronze coffin, with its archaic style and verdigris patina, looked very old; it was probably used for refining ancient corpses, and if he hadn't guessed wrong, it should have been handed down from the ancestors of the Zhang Family.

Zhang Quan gave this bronze coffin to Lu Chengyun to use but also kept back a trick by retaining a key, which is that bronze nail.

It seems both men were harboring their own devious plans, each wary of the other.

The coffin nail is the key to the bronze coffin...

The problem now was, how could he acquire the coffin nail?

Mo Hua delved into deep contemplation, frowning.

There was no way he could get the one from Lu Chengyun.

There was a slight chance to get Zhang Quan's, but the risk was great...

Zhang Quan despised him to the bone, and especially after the incident at Corpse Walking Stronghold, when the Corpse Controlling Bell and the ancestral portrait were stolen, he would certainly carry important items with him to avoid another opportunity slipping by.

Mo Hua sighed.

Being concealed had its disadvantages.

When others were unguarded, his abilities worked without fail.

But once they were on the alert, he faced obstacles everywhere.

Unable to think of a good idea for the time being, Mo Hua could only go back for now and then repeatedly ponder the situation.

But he really couldn't think of any methods.

Neither Lu Chengyun nor Zhang Quan provided him with any opportunities.

With no progress, Mo Hua was somewhat at a loss for a moment, casually thinking that maybe he should just return for now and make long-term plans?

After thinking it over, he went to find Lu Chengyun and said,

"Family Head Lu, I've completed the Formation eye of the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses. I have stayed in this mine for quite some time, and it is both boring and dull; may I return first?"

As expected, Lu Chengyun did not agree, but instead replied with a gentle smile,

"Junior Gentleman, please be patient. Although the Formation eye of the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses has been constructed, the formation has not begun operating, and I don't know if there are any flaws. I request that Junior Gentleman stay for a few more days."

"But... I'm worried that Junior Brother and Junior Sister might be concerned," Mo Hua expressed, hesitating.

Lu Chengyun chuckled,

"In just another half month, once the formation is operating, I will send Junior Gentleman back."

"Alright, Family Head, you'd better not break your promise..."

Mo Hua said helplessly.

Lu Chengyun nodded, "Definitely."

Mo Hua then walked away somewhat dejectedly.

Lu Chengyun, watching Mo Hua's back, completely let down his guard.

He's really just a child...

One who is heavily influenced by childish nature, can't stand loneliness, and is somewhat playful.

Moods of happiness and anger are all visible in their expressions.

Whether happy or unhappy, it's easy to tell.

"So young and inexperienced, with little depth in scheming..."

"Probably not fit to be a great vessel..."

Lu Chengyun shook his head.

In this Tao Cultivation World, it isn't just having talent that smooths the path, nor is it a little bit of cleverness that transforms misfortune into fortune.

One must endure hardships to be tempered.

One must take a few tumbles to grow.

It's just that if one falls here with me, there will be no opportunity for growth ever again...

A subtle sneer appeared at the corner of Lu Chengyun's mouth.

Afterward, Lu Chengyun became even more indulgent towards Mo Hua, even somewhat overindulgent.

No matter what Mo Hua did, he would not get angry.

He also seldom used his Divine Sense to keep an eye on Mo Hua.

A trace of foreboding arose in Mo Hua's heart. Experience tales at empire

This kind of indulgence was a bit like the indulgence given to a dead man.

It was like the "last meal" of a condemned prisoner, which was always more lavish than usual.

Lu Chengyun harbored murderous intentions and regarded him as a dead man, so it didn't matter what he did.

Mo Hua shook his head, inwardly mocking,

"This Lu Chengyun, appearing so magnanimous, yet who would have thought he could be so narrow-minded."

"Even to me, a thirteen-year-old Formation prodigy who is as harmless as an animal, how could he bear to strike..."

"Or is it because my talent is too good that jealousy arises in his heart?"

"Really, only mediocrity escapes jealousy..."

Mo Hua sighed internally and thought a bit conceitedly.

Since Lu Chengyun would not let him leave, Mo Hua simply couldn't go for the time being and decided to stay, continuing to plot against the bronze coffin.

"If you won't let me leave, then I will overturn your coffin!"

Mo Hua thought fiercely to himself.

In the following days, Mo Hua would squat at the Ten Thousand Corpses Sacrificial Altar every night, secretly watching Lu Chengyun and Zhang Quan.

The two of them, as if by agreement, alternated with one visiting one day and the other the next.

Lu Chengyun would open the coffin to draw the Spirit Pivot Evil Formation.

Zhang Quan would open the coffin, performing blood oaths and ringing bells to control zombies.

Each had their own method of trying to control the Corpse King.

It made Mo Hua quite curious as to whom the Corpse King would listen to once it was refined.

Besides, Mo Hua's attention was mainly focused on that bronze coffin nail.

He carefully memorized the size, length, material, and Formation Patterns on the nail.

Whenever Zhang Quan opened the coffin, exposing the inside Pattern, Mo Hua would start his Calculations: first, to deduce what kind of Pattern it was that sealed the bronze coffin.

Second, he deduced what kind of Formation was carved on the coffin nail?

After several days of stealthy observation and secretive calculation by Mo Hua, he finally understood, but it also greatly disappointed him.

He had thought that since the bronze coffin was sealed so tightly, the formation inside it must be some high-end formation.

To his surprise, it turned out to be just two simple Bronze Lock Formations, one positive, one negative, neither higher than first grade, with seven Patterns.

Mo Hua suddenly realized that he had overlooked something.

This bronze coffin was passed down by the Zhang Family.

The Zhang Family had inherited the Corpse Path, but they had no foundation in Formations.

In other words, the entire family was "Formation Blind."

What kind of high-end Formation could possibly be in something left behind by their ancestors?

He had overestimated them...

Mo Hua shook his head, deeply disappointed in the Zhang Family.

Now that he knew the sealing Formation of the coffin and the construction for unlocking on the coffin nails, things would be much simpler.

Mo Hua thought for a moment and mused to himself:

"Since I can't steal the key, I might as well make one."

After all, the core was the Formation; as long as he understood Formations, everything else would naturally fall into place.

The only question was whether the material of the coffin nails also mattered, whether they also needed to be cast from bronze...

If that were the case, then there was no suitable Formation media at hand.

Mo Hua decided to first try with something else.

The coffin nails were, strictly speaking, a type of Evil Artifact.

Mo Hua did not understand Artifact Refining, much less refining Evil Artifacts, so making a coffin nail by himself was definitely impossible.

His only option was to "borrow."

In the midst of the Stone Palace, with so many coffins and coffin nails, it should be alright to borrow from any old coffin.

But there was a knack to "borrowing."

He couldn't borrow from an Iron Corpse's coffin.

Iron Corpses were sealed in iron coffins, which were rare. Borrowing a nail from an iron coffin meant it was easy to get caught and risk initiating a corpse transformation.

Therefore, he had no other choice but to borrow from an ordinary wooden coffin first.

Among the vast array of coffins within the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses, Mo Hua chose one that was ancient and worn.

There were seven coffin nails hammered into the wooden coffin.

Inside the coffin lay a Walking Corpse.

Using a Formation, Mo Hua first drained away the Evil Power of the Walking Corpse and dispelled its Corpse Qi. Then he drew a Wooden Prison Formation to temporarily seal its corpse so it wouldn't lose control if it transformed.

Then came the task of removing the nails.

The nails on an ordinary wooden coffin were iron and firmly hammered into the coffin lid.

Mo Hua selected one that wasn't much different in size and tried to pull it out with his hands but couldn't budge it.

That's when he remembered he was a Spiritual Cultivator, not a Body Cultivator; his strength was very weak.

Helplessly, Mo Hua had no choice but to call over the little zombie.

The little zombie pushed off the coffin lid, hopped and bounced over to Mo Hua, and effortlessly pulled out the iron nail from the wooden coffin according to Mo Hua's wishes.

Mo Hua nodded, dipped a brush lightly in ink, and drew the unlocking Bronze Lock Formation on the coffin nail.

Then he inserted the coffin nail into the hidden recess on the bronze coffin.

The coffin lid fluttered slightly but did not open.

Mo Hua observed for a moment.

He discovered the size of the iron nail wasn't entirely fit; a little bit protruded on the outside, but it seemed to work. However, because of the size mismatch, the Formation Patterns of the Bronze Lock Formation didn't align, so the coffin couldn't be opened.

Mo Hua removed the coffin nail, wiped off the Formation Patterns, adjusted slightly, and then redrew them.

This time, it indeed worked.

The bronze coffin gave a faint "creak" as though an internal lock had fallen off, initiating some mechanism. Simultaneously, the Formations under the coffin lid also matched and unsealed.

Mo Hua pushed the coffin lid and found it was still quite difficult, and somewhat exasperated, he had to call the little zombie over again for help.

The little zombie hopped over again and helped Mo Hua lift the coffin lid.

Underneath the lid was a bronze outer coffin.

It was the same scene Mo Hua had witnessed when he sneaked a peek at Lu Chengyun drawing the Spirit Pivot Evil Formation.

What was different this time were the Formations inside; they were darker in blood color and the lines were deeper.

Mo Hua studied the bronze outer coffin carefully.

He deduced each Formation on it, cogitated meticulously, and combined this with the Corpse Refinement techniques he had previously learned, forming a rough understanding in his mind.

The method to refine a "Corpse King" was indeed special.

The heart and corpse were separate.

Inside the bronze coffin was the heart of the Lu Family Old Ancestor.

While covered with a yellow cloth on the sacrificial altar was the corpse of the Lu Family Old Ancestor with the heart removed.

These two required different techniques.

One was refining, the other was a ritual.

The ritual needed an altar.

Refining, on the other hand, required a coffin, human blood, and a Formation.

Once the "ritual" and "refining" were complete, the Corpse King would be truly refined.

What Lu Chengyun did was inscribe the Spirit Pivot Evil Formation on the zombie's heart vessels.

He deepened the Formation repeatedly.

To deeply imprint this Formation into the heart vessels of the Lu Family Old Ancestor.

To have complete control over it.

Mo Hua stroked his chin, pondering:

"If Lu Chengyun can inscribe it, doesn't that mean I can too?"

"But if I do so, he will surely discover it..."

"Then should I overwrite his Formation?"

"Draw the same Formation Patterns that he did, except he uses human blood and drives them with Evil Power, and I'll use ink and drive them with Spiritual Power."

"Then cover his Formation, overwrite his Formation Patterns..."

However, doing so, even though the Formation Patterns remained the same, the essence of them would change.

It would shift from Evil Power to Spiritual Energy, which would be more subtle, but Lu Chengyun might still notice it if he was careful and vigilant...

Mo Hua frowned slightly.

Once Lu Chengyun discovered that someone had tampered with the bronze coffin, things would become complicated...

Suddenly, Mo Hua paused in thought.

He intended to fiddle with the inside of the bronze coffin.

But Zhang Quan had already tampered inside it.

His Divine Sense was strong, his concealment was powerful, he knew the Spiritual Pivot Formation, and he had a little zombie to open doors, all of which Lu Chengyun was completely unaware of.

If Lu Chengyun was to be suspicious, he would probably suspect Zhang Quan.

After pondering for a while, Mo Hua came up with a plan:

First, overwrite it and see how Lu Chengyun would react.

If he became suspicious, then stop.

If he wasn't suspicious, then continue...

To also add a layer of my control to the Corpse King!

Lu Chengyun's Spirit Pivot Evil Formation, my own Soul Pivot Ultimate Formation, and Zhang Quan's Corpse Controlling ancient bell.

Tripartite control over the corpse.

Even if ultimately the control wasn't in my hands, it wouldn't fall entirely into Lu Chengyun's either.

As long as he couldn't completely control the Corpse King, couldn't mobilize all the Iron Corpses at the same time, the overall strength of Corpse cultivation would be significantly diminished.

Mo Hua's eyes glinted as he started to write, surreptitiously overwriting Lu Chengyun's Formation Patterns...

Chapter 508: Little Yellow Sparrow (1)

The next day, at the hour of 2 a.m., Lu Chengyun returned to the Ten Thousand Corpses Sacrificial Altar, filled with coffins, to perform the Drawing Formation again.

Mo Hua, however, hid behind the altar, secretly watching him.

Lu Chengyun, as ever, opened a coffin, took up a Bone Pen, poured out Blood Ink, and began painting the Formation with blood. But as soon as the brush touched the surface, his brow furrowed.

He stared at the Formation for a long time, his frown deepening, and finally murmured,

"No ..."

"No ..."

"This Formation ... there's a problem ..."

A chill went down Mo Hua's spine.

He had indeed been discovered.

Lu Chengyun continued, still puzzled,

"Who altered my Formation?"

"Who has the ability to change the Formation I've drawn?"

"And who could slip into the Corpse Mine under my watch, sneak into the sacrificial altar, open the bronze coffin, and alter the Spiritual Pivot Evil Formation I drew, the first-class, twelve-pattern?"

Doubt flickered in Lu Chengyun's eyes.

Suddenly, he jolted with realization,

"Could there be someone in this altar?"

He quickly released his Divine Sense, scanning the surroundings.

Mo Hua shrank his little head, earnestly concealing his presence.

Lu Chengyun's Divine Sense swept over the Formation, the coffins, the altar, and even over him, finding nothing.

After scanning several times, Lu Chengyun finally began to relax.

"Am I being overly suspicious ..."

Lu Chengyun murmured with a frown.

Such a thing seemed almost inconceivable ...

If someone really could accomplish it, that person's Cultivation would surely be profound and their methods unfathomable.

Such a senior Cultivator wouldn't need to resort to such underhanded tactics to deal with him; if they confronted him openly, he wouldn't stand a chance ...

"The Formation ... Mo Hua?"

Lu Chengyun suddenly thought of Mo Hua.

In the entire Corpse Mine, only Mo Hua possessed skills in Formation next to his own.

Could it be Mo Hua who altered his Spiritual Pivot Evil Formation?

"No, he doesn't have the power,"

Lu Chengyun declared decisively.

The Spiritual Pivot Formation of the first class with twelve patterns requires a twelve-pattern Foundation Establishment Divine Sense.

Mo Hua, this small Cultivator, though strong in Divine Sense, is after all still in Qi Refinement, at most with ten patterns, perhaps not even that much.

Divine Sense is the foundation of a Formation Master.

Without twelve patterns in Divine Sense and without using evil methods or borrowing another's Divine Sense, he surely would not be able to draw out the Spiritual Pivot Formation.

And this little Cultivator, with an aura pure and flawless like uncarved jade, must not have cultivated Evil Skills nor ever drawn an Evil Formation.

Besides, it was impossible for him to have learned the Spiritual Pivot Formation.

This was the Ultimate Formation of the first class with twelve patterns, transcending rank. Lu himself had researched it for nearly a hundred years, and even with the help of Demon Gate techniques to lower the difficulty, he had only just managed to complete the Formation. Your journey continues on empire

This little brat didn't even have a Formation Diagram. How could he learn it, how could he draw it?

As for the Formation Patterns, he had indeed seen them ...

But that was only a fleeting glance at the Formation Diagram, and occasionally seeing Lu Chengyun painting the Formation a few times when nothing else demanded his attention.

If he could learn it that way, it would be an utter fantasy.

No matter how high his talent, it can't be this effortless ...

If he could learn just by looking a few times, then what was the point of his many years of study in Formations?

Lu Chengyun shook his head.

"It can't be him ..."

If not Mo Hua, then only one man was left ...

"Zhang Quan!"

Lu Chengyun's gaze became gradually sharper.

He looked again at the Formation on the bronze coffin, his thoughts stirring subtly.

The energy in the Formation had changed, the evil aura had faded.

But the patterns remained unchanged.

This indicated that it was very likely not the Formation that had been altered, but rather someone had used other means to diminish his control over the Corpse King, thereby weakening the Formation's efficacy and diluting the Evil Power ...

This was Corpse Refinement technique!

Among all the Corpse cultivators in the Corpse Mine, it was naturally Zhang Quan who was most skilled in Corpse Refinement.

Even this bronze coffin had been handed down from the ancestors of the Zhang Family.

Zhang Quan knew it better than him, and it would make sense for him to fiddle behind Lu's back, appearing to be quite reasonable.

"Zhang Quan ..."

Lu Chengyun's gaze turned cold as he silently said the name.

He was aware that Zhang Quan had ulterior motives.

Moreover, the two had very different ideas on how to use the Corpse King.

Zhang Quan had a narrow vision and limited understanding, just like other ordinary Corpse cultivators, only knowing to refine corpses and kill, kill and refine corpses, fixated on establishing a Demon Gate to "bring glory to the ancestors", blind to the true nature of this world.

Originally, Lu Chengyun hadn't bothered about it.

After all, the Corpse Refinement skills of the Zhang Family were still of great use to him.

But if Zhang Quan dared overstep the bounds and covet the Corpse King, messing up his grand scheme, then no one could blame him for the consequences ...

Lu Chengyun's smile turned sinister.

Behind the altar, Mo Hua heard Lu Chengyun say he "lacked the strength" and then listened to him speak Zhang Quan's name; a fox-like grin appeared on his face.

But Lu Chengyun was clearly still uneasy ...

The next day, he asked Mo Hua to adjust the Formation eye of the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses, and at the same time, he opened the bronze coffin and started painting the Formation.

Mo Hua, as usual, peeked stealthily into the bronze coffin.

His gaze was full of curiosity and confusion.

There was nothing else unusual.

Lu Chengyun frowned, then asked, "Little gentleman, what do you think of this Formation?"

Mo Hua nodded, "It's very profound!"

"Can you understand it?"

Mo Hua mumbled, "I can understand... a bit."

However, when saying this, he clearly seemed somewhat guilty.

He probably didn't understand anything but wanted to save face, so he pretended to know a little.

Lu Chengyun thought to himself.

Then Mo Hua appeared to remember something, innocently saying:

"Right, Lu Family Head, you said that once the Formation eye is painted, you would teach me this Formation. Can you teach me now?"

Mo Hua looked at Lu Chengyun with clear eyes.

Lu Chengyun's expression was slightly startled.

The look in Mo Hua's eyes was too pure...

So pure that even suspecting him made one feel guilty.

"This naive child really believes that I would teach him the Formation?"

Lu Chengyun sighed to himself before saying gently:

"You can't learn it now. Wait until your Divine Sense becomes stronger..."

"Oh."

Mo Hua felt somewhat disappointed and left, but he would occasionally look back, his gaze lingering reluctantly.

Seeing this, Lu Chengyun's suspicions were dispelled, and he firmly thought to himself:

"It must be Zhang Quan!"

The person who tampered with the bronze coffin had to be Zhang Quan!

Mo Hua, this little Cultivator, may be a bit clever, but his gaze is clear, and he's not scheming enough to play too many tricks.

The only person who could pull off such maneuvers under his watch was Zhang Quan!

Lu Chengyun's eyes were sharp, his mind inscrutable.

In a place he was not aware of, Mo Hua had his back to him, his silhouette seemingly disheartened, but the little face was secretly smiling...

...

In the following days, Lu Chengyun kept his composure, but his gaze towards Zhang Quan was tinged with a hidden chill.

Zhang Quan, feeling guilty, noticed none of it.

But all this was seen by the seemingly innocent Mo Hua.

...

One night, at the hour of 2 a.m.

In the desolate and silent Ten Thousand Corpses Sacrificial Altar.

The mural rippled open, revealing a door, and Zhang Quan tiptoed inside.

He looked around to ensure there was nobody in the altar before opening up the bronze coffin, cutting his hand with a knife, feeding the corpse with blood, walking backwards, chanting spells, and ringing the bell to summon the corpses...

This series of Corpse Controlling spells, he had been casting for several days now.

Inside the bronze coffin, the Corpse King's heartbeat grew more vigorous and powerful, filled with a might that struck fear and submissiveness in the other corpses.

After finishing the ritual, Zhang Quan's face was pale, his forehead starting to sweat.

This set of spells required more blood as it progressed, and the refining process became increasingly strenuous.

But if he could control the Corpse King, it would all be worth it.

Zhang Quan closed the coffin lid, sneered, and left the altar...

The eerie altar returned to dead silence.

A moment later, a figure slowly emerged from behind the altar, dressed in ornate clothes, his face gloomy.

It was Lu Chengyun.

He glanced at the mural before walking over to the bronze coffin, unsealing the lid, and inspecting the Formation on the bronze casket.

The strength of the Formation had indeed weakened.

At the same time, the heartbeat of the zombie grew slightly stronger.

Lu Chengyun's eyes were cold as he silently took out a Bone Pen, dipped it in human blood, and reinforced the Formation to suppress the power of the Corpse Controlling Bell.

After finishing, he sealed the coffin again.

Lu Chengyun sneered as well, then left the altar.

The altar became silent once more.

Not long after Lu Chengyun left, in less than the time it takes to drink a cup of tea, a small head peeked out from above the altar.

The praying mantis stalks the cicada, unaware of the oriole behind.

Mo Hua was the little oriole.

As Lu Chengyun hid behind the altar, watching Zhang Quan, he hid on the stone beam above Lu Chengyun's head, watching them both.

Now that both Zhang Quan and Lu Chengyun had left.

Mo Hua's gaze brightened slightly. He leaped down nimbly from the altar, then came before the bronze coffin and used his homemade coffin nail to unseal the Formation, opening the bronze coffin and then summoning a small zombie to help him push the lid off.

Underneath the coffin lid was the casket.

Atop the casket was the Formation Lu Chengyun had just reinforced.

Mo Hua then took out his ink and brush, overlaying his own Formation onto Lu Chengyun's Spiritual Pivot Evil Formation...

Zhang Quan was refining a corpse.

Lu Chengyun was Drawing Formation.

Mo Hua was overlaying a Formation.

This scene played out in turns in the altar.

Until more than half a month later, when the Corpse King was about to be refined and emerge from the coffin...

And after receiving a message from Mo Hua, the undercurrents in South Yue City had been turbulent for more than half a month, with a sense of trepidation and gravity as if a mountain storm were about to break...

Within the Minor Wilderness State Boundary.

It appeared to be clear skies and sunlight, but in an instant, a storm was about to hit.

Chapter 509: Undercurrent (1)

South Yue City, deep into the night.

In the residence of the Situ Family, there appeared an elderly man with white hair.

He sat at the table, his expression solemn; the tea on the table had cooled, yet he hadn't had the chance to take a single sip.

Situ Fang, with her eyebrows slightly furrowed, asked,

"Elder Wang, what did the clan say?"

The old man, known as Situ Wang, frowned and sighed,

"The clan can't spare any manpower..."

Situ Fang furrowed her brows and said, "Our Situ Family is, after all, a Third-Rank Clan; it's impossible that they can't even spare over ten Foundation Establishment cultivators. Could it be that the clan doesn't believe it?"

Elder Situ Wang nodded his head, "That's part of the reason."

He let out a sigh, "Eighty Iron Corpses, tens of thousands of Walking Corpses, this... it's preposterous..."

The entire Second-Grade Prefecture Boundary might not be able to muster the strength to combat such a force.

Situ Fang let out a small sigh.

She didn't quite believe it either, or rather, she didn't dare to.

But this news had been scouted by Mo Hua and was delivered by the siblings of the Bai Family; even if she didn't dare believe it, she also knew it was highly unlikely to be false.

Mo Hua's actions were always unexpected.

Though young, he was sometimes audaciously bold.

Yet, his actions were often well-calculated and thought-out.

Since knowing Mo Hua, the words he spoke and the actions he took were always reliable, and they shouldn't be false.

It's just that others might not believe...

Situ Wang said, "I heard that this news was scouted by a young cultivator?"

Situ Fang nodded her head.

"How old is he?"

There was a pause from Situ Fang before she responded in a low voice, "Thirteen..."

Situ Wang looked somewhat at a loss, helplessly saying, "Thirteen years old... Even if I believed it, the clan wouldn't... Thirteen years old..."

Situ Wang shook his head.

Cultivators have long lifespans.

Cultivators from clans are even more so wealthy in reserves and advantageous in conditions.

Generally, cultivators under the age of twenty all look quite young and are still considered children.

A thirteen-year-old child uncovering such a major incident, even Situ Wang was uncertain.

However, he and Situ Fang shared the same lineage, and he had watched her grow up since she was a child; knowing her character, he had made this trip personally to assess the situation.

Situ Fang had no choice but to say,

"Mo Hua is a First-Grade Formation Master."

Situ Wang was startled, "Who?"

"The young cultivator you mentioned."

Situ Wang's palm trembled, "Thirteen years old? A First-Grade Formation Master?"

Situ Fang nodded.

Situ Wang, having lost his Elder's composure, couldn't help but ask in a low voice, "Is that true?"

Situ Fang helplessly replied, "Would I really lie to you? If you don't believe me, you can ask Elder Jin."

Mo Hua was young, and his talents were too high, which easily attracted envy and hatred.

Situ Fang chose not to spread word about it widely; within the Situ Family, only Situ Fang and two Elders who had seen Mo Hua were aware of this.

Situ Wang appeared somewhat lost in thought, then muttered to himself,

"Thirteen years old, a First-Grade Formation Master... How on earth is that young cultivator's mind constructed..."

Situ Fang said,

"Now, his words should carry some weight, right..."

Situ Wang, with furrowed brows, pondered for a moment before he slightly nodded,

"If that is indeed the case, then we cannot regard him as any ordinary young cultivator. A First-Grade Formation Master, even in the Second-Grade Prefecture Boundary, is still a person of stature and wouldn't joke about such matters..."

Situ Fang's eyes brightened slightly, "Then Elder..."

But Situ Wang shook his head, "I can only do my best to argue for it, but whether the clan agrees or not, it's not for me to decide."

"Is it because of the Undead Calamity?" Situ Fang frowned and asked. Explore new worlds at empire

"Correct..." Situ Wang sighed, "This matter is too dangerous..."

"Iron Corpses so strong, and that many Walking Corpses, if they are manipulated to form a Corpse Tide, it would be extremely terrifying."

"Zombies are unlike ordinary cultivators..."

"Facing cultivators in battle, being injured is usually not a big concern; find some way to treat it and usually, it's okay."

"But fighting against zombies, once injured and bleeding, contaminated by Corpse Qi and the heart attacked by Corpse Poison, if it spreads, the consequences become completely uncontrollable..."

There was a deep horror in Situ Wang's eyes.

Situ Fang fell silent too.

"Moreover, there's another most important issue..."

Situ Wang looked at Situ Fang, hesitant to speak, but after some thought, he still spoke bluntly,

"This matter, for our Situ Family, holds no benefits."

Situ Fang's expression turned stagnant upon hearing this.

Situ Wang said in silence, "The Situ Family, generation after generation has been in charge, with ancestors starting from the Demon Suppressing Court of the Taoist Court, firm and upright in conduct, incorruptible..."

"But no matter what, a clan is still a clan, and its interest must come first..."

"This matter has few benefits."

Situ Wang paused, then added,

"At least, in the face of risk, this benefit is not significant..."

Truly exterminating the Corpse Mine and suppressing the thousands of zombies does indeed confer great merit.

But the cost and risk involved are manifold.

In the Corpse Tide commanded by the Corpse King and the Iron Corpses, the cultivators sent by the Situ Family could completely perish—it's a possibility.

The Situ Family cannot afford this risk.

"Then the Taoist Court..." Situ Fang frowned.

"The Taoist Court is the same," Situ Wang said, "Even if the Taoist Court is aware and believes it, after weighing the pros and cons, they also might not take significant action."

Situ Wang spoke gravely, "The Taoist Court is more complicated than our Situ Family, with the distribution of power, entanglement of interests, too convoluted to sort out..."

Seeing that Situ Fang didn't quite understand, Situ Wang clarified,

"In terms of principle, according to the Taoist Law, annihilating zombies and eliminating demons is obligatory."

"But practically speaking, this matter is fraught with difficulties."

Chapter 510: Undercurrents (2)

"To eradicate the Corpse Mine, we'll need the deployment of Taoist Soldiers and Spirit Stones."

"Who will send the Taoist Soldiers? Who will provide the Spirit Stones?"

"If Taoist Soldiers set out, they'll require logistics; should they die or get injured, compensations must be provided. And all the mobilization of manpower and resources before and after can't be done without Spirit Stones."

"Should there be heavy casualties, a huge responsibility must be assumed."

"Once the matter is successful, and credit is earned, suddenly many people will appear to share in the credit, even those unrelated will reach out, wanting a piece of the pie..."

"Taking huge risks, bearing great responsibility, paying a steep price to eradicate the Corpse Mine, and in the end, it's very likely the credit will go to someone else..."

"Who would be willing to do such a thing?"

Situ Wang sighed and said,

"Unless the Lu Family really committed a taboo, openly walking the path of Heretical Demons, enraging the Taoist Court enough to issue a decree for suppression, otherwise these Court Officials, both high and low, who are overstaffed and underworked, would never pick up this hot potato..."

Situ Fang sighed in disappointment.

Situ Wang looked at Situ Fang with a hint of pity.

Though Situ Fang's talent was not outstanding, she was the most righteous, most eager to learn, and had the strongest sense of responsibility among their disciples of this lineage.

Such a disciple was more worthwhile to nurture than those who had high talent but flawed characters.

Moreover, as they came from the same lineage and she being an elder, Situ Wang was not very keen on letting her take risks.

"The waters of South Yue City are too muddy; even if we could wade through them, there's no need to soil ourselves..."

Situ Wang pondered for a moment, then diplomatically said,

"Fang girl, if I were to have my way, you should take this opportunity to leave as well..."

His brows were deeply furrowed:

"Should the situation really deteriorate and turn urgent, this whole South Yue City could turn into a living hell. By then, no one can guarantee your safety..."

"You should also cherish your path of Tao Cultivation..."

Situ Fang was momentarily stunned, then gratefully said, "Thank you, Uncle Wang!"

But after thinking it over, she shook her head:

"I am a Supervisor of South Yue City. Although my cultivation isn't high, I have duties to perform, and I must do what's expected of me."

Situ Wang frowned, "But some tasks are impossible to carry out..."

"If it's truly impossible," said Situ Fang, "then I'll consider leaving."

Situ Wang fell silent for a while, then sighed,

"It must be so, then."

He took out a Jade Slip, feeling helpless,

"I'll write another letter back to our clan, to urge them to consider the bigger picture and send some more people here if they can, and to make some moves on the part of Taoist Soldiers Court too..."

"But how much help there will be, that can only be left to fate..."

Situ Fang was overjoyed and hurriedly bowed, "Thank you, Uncle!"

Seeing Situ Fang like this, Situ Wang felt both relieved and emotional, but upon thinking of the Corpse Mine, his gaze filled with concern, and his expression was far from optimistic.

Eighty Iron Corpses, tens of thousands of Walking Corpses, ah...

A single misstep could turn into a catastrophe for the entire state boundary...

Situ Wang shook his head and sighed, "Difficult, indeed..."

...

In South Yue City, South Yue Sect, within an incense-filled tea room,

The Sect Leader of South Yue Sect was in confidential conversation with Elder Su.

The Sect Leader of South Yue Sect, named Zhao, was in the mid-stage of Foundation Establishment, over two hundred eighty years old, having reigned over the South Yue Sect for one hundred and ten years, and he held considerable prestige within the Sect.

"Have you heard about the Lu Family's matter?"

After they finished their tea, Sect Master Zhao came straight to the point.

Elder Su frowned, "Which matter is the Sect Leader referring to?"

"The matter of the mine." Sect Master Zhao said.

Elder Su pondered for a moment, then slowly said,

"I've only heard some rumors..."

Sect Master Zhao drank his tea, staying silent.

Seeing that he could not discern anything from Sect Master Zhao's face, Elder Su weighed his words and asked,

"Does the Lu Family... really have problems?"

Sect Master Zhao glanced at him and spoke indifferently,

"Does the Lu Family have no issues, being able to occupy so many mines, manage to open up Jinhua Street, earn so many Spirit Stones, and live a life of luxury and indulgence?"

"Without engaging in production but making a huge profit, it's likely there are issues in nine out of ten cases."

Elder Su's expression grew solemn, "What issues could the Lu Family have?"

Sect Master Zhao shook his head slightly, "It's just some idle rumors without any solid information, I shouldn't speak carelessly."

He looked at Elder Su and continued,

"I know you have quite a relationship with Lu Chengyun, and I called you here to entrust you with some matters."

Elder Su said respectfully,

"Please, Sect Master, give me your instruction!"

Sect Master Zhao nodded slightly, then lowered his voice and said,

"Our South Yue Sect, from top to bottom, has good relations with the Lu Family, is related by interests, and has received no small amount of Spirit Stones from them..."

Elder Su frowned and asked,

"Does the Sect Master mean that, because we've received Spirit Stones from the Lu Family, we should form an alliance with them?"

Sect Master Zhao shook his head, his voice carrying significant meaning,

"What I mean is, even though we have accepted the Lu Family's Spirit Stones, we must not be single-minded and stand on the same boat with the Lu Family..."

Elder Su was taken aback, "Isn't that somewhat... dishonorable?" Continue reading at empire

Sect Master Zhao shook his head, "Sect interests come before honor."

"But aren't the Spirit Stones from the Lu Family also interests?"

Sect Master Zhao explained,

"Spirit Stones are indeed interests, but they are only short-term profits. The survival and continuation of the Sect are the fundamental interests."

"The abundance of Spirit Stones can indeed bring temporary prosperity."

"But if we compromise our moral and ethical stances on good and evil for Spirit Stones and it affects the life and death of our Sect, we must decisively forgo the lesser profits for the greater good!"

Elder Su pondered deeply, struck by the realization.

Sect Master Zhao sighed,

"Many Cultivators don't understand this principle."

"That's why in South Yue City, sects and families rise and fall, but only our South Yue City has survived for hundreds of years."

"The Lu Family won't last as long as we have."

Sect Master Zhao looked at Elder Su and reminded him,

"Speak of interests when it's time to discuss interests, and uphold principles when it's time to talk about principles."

"Do not sacrifice principles for profits, or it will lead to great disaster!"

Elder Su nodded solemnly, "Sect Master, I have taken it to heart."

Sect Master Zhao breathed a sigh of relief and exclaimed with satisfaction,

"I'm past my prime, and the position of Sect Master will have to be passed on sooner or later. You might not be as cunning as others, but you are loyal and proficient in Formations. With some honing, perhaps the position of Sect Master of our South Yue Sect will be yours one day..."

Elder Su never expected to hear such words, and couldn't help asking,

"Sect Master, are you... just leading me on?"

Sect Master Zhao glared at him, "Do you think I make such gestures to just anyone? I have high hopes for you!"

Elder Su quickly bowed and said,

"Yes, yes!"

Afterward, Sect Master Zhao gave him a few more instructions.

Before leaving, Elder Su was still somewhat puzzled,

"Sect Master, regarding the matter with the Lu Family, what exactly should our South Yue Sect do?"

Falling out with the Lu Family would be unwise.

Acting in complete collusion with the Lu Family was not very secure either.

Sect Master Zhao then gave specific advice,

"If the Lu Family doesn't cause a stir, we'll pretend as if nothing happened, continue to take the Spirit Stones, doing business as usual when it's time to discuss interests."

"But if the Lu Family does stir trouble, we must distinguish ourselves clearly from them, and even be prepared to suppress them at all costs. This is adhering to principles when it's time to talk about principles..."

Elder Su finally understood.

He was truly worthy of being the Sect Master; he was very flexible in handling interests and principles.