

The Quest 511

Chapter 511: Calculated (1)

"I have already issued an order that, within one month, disciples and elders of our sect are forbidden to have dealings with the Lu Family. As for what to do afterward, we'll base our decision on how the situation develops..."

Sect Master Zhao's expression was somber, and then he glanced at Elder Su:

"You also shouldn't interact too much with Lu Chengyun. He's too cunning for you to handle..."

After Sect Master Zhao finished speaking, he promptly offered tea to see the guest off.

Elder Su left the tea room with a slight sigh.

In the past, he had had a favorable impression of Lu Chengyun. Both being Formation Masters, they got along well, often drinking tea together, discussing the Tao, and even enjoying pleasure quarters together.

However, he never imagined that beneath Lu Chengyun's genteel appearance lay such a heart of darkness...

Indeed, it is true that one can know someone's face but not their heart.

Feeling a pang of regret, Elder Su thought of Mo Hua, and a sense of regret washed over him.

If he had known this would happen, he would not have told Lu Chengyun all of Mo Hua's information and gotten himself into Lu Chengyun's schemes...

The more Elder Su thought about it, the more regretful he became, causing him to look up towards the mines with a worried expression, muttering to himself:

"I wonder if Mr. Little Mo will be alright..."

"And whether we'll ever be able to have tea together again..."

Elder Su sighed.

...

"Little Junior Brother won't be in trouble, will he..."

Bai Zisheng sat under the big tree in the courtyard, frowning, filled with concern.

"He hasn't been back for a long time. I've been so worried recently that I've lost my appetite."

Bai Zixi looked at him helplessly:

"You just find the meals unpalatable and want him to come back to cook, don't you..."

Bai Zisheng responded with a guilty conscience, "I'm worried about his safety. The cooking is secondary!"

Bai Zixi glanced at him indifferently and ignored him.

After a moment's thought, Bai Zisheng added:

"Why don't we just barge in and rescue Little Junior Brother?"

"We don't have enough manpower," Bai Zixi shook her head.

"How many people do we have now?" Bai Zisheng asked curiously.

Bai Zixi pondered for a moment, her beautiful eyes slightly blinking, and then replied:

"Not counting the Situ Family and the Taoist Court, we only have five at the Foundation Establishment level and sixty in Qi Refinement."

Bai Zisheng was somewhat disappointed, "That's all... Are they people from our Bai Family?"

"No, they were hired by Aunt Xue with Flower Spirit Stones," Bai Zixi said.

"What about the people from our Bai Family?"

Bai Zixi looked at him with irritation, "Where would we find people from the Bai Family? We're in Li State, and the Bai Family is so far away. Given the short time, how could they possibly make it here?"

Bai Zisheng frowned, "But with so few people, we're no match for the Lu Family. How are we going to rescue Mo Hua?"

Her gaze cool and contemplative, Bai Zixi said after some thought:

"We don't need to rescue him directly. As long as we make a move, Little Junior Brother should be able to find a chance to escape on his own."

Bai Zisheng thought about it and nodded, "That's true."

His Little Junior Brother was very clever and full of tricks. Although lacking somewhat in cultivation, he had many bizarre methods at his disposal.

He could use the Concealment Technique and the Water Passing Step.

With a strong Divine Sense and expertise in formations.

Ordinary cultivators wouldn't be able to detect him, and ordinary formations couldn't hold him.

As long as there was an opportunity, he would definitely be able to slip away...

Bai Zisheng breathed a little easier, muttering to himself:

"He should be fine..."

Bai Zixi nodded slightly, her brow furrowed.

The smiling face of Mo Hua emerged in her mind.

She suddenly felt uneasy, her delicate and fair hand unconsciously fiddling with the Little Tiger in her hand.

...

Inside the bamboo room, Old Kui spoke in a wooden voice:

"There aren't enough people, right?"

Mr. Zhuang nodded, "Not enough."

Curious, Old Kui inquired, "Aren't you worried?"

"Worried about what?"

With a dry voice, Old Kui said:

"With insufficient manpower, how will you deal with the Lu Family, how will you resist the Corpse Tide? You don't really expect the kid Mo Hua to solve all of this on his own, do you?"

"That's not possible," Mr. Zhuang said.

Mr. Zhuang looked into the distance, slowly adding:

"Sometimes human efforts reach their limits; great undertakings in this world are not the work of one person alone. Many things also cannot be resolved by a single individual..."

"Behind every hero stand many unsung individuals."

Mr. Zhuang's expression was reflective.

Old Kui furrowed his brow, "Say something useful."

With a click of his tongue, Mr. Zhuang was somewhat speechless:

"Can't you let me finish my reflections?"

Old Kui said, "You've repeated them too many times; my ears have calluses."

Disappointed, Mr. Zhuang "criticized":

"Can't you learn from Mo? He listens very carefully when I speak these words to him!"

Old Kui said in silence: "He is your disciple and needs to show you respect. I don't."

"Fine," Mr. Zhuang said helplessly, sighing.

Old Kui, wooden in expression, asked, "So, what exactly do you plan to do?"

This time Mr. Zhuang spoke candidly:

"If we don't have enough people, I'll call for some help."

Old Kui showed a surprised look, "You will call?"

Mr. Zhuang nodded.

With a complex expression, Old Kui said quietly, "A loner like you still has people willing to help you?"

Mr. Zhuang, displeased, retorted, "Why am I a loner? I have disciples now, and not just one but three!"

Old Kui acted as if he hadn't heard, his brow furrowed as he said:

"Who are you asking for help?"

Mr. Zhuang gave a mysterious smile.

He took out an ancient Copper Coin and tossed it gently into the air. The coin tumbled, stirring the qi, and finally descended slowly, returning to the palm of his fair, slender hand.

The Copper Coin reversed, and the Heavenly secret shifted.

A trace of qi, almost imperceptible, tugged at causality, rippling outwards.

Old Kui was stunned, then his gaze gradually cleared...

...

Meanwhile, to the west of Minor Wilderness State Boundary.

In a remote Immortal City, three cultivators were resting in an inn.

An emaciated elder, a middle-aged cultivator, and a young man in white.

In front of them lay a simple spread of food and drink.

But none of the three had much appetite.

The young man in white silently ate the unappetizing meal, the middle-aged cultivator drank to satisfy his hunger, and the emaciated elder rested with his eyes closed.

After three rounds of drinks, the emaciated elder suddenly opened his eyes.

Feeling a tremor in his heart, he quickly took out the Three Talents Divination Copper Coin, shook it for a divination, and after calculating once, his eyes revealed shock.

The young man in white looked puzzled by this.

The middle-aged cultivator asked, "What's wrong?"

The emaciated elder seemed dazed as he murmured, "I've actually... pinpointed that person's location..."

The middle-aged cultivator became excited, crushed the wine cup in his hand, and stared as he asked:

"Really?"

The emaciated elder still found it hard to believe but nodded and said:

"Yes! With the Three Talents Divination Copper Coin... the divination sign is clear, there's no mistake."

"But..." the emaciated elder was still somewhat puzzled, muttering to himself:

"How did I manage to calculate it? How could I calculate it? How did I come to calculate it... I... I don't have such ability..."

The middle-aged cultivator took it for granted as he said:

"Even the wisest can overlook something. We've been thieves for a thousand days, and that person has been guarding against thieves for a thousand days; no matter how meticulous, there's always a moment of negligence, exposing a flaw for you to calculate once, that's normal..."

A gleam of astuteness flashed in the middle-aged cultivator's eyes, "We must seize this opportunity!"

He threw two Spirit Stones onto the table, then immediately stood up, "There's no time to lose, let's set out now."

The emaciated elder nodded, but was still somewhat doubtful of himself.

The young man in white, however, was invigorated, with longing in his eyes as he thought of the person he might soon meet.

The three set off immediately, following the lead of the divination signs, heading eastward from the Minor Wilderness State Boundary.

In just a few days, the trio arrived at the outskirts of South Yue City.

The middle-aged cultivator asked, "Is this the place?"

The emaciated elder nodded, "According to the divination signs, yes."

The middle-aged cultivator fell silent for a moment, then asked, "What do you think?"

The emaciated elder pondered for a moment, then said, "Let's enter the city first to see what's going on."

"Won't this alarm our quarry?" the middle-aged cultivator was somewhat concerned.

The emaciated elder sneered, "What are you thinking? By the time you thought of coming here, that person might have already known. Our being here is just to try our luck, to see if there are any clues, to see if that person wants to meet us..."

The middle-aged cultivator looked astonished and couldn't help muttering:

"Is it really that mystical?"

The emaciated elder shook his head with a look that said "you cannot discuss the ice with a summer insect," and then he looked at the young man in white and warned:

"Young master, remember what I told you: you can look, but speak little and do less. The causality here is too great, and we cannot afford to provoke it."

The young man in white's expression turned solemn, and he nodded his head.

The three entered South Yue City, settled down in an inn, and did some inquiring.

After their inquiries, the trio gathered again, all wearing puzzled expressions.

"Why are there so many familiar faces?"

"Xie family from Kun State, Tu Family from Li State, Yuan Family from Qian State..."

"Hidden Taoist Sect, Return Sword Sect, Ten Thousand Formation Mountain..."

"Did they all calculate it?" the middle-aged cultivator frowned.

The emaciated elder thought for a moment, then suddenly realized:

"It turns out it's not just me who calculated it, but everyone did, or rather, that person let us all calculate it..."

The emaciated elder suddenly felt a lot more at ease.

In matters of Heavenly secret Calculation, it's not bad to be mediocre; it's unexpected complications that are feared.

Being mediocre at most means failing to calculate anything, and that's no big deal.

What's really feared is an accident:

If you suddenly can't calculate something you normally could, or if you suddenly manage to calculate something you normally couldn't.

That's when trouble might become serious...

If someone interferes with the Heavenly secret or there's a shocking change.

Knowing his own limits, the emaciated elder now saw that everyone was present and had also calculated, showing that his skill level had not changed, was just as before, comfortably "mediocre."

The heavy weight on the emaciated elder's heart was finally lifted.

Then he began to wonder again:

"That person, elusive as a dragon, why would suddenly reveal this bit of trace and entice everyone here? What's the purpose?"

Not only was the emaciated elder curious, but all the cultivators who had converged on South Yue City shared this doubt.

But despite their long search, they still found nothing.

Not understanding, the emaciated elder relaxed his Divine Sense, scanning South Yue City.

There was nothing unusual about South Yue City.

He looked again at the mines outside the city.

Still, he found nothing.

"Impossible..."

Not giving up, the emaciated elder set up the Three Talents Divination Copper Coin and cast a divination. This time, he indeed sensed something fishy.

The elder pondered for a moment, then cast a spell, blue light gathering in his eyes as he stripped away the outer appearance and glanced once more toward the mine outside the city.

This look turned his face pale, his heart filled with dread, as he cried out:

"A sky-high surge of Corpse Qi!"

"Damn, how many zombies must there be?!"

Chapter 512: Birthing Evil (1)

In South Yue City, various clans and sect cultivators related to the Heaven Shu Pavilion gathered, each with their means and powers.

It wasn't only the gaunt old man who could see this.

Above the mine, corpse qi pervaded the air.

Within it, countless types of corpses were bred.

Although those present were from prominent powers and had seen much of the world, they all inhaled sharply in the face of the soaring corpse qi.

With the Taoist Court united, the Demon Path gradually declined.

Where today could one find such intense corpse qi, let alone so many zombies?

For a time, everyone was frightened and appalled.

"Audacious to the extreme!"

"Who is refining corpses?"

"... How many people have been killed?"

"Defying the Taoist Court, disregarding Taoist Law, this is outrageous!"

"... Which Demon Sect's handiwork is this?"

...

The crowd was abuzz with discussion, and eventually, someone asked:

"What should we do?"

At this question, everyone fell somewhat silent.

A cultivator said, "With an evil demon present, we cannot sit idly by. We must annihilate it!"

"There are too many..."

"We can't handle this..."

"Don't forget our main task. We came here not to meddle in unnecessary matters."

"How can this be called meddling in unnecessary matters?"

"Exterminating demons and protecting the way is just and righteous!"

"Hmph, putting on a righteous appearance, who are you trying to impress..."

"You motherfucker..."

Voices of argument rose within the inn.

But it remained within the inn only.

The entire Nanyue Inn had been booked by these cultivators, who set up measures to conceal sight and sound, keeping outsiders away. If one wasn't of their ilk, they couldn't enter this inn.

After a long dispute, the gaunt old man, who practiced Three Talents Divination with Copper Coins, suddenly frowned and slowly asked:

"Do you know where that person is?"

There was a moment of silence among the crowd, and then they all shook their heads.

The gaunt old man continued:

"He let us calculate his location, drawing us here, but once here, his trace is nowhere found. Instead, we encounter a mountain permeated with corpse qi. Do you think this is a coincidence?"

"What are you implying?"

The gaunt old man said, "Perhaps it is because of this Corpse Mountain that he led us here."

Everyone exchanged glances, and someone else spoke:

"And then what?"

"Did he have a moment of compassion, hoping we would lend a hand?"

"No, he's dragging us here to do the heavy lifting..."

"Or perhaps, is it a test for us? Whoever can solve this problem, he'll meet with them?"

"What are you thinking?"

"Our intentions aren't pure... he is not some benevolent old man bestowing opportunities upon others."

"Indeed... That person is arrogant, a genius with exceptional talents, thinking of no one as his equal. Why would he play such a boring game with us?"

"Then what do you suggest we do?"

The crowd looked at each other, each with their own ulterior motives, and remained silent.

They eventually dispersed unhappily, leaving the matter unresolved.

After the gaunt old man and two others returned to their room, they set up a Sound Isolation Formation and began a secret discussion.

The middle-aged cultivator said, "The corpse qi is too intense, and in a short while, it is likely to evolve into a Corpse Tide. This South Yue City is no place to linger."

The gaunt old man asked, "What do you mean?"

"What else could I mean? Let's hurry and leave. If we don't go now and get caught in the Corpse Tide, we might not be able to get out."

The middle-aged cultivator's tone was slightly heavy, "Even without the Corpse Tide, anyone who can deceive the heavens and refine so many zombies with these methods is not someone easy to contend with."

"What good does this thankless task bring us? Why should we wade into these muddy waters?"

The gaunt old man was silent.

The middle-aged cultivator asked in surprise, "You don't plan to stay, do you?"

The gaunt old man's brows were tightly knit, and he nodded slightly.

The middle-aged cultivator clicked his tongue and turned to ask the white-clothed youth, "What about you, young master?"

The white-clothed youth nodded and said:

"With the Corpse Tide wreaking havoc and the lives of sentient beings at stake, I also wish to stay and offer whatever help I can."

Such youthful idealism and fiery words gave him a bit of a headache.

But if he were to leave alone... without the old man's Three Talents Divination with Copper Coins, he would be like a headless fly, bumping around aimlessly.

The middle-aged cultivator, somewhat unwillingly, asked the old man:

"Do you really want to stay?"

The gaunt old man nodded, as if pondering something serious, and after a moment, he slowly said:

"I... have a premonition..."

The middle-aged cultivator was taken aback, "What premonition?"

The gaunt old man took a deep breath, his gaze uncertain:

"These days, I occasionally feel a sense of dread."

"It seems that there is a great terror ahead, extremely dangerous, with life and death uncertain."

"Yet, if we can suppress the Corpse Mine and save this city, or even the cultivators in this prefecture border, perhaps we can establish a good karmic connection. In a future encounter with life-and-death adversity, there might be a glimmer of hope for survival..."

The middle-aged cultivator furrowed his brows.

He felt nothing, and naturally, he believed in nothing.

But he also knew the saying: Heed others' advice, and you'll have enough to eat.

In the Cultivation World, cultivators who live to an old age must trust even the most ethereal of premonitions.

"Fine, I'll stay too, but let me make it clear: the moment things look bad, I'm out of here."

The middle-aged cultivator said resignedly.

The gaunt old man nodded, the white-clothed youth breathed a sigh of relief and smiled faintly.

The next day, there were fewer people in the inn.

Some had left South Yue City, unable to find any clues about Mr. Zhuang, and went elsewhere to search.

Some, concerned about the outbreak of the Corpse Tide and unable to fend for themselves, left without a word.

But there were also those who stayed.

Some, like the gaunt old man, had a vague premonition of a thread of karma and mystery emanating from the Corpse Mine.

There were also those who had no premonitions but were simply of upright character and wished to eliminate the zombies, hoping to do something for the local cultivators.

The crowd discussed how to suppress the Corpse Mine.

However, with countless zombies inside the mine, dealing with it was extremely tricky.

"With just us cultivators, I'm afraid it won't do."

"We need to write a letter, to call for reinforcements from our clan or sect."

"It will take some time..."

"But there's no other way, we can't just rush in unprepared like a brash young man and seek death..."

"We know nothing about the situation inside the Corpse Mine."

"How many Iron Corpses, how many Walking Corpses, are there any other special zombies, and who is refining them? Are the local Tao Cultivation forces involved?"

"Don't even think about it, there must be local forces involved. The construction of a Corpse Mine requires a lot of manpower and material resources. Without the support of local forces, it can't be built."

"The Lu Family, perhaps..."

"I think so too."

"Any evidence?"

"Just a hunch, you can tell at a glance..."

"When the mighty dragon doesn't suppress the local snake, then we're in trouble."

A young cultivator said proudly:

"It's a pity that this place is only a Second-Grade Prefecture Border. The Heavenly Dao limits us; Golden Cores cannot act. Otherwise, I would have my father come over and flatten this mountain with one sword!"

"Alright, alright, we know your father is a Golden Core..."

"Even a Golden Core coming over wouldn't be able to flatten it with one sword..."

"Even if it were flattened, these zombies wouldn't be exterminated in a short time. Once the zombies go out of control and invade South Yue City, then all the cultivators in the city would turn into zombies, resulting in an even bigger problem..."

"Young man, don't be too hot-tempered."

"To solve problems, we can't do without military force, but relying solely on military force won't do either..."

The young cultivator sat down sullenly.

"So what do we do?" someone else asked.

After a moment of contemplation, someone slowly said, "Taoist Court?"

"To request the mobilization of Taoist Soldiers?"

"That might be a solution..."

"Who has connections to the Taoist Soldiers Court?"

"There are a few uncles in my family who hold positions within the Taoist Soldiers Court..."

An elder shook his head, "Forget it, the Taoist Court won't send Taoist Soldiers. Even if they do, how many can they send?"

"The risk is too high, the cost too great."

"Why would that be? Eliminating demons and purging evil is the fundamental principle of the Taoist Law, as well as the responsibility of the Taoist Court!"

"That's what is said..."

"Don't oversimplify the matter."

"So much manpower and material resources can't just be mobilized at will."

"Exactly, if you count everything from top to bottom, with all that gets skimmed off each layer, the actual cost could be even greater."

"You shouldn't say such things..."

"The Taoist Court has its own difficulties..."

"What difficulties? The kind that come from demanding bribes and kickbacks?"

"Don't be snide..."

"Your mother's..."

As the people talked, the conversation turned heated.

"Alright, alright," an elder with a white beard and high seniority slowly said, "Let's talk about the important matters."

The argument subsided.

After a moment of silence in the room, someone else said:

"Why don't our families jointly submit a petition to the Taoist Court, clearly stating the pros and cons, bringing the matter into the open, so that the Taoist Court cannot ignore it..."

The crowd nodded slightly in agreement.

At that moment, the gaunt old man from the group suddenly stood up, his hands clutching a Copper Coin for divination, his face pale.

The cultivators looked at each other, some puzzled.

The white-bearded elder frowned and asked, "Brother Wen, what has happened?"

The gaunt old man's expression was panicky, his voice trembling as he said:

"Just now, I had a moment of inspiration and cast a divination with the Copper Coin..."

"The divination revealed..."

"It revealed... the future scene of the mine."

Thinking of that vision, the gaunt old man was still somewhat shaken:

"The living mixed with the dead, the boundaries between life and death indistinguishable, the living like corpses, corpses like the living, and reigning above them, a Corpse King with dark gold blood in its eyes, not subject to the control of any man or corpse..."

Upon hearing this, the white-bearded elder's face turned pale.

The other cultivators, however, were somewhat at a loss, "What of it?"

"It means," the gaunt old man said with a look of fear, slowly:

"That within this Corpse Mine, a Corpse King has been refined. If not suppressed and left unchecked, it will turn into a disaster within a hundred years. This Corpse King will become... a Corpse Sin!"

"Which is to say, this Corpse Mine is actually nurturing a Taoist Demon!"

At these words, all the cultivators were stricken with fear.

"Taoist Demon!"

This was a term only seen in the Tao Cultivation Canon, signifying a disaster that human power could hardly resist.

Even the clans or sects with a thousand years of heritage had records of being destroyed by a Taoist Demon...

Nurturing a Taoist Demon?

The voice of the white-bearded elder trembled involuntarily, "Is this... true?"

The gaunt old man's heart throbbed, "The divination is so..."

After a pause, he added, "I couldn't have calculated such a thing with my own abilities..."

The implication was that someone else had made him calculate it or, rather, had conveyed it through his divination to everyone...

Who that person was, everyone had a clear idea.

The white-bearded elder fell silent for a moment, his face stern as he said:

"Report this matter to the Heaven Shu Pavilion, request the Pavilion Elders to calculate."

"At the same time, also petition the Taoist Court, to request support from the Taoist Soldiers..."

"If it's true as said, that within the Corpse Mine, a Taoist Demon is being nurtured, then we must mobilize all the cultivators we can, at all costs, to suppress the Corpse Mine, slay the Corpse King, and eradicate this Taoist Demon from its inception, leaving no future troubles!"

Chapter 513: Refining (1)

Time was of the essence. Without delay, everyone sent out messages to report the matter of the "Taoist Demon".

The news set off a thousand ripples. Not only were various clans and sects shocked, but the Taoist Court was also shaken.

Within the Heaven Shu Pavilion.

The Pavilion Elder watched the celestial observatory, deducing in his mind, before slowly nodding and saying,

"It's a sign of the Taoist Demon..."

He took out a Jade Slip, inscribed a few patterns, and then instructed a disciple, "Give this to the Taoist Soldiers Court."

The disciple respectfully took it, sealed it in a secret box, and without delay, promptly delivered it to the Taoist Soldiers Court.

The Taoist Soldiers Court urgently deliberated and then issued a mobilization order:

From Li State, the boundary of Minor Wilderness State, as well as the nearby Black Mountain State Boundary, Li Mountain State Boundary, and Great Wilderness State boundary, to the borderlands of the barbaric territory, summon ten Foundation Establishment leaders and two thousand first-assessment Taoist soldiers.

They were to march day and night to South Yue City in the boundary of Minor Wilderness State to suppress the Corpse Mine and quell the undead menace. Any who obstructed their path were to be executed without mercy!

Meanwhile, the Central Tao Court also sent out a summons:

Within a five-hundred-mile radius of Minor Wilderness State Boundary, any power acknowledged and assessed by the Taoist Court was to deploy at least one Foundation Building Cultivator to South Yue City to aid in the fight, to flatten the Corpse Mine, and to exterminate the Corpse King.

After the matter was settled, rewards would be distributed according to merit.

Should anyone disobey the command, their clan or sect would be demoted in rank, and they would be ineligible for promotion for a hundred years...

With the order released, various powers were stirred, and cultivators moved about in alarm.

The momentum of an impending torrential downpour was gathering over South Yue City...

At the high pavilions of the Heaven Shu Pavilion,

The Pavilion Elder stood alone, his gaze deep as he looked up at the sky. After a long while, he murmured softly,

"Gui Tao's people, huh..."

In his eyes, there was a hint of surprise.

"To actually rear a Taoist Demon... within a hundred years... another great demon will arise..."

"But... is the Taoist Demon so easy to rear?"

"Is it the problem of Gui Tao's people or has the Heavenly Dao... developed a problem...?"

The Pavilion Elder silently gazed at the sky.

Yet in the sky, where winds surged and clouds roiled, and within the daylight, no one could discern the mysteries secreted away; under the blazing sun, not a single sign could be seen.

The frown on the Pavilion Elder's brow only grew deeper.

...

Outside, the situation was rapidly changing, with undercurrents flowing in secret among various powers.

Within the Corpse Mine, however, it was business as usual.

Each evening, Zhang Quan would still ring his bell for corpse refinement, Lu Chengyun continued his Formation Painting, and Mo Hua shared the same routine, tracing over Lu Chengyun's Formation Patterns.

Within the bronze coffin, the Corpse Qi grew denser, its presence more imposing.

But within it, the triple layers of control slowly intensified...

Until three days later, the Corpse King was about to be refined to completion.

Within the Ten Thousand Corpses Sacrificial Altar, Zhang Quan could hardly contain his glee, and he burst into wild laughter, saying,

"Soon after the Corpse King awakens and comes under my control! The entire Minor Wilderness State Boundary will be littered with floating corpses, becoming a true Minor 'Corpse' Wilderness; and I, Zhang Quan, will become the old ancestor of the Corpse Path of this state boundary!"

"Lu Brother, Lu Chengyun!"

"I will make you realize who the real short-sighted one is—it's you!"

After laughing, Zhang Quan left.

Once Zhang Quan had gone, Lu Chengyun made his appearance.

With a calm expression, he reinforced the Spiritual Pivot Evil Formation and, looking in the direction Zhang Quan had left, sneered,

"Playing tricks under my nose? Courting death!"

After sneering, Lu Chengyun, too, departed.

The last to show himself was Mo Hua, with his big eyes twinkling.

He smoothly opened the coffin, drew the formation, used the genuine Spiritual Pivot Formation to suppress Lu Chengyun's Evil Formation and increase his own control over the Corpse King.

After finishing his work, Mo Hua's young face broke into a mischievous grin as he exclaimed playfully,

"Let's see who this big dumpling will listen to once it's refined!"

Mo Hua earnestly completed the Formation Drawing, meticulously sealed the coffin, and tiptoed away from the Ten Thousand Corpses Sacrificial Altar.

After leaving the altar, Mo Hua pondered for a moment and then, using Little Tiger, sent a note to his Junior Brother and Sisters.

The note read:

"In three days, on the fifteenth of July, the Corpse King will be refined, and the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses will commence."

Mo Hua placed the note on Little Tiger.

Obeying the command, Little Tiger "huffed and puffed" as it climbed upward.

In his heart, Mo Hua harbored some worries.

With so many zombies within the Corpse Mine, he didn't know how many people his Junior Brother, Sisters, and Sister Situ had mobilized.

If there weren't enough people, trouble was sure to follow.

They wouldn't be able to control Lu Chengyun, subdue the zombies or suppress the Corpse Mine, and if an uprising occurred, the consequences would be unimaginable.

But after considering every angle, Mo Hua also felt certain there wouldn't be enough people.

Their current strength was no match for Lu Chengyun.

He couldn't think of any other place to summon more cultivators from...

"Forget it, it's out of my hands now..."

Mo Hua sighed inwardly.

He had done all that he could.

What remained were matters that he, a mere Qi Refinement cultivator, had no power to change.

All he could do was to make the best effort possible and leave the rest to fate.

The most important thing now was to find a way to escape.

Mo Hua had already planned ahead:

"As soon as someone attacks the Corpse Mine and the two sides clash, causing chaos, I'll find a way to slip away!"

At that time, Lu Chengyun was too preoccupied with the formidable enemy at hand to care about me.

Hiding myself and dismantling his Formation, I'd be able to escape smoothly.

As for the Contemplation Map...

I'll see if there's a chance, but if not, so be it.

The Contemplation Map is truly a valuable item, and I've always been thinking about Zhang Quan's ancestor depicted in it.

But life is more important; I can't risk it all for a mere Contemplation Map anymore.

In this mine, with so many Zombies and the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses harboring dozens of Iron Corpses, Zhang Quan glaring at me like a tiger stalking its prey, and Lu Chengyun harboring ill intentions...

It's better to be a coward when faced with danger at every turn.

Mo Hua nodded to himself.

After escaping, I'll make a long-term plan...

I'll slip out first, then find someone to help, and with backup, I'll sneak back in. Secretly controlling the Corpse King, maybe I can "ambush" Lu Chengyun.

Thinking it through and finding no flaws, he finally felt at ease.

But what Mo Hua didn't anticipate was that things would still go awry.

And this surprise came unexpectedly...

The next day, he was still hiding behind the sacrificial altar.

Zhang Quan was still ringing his bell to control corpses.

However, after ringing the bell, Zhang Quan spat out a mouthful of fresh blood, his pale face turning instantly ghastly white, yet he kept laughing as he chanted:

"Success! Success!"

Mo Hua didn't quite understand.

"What's successful? Why is Zhang Quan so ecstatic?"

Next, Zhang Quan walked straight to the front of the altar and suddenly pulled off the yellow cloth!

Mo Hua was startled; he focused his gaze and saw that under the cloth was indeed a corpse.

The corpse was ferocious and sinister, its face bearing a resemblance to that in the mural.

It was indeed the Lu Family Old Ancestor, "Capitalist Lu."

His eyes bulged with bloody streaks, ugly beyond compare, and his chest had been flayed open, forming a large hole with no heart inside.

A shiver ran through Mo Hua's heart.

He had guessed correctly.

They were indeed refining the Lu Family Old Ancestor into the Corpse King!

The bronze coffin was used for Corpse Refinement, refining the heart, while the Golden Altar was for the sacrificial ceremony of the corpse.

Zhang Quan bowed and said:

"Elder Lu, that deceiving Lu Chengyun has tricked you and harmed you, making Zombies work the mines, making you oversee such laborious work."

"This is an insult to you!"

"I, on the other hand, will make you the leader of ten thousand Zombies, the Corpse King of the Minor Wilderness State Boundary, striking fear into the cultivators of this state, ensuring your name is revered for a hundred years!"

...

Zhang Quan passionately delivered his ambitious speech.

Mo Hua frowned. "What's going on?"

Wasn't it said that the Corpse King would be refined in three days?

What did Zhang Quan mean now?

He was opening the coffin early?

Mo Hua sneakily glanced at Lu Chengyun, who was hiding behind the altar, and saw that his expression was also a bit excited, but not surprised.

It seemed he too knew that today was the day the Corpse King would be refined.

Mo Hua was dumbfounded.

So, only I was unaware?

On the fifteenth of July, the Corpse King will emerge from the coffin.

This had been the unified story shared by Zhang Quan and Lu Chengyun.

Both had conspired and said as much.

Mo Hua, eavesdropping, had heard the same.

Yet, he never expected that Zhang Quan was deceiving Lu Chengyun, who, fully aware, did not expose him; therefore, in the end, the only one deceived was the eavesdropping Mo Hua himself.

Mo Hua was somewhat speechless and helpless:

Who made me an amateur in Corpse Refinement? Amateurs are always easily deceived by the experts.

Meanwhile, Zhang Quan had already opened the coffin and the bronze casket, lifting a dark green, sinewy heart enveloped in Formation Patterns, solemnly and respectfully, and shoved it into the chest cavity of the Lu Family Old Ancestor's heartless corpse on the altar.

The eerie heart gave a bizarre twitch.

A muffled sound echoed.

Then, blood streaks formed, resembling threads, weaving on their own, fusing tightly with the corpse.

The beating of the heart grew louder.

Though the sound was not loud, it made Mo Hua feel an oppressive suffocation.

Mo Hua hastily covered his ears.

But the sound seemed to arise within his heart, filled with a frightening majesty, capable of commanding the dead.

At the same time, Zhang Quan bowed down and murmured incantations.

These were Corpse Path incantations.

Dull and sinister, unlike any human voice.

Mo Hua couldn't understand at all, but the chanting made him feel nauseous.

Mo Hua struggled to endure. After an unknown period, the incantation and heartbeat sounds ceased simultaneously, and deathly silence fell over the altar.

Zhang Quan suddenly looked frenzied.

And atop the altar, the Lu Family Old Ancestor abruptly opened his eyes!

Lu Chengyun, hidden in the shadows, grinned sinisterly, his eyes gleaming coldly.

Chapter 514: 496

In the center of the altar, terrifying corpse Qi pervaded.

The original Lu Family Old Ancestor had now been refined into a "Corpse King."

Its eyes were pitch black, and within its pupils, a hint of blood red flared, and within that blood red, a streak of dark gold shone, making it look utterly different from the other zombies.

The Corpse King's body was enwreathed with an almost tangible density of corpse Qi, resembling gray-black blood that twined around it.

It suddenly swelled in size; its originally withered corpse flesh, as the blood vessels coagulated, gradually became burly, towering over nine feet tall.

The Corpse King's body surged with evil power, and its aura was cold and dreadful, with an underlying brutality and a fearsome majesty which made people quake in fear.

Zhang Quan looked on, eyes filled with obsession, muttering:

"Good! Good!"

"Worthy of being the Corpse King!"

"Worthy of commanding tens of thousands of zombies—the Corpse King has such an aura of corpse Qi, such an imposing presence, truly extraordinary!"

"I, Zhang Quan, have not let down the expectations of my ancestors, nor have I failed the bloodline of the Zhang family. I have finally refined the ultimate Corpse King of the Zhang Family's Corpse Path!"

Zhang Quan fell to his knees with a thud and made several loud kowtows facing the empty ground on the other side.

"Ancestors above, your descendant Zhang Quan has brought glory to our lineage!"

After bowing his head, Zhang Quan stood up, took a deep breath, and then took out the pitch-black Corpse Controlling Bell that was neither stone nor wood, neither bronze nor iron and shook the bell to command the Corpse King.

At the sound of the bell, the Corpse King's gaze shifted, as if it had "come to life."

Simultaneously, the iron coffins of the Formation of Ten Thousand Corpses began to stir.

The coffin lids were thrown open, and one after another, dark cyan hands reached out from the coffins. Iron Corpses, obeying the orders of the Corpse King, climbed out of the iron coffins, bowing before the Corpse King and then turning to kowtow toward Zhang Quan.

Zhang Quan was overjoyed!

He could feel that through commanding the Corpse King, he could control these more than twenty Iron Corpses simultaneously!

More than twenty Iron Corpses!

That meant more than twenty Foundation Building combat forces under his command.

And this was just the beginning, and there would be more in the future!

As long as he controlled the Iron Corpses to group attack and kill Foundation Building Cultivators, and then refined their dead bodies into Iron Corpses, and used the Iron Corpses to kill more Foundation Builders...

This cycle repeated itself, and he would have more and more Iron Corpses under his command.

Without the Corpse King, he could only control one or two Iron Corpses at most at the same time.

But with the Corpse King, even if there were hundreds of Iron Corpses, he could control them all at once.

In this way, he would have an army of demonic "Corpse soldiers" under his sole command, comparable to Second Grade Taoist Soldiers!

In the Second-Grade Prefecture Border, this Corpse army could sweep away all before it, invincible!

For a moment, Zhang Quan's heart blossomed with joy.

But just as Zhang Quan was lost in his fantasies, he was completely oblivious to the fact that an Iron Corpse behind him had its stiff eyes rotate, its gaze slightly turning green as it slowly turned its head towards him.

The Iron Corpse opened its mouth, displaying its dark cyan fangs.

It silently moved behind Zhang Quan, opening its gaping maw, its fangs sharp and foul-smelling, coated with a yin-green Corpse Poison as it viciously bit down on Zhang Quan's neck!

Cold, dangerous winds blew in waves!

Zhang Quan jolted alert, feeling an icy chill on his back, as if something were standing behind him, its rotten breath spraying on the back of his neck, making his hairs stand on end.

In the corner of his eye, he saw an ugly dark cyan corpse face and a pair of venomous fangs!

Zhang Quan was horrified and quickly twisted his body to the side.

But the reaction time was too short, and although he managed to avoid a fatal attack, his right shoulder was still grazed by the fangs of the Iron Corpse, leaving two bloody marks, tearing his clothing and soaking it with blood.

The cold and strange Corpse Poison, following the wound, mixed into the bloodstream, spreading throughout his body.

Zhang Quan felt that a bloodthirsty, non-human consciousness was gradually taking over his own.

Iron Corpse Corpse Poison!

Zhang Quan's heart trembled with fear, and he hastily retreated several yards, taking out a bottle of Pills and swallowing them to temporarily suppress the Corpse Poison in his body.

Having suppressed the Corpse Poison, Zhang Quan breathed a sigh of relief. His gaze then turned cold as he looked towards the Iron Corpse.

This Iron Corpse wanted to kill him?!

But to his surprise, after biting him once, the Iron Corpse no longer moved and stopped in its tracks.

Zhang Quan frowned, "What's happening?"

He remained cautious, inching closer to take a look.

He found that aside from his own blood on the fangs of this Iron Corpse, there was nothing else unusual about it.

Zhang Quan tried to control it.

This Iron Corpse's movements and retreats were completely under his command, without a hint of loss of control.

Zhang Quan furrowed his brow.

Just as he was puzzled and unable to understand, without any warning, another Iron Corpse's eyes moved, its pupils changed slightly, and it opened its ferocious fangs, lunging at Zhang Quan to attack.

This time Zhang Quan was somewhat prepared, and he quickly rolled back to dodge, barely avoiding it.

And this Iron Corpse, just like the other one, stopped after a single attack, its pupils turning dull and lifeless once again.

Zhang Quan's face grew stern as his mind raced.

"What's going on?"

Intermittent loss of control?

Was the Corpse King not well refined, or was there a problem with his Corpse control?

Could it be that because there were too many Iron Corpses, he couldn't control them momentarily, leading to this feign-death situation?

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Zhang Quan was uncertain and apprehensive.

But before he could think further, more Iron Corpses suddenly attacked, lunging from behind.

This time it wasn't just one, but two, each attacking once before stopping, and after a brief moment, the number of ambushing zombies gradually increased to three...

Zhang Quan was hard-pressed to defend himself, and the bite marks from the zombies on his body grew more numerous...

But he was still clueless, utterly unaware of what was happening.

Meanwhile, hidden in the shadows, Lu Chengyun who was controlling the Iron Corpses, smiled malevolently.

And Mo Hua, who had been watching everything, cursed Zhang Quan in his heart for being a fool.

"Lu Chengyun is playing you, How can your brain fail to figure out such a simple thing?"

When Zhang Quan was played by Lu Chengyun to the point of being covered in wounds, he finally realized it.

Someone was controlling these Iron Corpses!

The Iron Corpses were under the control of the Corpse King.

And in this corpse mine, who else could control the Corpse King?

Zhang Quan clenched his teeth and shouted, "Lu Chengyun!"

"You motherfucker..."

"Hiding your head while showing your tail, come out to me!"

By now, Lu Chengyun no longer hid, but slowly came out from behind the altar.

Zhang Quan was taken aback, then said with hatred, "It really is you!"

Lu Chengyun replied calmly, "Brother Zhang, I've been sincere with you, yet I never thought you'd attempt to steal my Corpse King and ruin my grand plan behind my back?"

Zhang Quan looked surprised and confused, frowning as he asked, "When exactly did you find out?"

Lu Chengyun smiled without giving an answer, instead said lightly, "Does it even matter at this point?"

Zhang Quan's eyes twitched.

Indeed, at this point, everything was out in the open, with both parties having torn their facades, engaged in a life-and-death struggle. Knowing these details was meaningless.

Zhang Quan sneered, "Since when did the Corpse King become yours? It was refined using my Zhang Family's bronze coffin and my Zhang Family's methods of Corpse Refinement. It should belong to the Zhang Family!"

Lu Chengyun shook his head, "Brother Zhang, you are mistaken. This Corpse King was made using the body of the Lu Family Old Ancestor."

Zhang Quan scoffed, "What do you mean 'your Lu Family'? You're just a son-in-law who climbed up by clinging to a woman and opportunistically sycophanting. What does the Lu Family have to do with you?"

Those words seemed to strike a nerve in Lu Chengyun.

His eyelids twitched, and his smile became colder. After a moment of silence, he sighed, "Brother Zhang, I've long known about your duplicity..."

"I've told you before, everyone has their own ambitions, I don't blame you."

"But you should never have meddled with the Corpse King."

"The Corpse King is not something someone of your caliber can control!"

Zhang Quan burst into mocking laughter, "You are fit to control it? You, who seek after fame and fortune, conduct yourself in sneaky ways, have a spine of jelly, and go around bribing people with Spirit Stones... What caliber do you speak of?"

Lu Chengyun's face twisted as he drew a slender sword. With a flash of the blade, he went straight for Zhang Quan's face.

Zhang Quan spat out a curse and swallowed a Corpse Blood Pill. He underwent Corpse Transformation suddenly, his flesh turned iron-blue and his eyes crimson, and he clashed with Lu Chengyun.

For a time, the sword light was overflowing and the Corpse Qi was rampant.

The surrounding coffins were also shattered into fine dust by the sword Qi and the punch winds.

Mo Hua looked into the distance and saw that the coffin of the little zombie under his control was far enough not to be affected by the battle. He breathed a sigh of relief and then continued to watch.

The two had harbored grudges against each other for a long time, but each had been biding their time. Now that the old resentment had erupted, they spared no effort.

However, Zhang Quan, who had taken pills, was clearly no match for Lu Chengyun, especially since he had previous wounds from being ambushed by Lu Chengyun with the controlled Iron Corpses. At the moment, he was barely holding on.

After fighting for a while, Zhang Quan repelled Lu Chengyun with a punch and thought about controlling the Corpse King to kill Lu Chengyun.

The Corpse King, under his control, constricted its pupils, and its blood color intensified.

But at the same time, Lu Chengyun also moved his Divine Thought, using the Spiritual Pivot Evil Formation to control the Corpse King.

Both were trying to control the Corpse King.

The Corpse King's pupils flickered between brightness and darkness, its blood color deepened and lightened by turns, its killing intent waxing and waning. After a while, it became as motionless as wood or stone, silent and still.

Mo Hua's thoughts stirred slightly.

It seemed that when the control from both sides clashed, and neither could overpower the other, the Corpse King would not help either side.

Unable to control the Corpse King, Lu Chengyun and Zhang Quan began trying to control the Iron Corpses through the Corpse King.

Zhang Quan rang a bell, and Lu Chengyun controlled the Formation.

After a standoff, they each controlled a portion of the Iron Corpses.

Zhang Quan managed to control eleven, while Lu Chengyun, being stronger than Zhang Quan, controlled thirteen Iron Corpses.

Zhang Quan and Lu Chengyun went back to fighting each other.

And the Iron Corpses they controlled started fighting to the death as well, making the scene even more chaotic.

Mo Hua climbed further up the altar to keep away from the fray.

From atop the altar, Mo Hua peered down to find the situation becoming increasingly clear.

Zhang Quan, already weaker than Lu Chengyun and with two fewer Iron Corpses under his control, naturally fell at a disadvantage.

After a fierce battle, Lu Chengyun's clothes were torn, but his demeanor was collected, and his breath steady.

Meanwhile, Zhang Quan was in dire straits, covered in wounds, panting heavily.

Mo Hua shook his head, thinking that if this continued, Zhang Quan would be finished.

Once Zhang Quan was done for, Lu Chengyun would be unchallenged, making it less convenient for himself to fish in troubled waters.

Perhaps he should help Zhang Quan?

Mo Hua blinked, contemplating.

Sneakily, he made some small moves...

It was also a good opportunity to test whether the Spiritual Pivot Formation he had laid was effective.

Mo Hua's eyes brightened, then he crossed his legs and sat down, holding his breath and concentrating, quietly sensing.

Thus, amidst Zhang Quan's and Lu Chengyun's tumultuous fight, no one noticed an obscure Divine Sense silently connecting with the formation on the Corpse King's chest, stealthily controlling the Corpse King, and using it to control a portion of the Iron Corpses...

Chapter 515: Ancestors (1)

Mo Hua communicated with the Spiritual Pivot Formation using Divine Sense, manipulating the Corpse King, and he instantly felt three forces of domination, co-existing yet disparate, within the body of the Corpse King.

One was the Corpse control method commonly used by corpse cultivators, mediated by the Corpse Controlling Bell.

Another was the Corpse control method of the Evil Formation, with the Spirit Pivot as its core.

The last one was the orthodox Soul Pivot Ultimate Formation Spirit Controlling Method, which Mo Hua himself had set up, of the first rank and twelve Patterns.

These three forces, forming a mutually restraining triangle, opposed each other, and in a short time, none could fully control the Corpse King.

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Mo Hua felt a bit disappointed.

He had wanted to fully control the Corpse King, manipulate all the Iron Corpses, join forces with Zhang Quan to slaughter Lu Chengyun, then turn around and kill Zhang Quan as well.

To use a borrowed knife to kill someone, "one corpse, two lives".

But now with the power divided, Mo Hua was uncertain if he could overcome the Corpse Controlling Bell and the Spirit Pivot Evil Formation, to completely dominate the Corpse King within a short period.

However, this was also within his expectations.

Mo Hua did not forcefully activate the Formation to dominate the Corpse King.

This way, if his strike didn't succeed, he could avoid startling the prey and revealing his own methods left on the Corpse King.

The Corpse King could not be controlled, but the Iron Corpses could.

Like Lu Chengyun, he began to control the Iron Corpses indirectly through the Corpse King.

Within the altar, there were a total of twenty-four Iron Corpses.

Zhang Quan controlled eleven, and Lu Chengyun controlled thirteen.

Mo Hua, by taking advantage of the Spiritual Pivot Formation on the Corpse King's Heart Pulse, surreptitiously transformed a portion of the Iron Corpses that Zhang Quan and Lu Chengyun controlled into his own forces.

Mo Hua was subtle in his methods.

Lu Chengyun and Zhang Quan were engaged in a fierce battle and thus completely unaware that some of their Iron Corpses had already "defected".

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

Lu Chengyun had the upper hand, pushing Zhang Quan back step by step.

Zhang Quan struggled desperately, his injuries growing more severe, and his controlled Iron Corpses also began to falter.

Lu Chengyun let out a cold sneer and began to manipulate the Iron Corpses, together with himself, surrounding Zhang Quan, determined to kill Zhang Quan to eliminate future troubles!

Zhang Quan must die!

In this world, the only one who could control the Corpse King was himself!

In Lu Chengyun's eyes, a cold light surged, and the power of his Sword Qi soared.

Zhang Quan, after undergoing Corpse Transformation, had a body hard as bronze and iron and managed to block several blows, but he was still pierced through the left shoulder by a sword. In

pain, he exposed a weakness and was then sent flying by a punch from an Iron Corpse, crashing to the ground.

With a distant gesture, Lu Chengyun manipulated the Iron Corpses to converge on Zhang Quan.

Zhang Quan struggled to rise, but it was too late, and he could only weakly ring the bell, calling a few Iron Corpses to protect himself.

But with his Blood Qi depleted and his injuries severe, he only summoned four Iron Corpses, completely unable to block the onslaught from Lu Chengyun's more than ten Iron Corpses.

In Lu Chengyun's calm eyes, a murderous intent was brewing.

His Iron Corpses, driven by bloodlust, charged straight for Zhang Quan.

Some were intercepted by Zhang Quan's Iron Corpses and tangled up in a struggle, but the rest reached Zhang Quan, their faces ferocious, opening their bloodied maws towards him.

"I'm going to die!"

Zhang Quan was terrified.

As death loomed, he used all his strength to push away one Iron Corpse and then kicked another flying.

But the other Iron Corpses had already pounced close, seizing his limbs with their long sharp claws embedded deep into his flesh, holding him tightly in place.

Another Iron Corpse, its claws swelling, radiated sinister Corpse Poison, aiming straight for Zhang Quan's heart.

If this claw struck, his heart would be pierced, and certain death was guaranteed!

Zhang Quan's eyes bulged with rage, yet no matter how he struggled, it was to no avail.

Just as he was engulfed by terror, the lethal claws of the Iron Corpse about to take his life suddenly stopped.

The sharp tips of the claws were merely a hair's breadth from his chest.

He could even feel the sharp, cold, ancient intent to kill.

Zhang Quan was stunned.

Lu Chengyun was also taken aback.

What happened?

Was there a loss of control?

Zhang Quan, narrowly escaping death, heaved a sigh of relief and then noticed that not only the Iron Corpse in front of him but also several nearby Iron Corpses had stopped moving.

Though unsure why, Zhang Quan still felt a tremendous sense of relief. He immediately stood up, retreated several strides, and left the encirclement of Iron Corpses.

Lu Chengyun frowned.

His Divine Thought moved, and he began to control the Iron Corpses again.

This time the Iron Corpses still moved according to his will, showing no abnormalities.

"What's going on..."

Was it a control conflict, or was there a flaw in the Formation?

Lu Chengyun couldn't figure it out, so he suppressed the doubts in his heart. The priority was to kill Zhang Quan first.

Lu Chengyun once again manipulated the Iron Corpses, resuming the attack on Zhang Quan.

But the subsequent events still defied his expectations.

Every time an Iron Corpse was about to claim Zhang Quan's life, there would be a slight delay, allowing Zhang Quan to escape.

After several instances, Zhang Quan realized what was happening.

These Iron Corpses were showing mercy!

Why?

Why was it that whenever he was on the verge of death, they would spare his life?

Zhang Quan furrowed his brow in thought, then suddenly it dawned on him.

He understood!

The reason the Iron Corpses spared his life at the critical moment was for only one reason:

It's the ancestors!

In the depths of the unseen, the ancestors are aiding me!

Zhang Quan's thoughts raced urgently.

This Corpse King was cultivated from the bronze coffin of the Zhang Family and the ancestral Corpse Refinement technique, nurtured day and night.

Now, this Lu Chengyun intends to use the corpse of the Zhang Family to kill him, the heir of the Zhang Family.

The spirit of the ancestor in heaven couldn't bear to watch this, thus lending a helping hand in his most perilous moment, leaving behind a glimmer of hope for the Zhang Family.

Zhang Quan was extremely grateful and immediately knelt down to the sky, knocking his head several times, and loudly said,

"Disciple Zhang Quan thanks the ancestors!"

This kneeling stunned Mo Hua as well.

After pondering for a moment and getting over the shock, he couldn't help but snidely think to himself,

You shouldn't thank your ancestors; you should be thanking your "junior" ancestor.

Witnessing this, Lu Chengyun also showed a wary look, his heart slightly chilled:

The Zhang Family truly is a family of corpse refiners with unthinkable methods, to be able to borrow the power of an ancestor to control an Iron Corpse.

He had never heard of such a thing!

Since that's the case, Zhang Quan must not be left alive!

Lu Chengyun raised the thin sword in his hand, the sword light shimmering like water, sweeping across like a curtain, filled with relentless Spiritual Power, striking towards Zhang Quan once again.

Zhang Quan, though still being forced back repeatedly, was now greatly invigorated.

"The ancestors are aiding me! I will not die!"

Indeed, the spirit of his "ancestors" in heaven was protecting him.

Whenever his life hung by a thread, the Iron Corpse attempting to kill him would "fall ill," stuttering in place for a while.

Zhang Quan's face showed even greater joy.

Yet, Lu Chengyun grew more anxious and was even more wary of Zhang Quan's "ancestors."

He decided not to rely on the Iron Corpse but to use his own Taoist Skill and the superior Sword Weapon in his hand to slowly wear down Zhang Quan, intent on slaying him!

But he was so focused on killing Zhang Quan that he unwittingly revealed a large vulnerable spot on his back.

Mo Hua's eyes lit up.

Now is the time!

With a move of his Divine Sense, he pulled the Formation Pivot. At the same time, one of the Iron Corpses controlled by Lu Chengyun suddenly "defected," its pupils contracting, emitting a blue light, and its claws, swift as the wind, fiercely struck towards Lu Chengyun's back.

This attack was swift, accurate, ruthless, and extremely sinister.

The timing of the opportunity was also just perfect.

Caught completely off guard, Lu Chengyun had no way to defend himself in time!

The Iron Corpse's claw pierced straight through his back, thrusting violently, and after one swift motion, tore his robe to shreds.

Mo Hua's plot was successful, and he smiled slyly, but halfway through his laugh, he heaved a sigh and was filled with disappointment.

Lu Chengyun, ambushed by the Iron Corpse, coughed up fresh blood from his mouth, but there were no injuries on his body.

His robe in tatters, he revealed the silver chainmail underneath.

This chainmail was clearly also a superior Spiritual Artifact.

The Iron Corpse's claws could not penetrate the chainmail, thus failing to injure Lu Chengyun's vitals; they only managed to shake him violently.

Lu Chengyun, being at the Foundation Establishment stage, considered such an injury trivial, not to speak of a fatal blow.

Mo Hua felt it was a pity.

Lu Chengyun wiped the blood from the corner of his mouth, his heart still trembling with fear.

He almost capsized in the gutter! Without the silver chainmail on his body, the Iron Corpse's claw would have penetrated his back, the Corpse Poison invading his body, then facing the combined assault from Zhang Quan and the Iron Corpse, his odds today would have been slim!

An eye for an eye, a vile and lethal attack!

This Zhang Family ancestor was either a person, a corpse, or a ghost, but he certainly was a vicious character!

Or could it be that the Zhang Family's Corpse control technique possesses some strange and unpredictable magical power?

Lu Chengyun felt an icy chill in his heart.

He must fight quickly and decisively to avoid further complications!

Lu Chengyun's expression turned serious, putting his all into the fight, his sword light abruptly changed, the Spiritual Power darkening to a shade of light black-gray.

Zhang Quan heard this and paled, "The Lu Family's Opening The Mountain Sword Method! You've actually cultivated it to such an extent?"

Lu Chengyun gave a faint smile, "You recognize this Swordsmanship?"

Zhang Quan's expression was grave.

Lu Chengyun spoke indifferently,

"Opening The Mountain Sword Method... I found this superior Taoist Skill in a Jade Slip buried with one of the Lu Family elders when I dug up the Lu Family ancestral tomb. I have diligently practiced it for decades..."

Lu Chengyun raised the long sword in his hand, the Sword Qi dividing, sweeping outward to both sides, imposing as if splitting mountains and levelling plains.

Lu Chengyun said coldly, "I never use this Swordsmanship on ordinary days to prevent others from noticing. Today, being able to die by this Swordsmanship is a favor I bestow upon you."

Zhang Quan's gaze turned cold, and he gritted his teeth,

"Fine, let's see today whether your Swordsmanship is stronger or my Corpse Technique is mightier!"

The enmity between the two was like fire and water, deciding both their fates and the outcome of their battle.

But Mo Hua couldn't stand listening any longer, cursing Zhang Quan in his heart:

"Idiot, his Swordsmanship is obviously stronger. Your Corpse Technique is shit in comparison; you can't even beat my Junior Brother..."

"Facing death and you still don't think of running, insisting on fighting to the death here."

"He's using his trump card, and you still have no clue, still wanting to compare strengths, you're really beyond help!"

"When he was gathering strength for his attack, you should have run already, what are you putting on airs for?"

"Spending all day refining corpses, you must have refined your brain into stiffness too..."

Mo Hua, this "junior ancestor," detested Zhang Quan's lack of competitiveness and internally showered him with scorn.

Chapter 516: Who to Feed (1)

As Mo Hua expected, Zhang Quan was completely and utterly no match for Lu Chengyun.

Lu Chengyun's swordsmanship was profound and his moves were well-practiced.

Zhang Quan still used the same old tactics, relying on his own Corpse Transformation and exchanging moves with Lu Chengyun in a straightforward manner, only to be pierced into a honeycomb by Sword Qi, blood pouring out of him as he fell to the ground.

This lack of strategy and simplicity in tactics left Mo Hua sighing in amazement.

Mo Hua had thought that if Zhang Quan dared to confront Lu Chengyun head-on, he must have had some sort of trump card, but it turned out he was only driven by a spirit of rage and fearlessness.

And then he was really going to die...

Mo Hua watched, shaking his head.

If he were truly his ancestor, he would be so enraged that he'd flip the lid of his coffin.

Having secretly controlled the Iron Corpse to help him so much, yet this Zhang Quan still managed to disappoint completely!

Without Zhang Quan as a pawn, he would have no way to kill Lu Chengyun...

Mo Hua felt somewhat helpless.

In the center of the sacrificial altar, Zhang Quan lay dying.

His face was pale, and blood trickled from the corner of his mouth. Knowing he was going to die, he didn't beg for mercy from Lu Chengyun but instead used all his remaining strength to say, falteringly:

"My... my... scroll?"

Lu Chengyun's eyebrows lifted, "Are you talking about your Ancestral Master Picture?"

Zhang Quan coughed up a mouthful of blood and said weakly:

"Exactly..."

Lu Chengyun shook his head, "It belongs to me now."

Zhang Quan showed anger on his face, coughed up a few more mouthfuls of blood, and slowly said:

"Okay... I concede, but... Brother Lu, considering the many years I've served you, before I die, let me take one more look... at the Zhang Family ancestors..."

Lu Chengyun's gaze sharpened, showing no emotion, and he simply asked:

"And what will that change?"

Zhang Quan's expression was ferocious as he rasped:

"I, Zhang Quan, have failed to continue the bloodline of the Zhang Family, causing the lineage of the Corpse Path to be severed. I want to kowtow... to apologize to the ancestors!"

Lu Chengyun seemed slightly moved and nodded, "Alright!"

He took out a scroll from his Storage Bag.

The scroll was rolled up, the paper aged, with faint traces of dirt and footprints on it—the marks left by Mo Hua...

Indeed, it was the Zhang Family's Ancestral Master Picture.

Zhang Quan's gaze was filled with eagerness.

Lu Chengyun slowly unfurled the scroll.

Zhang Quan's gaze was firmly fixed on the picture in Lu Chengyun's hands.

When Lu Chengyun had unrolled half of it, his gaze turned icy. Seizing the moment when Zhang Quan was distracted, he suddenly thrust his sword through Zhang Quan's chest, killing him instantly!

Zhang Quan looked at the sword in his chest, then lifted his eyes to Lu Chengyun, his face filled with disbelief as he angrily spouted:

"Lu you traitor, you..."

Before he could finish, Zhang Quan's breath ceased, and he slowly fell to the ground.

Even in death, Zhang Quan's eyes were fixed on Lu Chengyun without closing.

Lu Chengyun, looking at the already dead Zhang Quan, remained impassive. After confirming his death a moment later, he spoke in a gentle tone:

"Brother Zhang, I'm sorry, but I feared you had some tricks up your sleeve. To be on the safe side, I had to let you die first..."

"You don't need to worry about your family's affairs."

"I will properly enshrine this Ancestral Master Picture."

"One day, I'll take an adopted son and have him carry the 'Zhang' surname, to continue your family's legacy."

"Your Zhang Family's Corpse Path will also flourish under my control..."

...

Having finished speaking, Lu Chengyun wiped Zhang Quan's blood from his sword using Zhang Quan's corpse, then sheathed his blade, walked to the front of the altar.

In front of the altar stood the nine-foot-tall, imposing Corpse King, standing tall like an abyss.

Once Lu Chengyun's Divine Sense stirred, he could feel that this Corpse King was completely under his control, and the more than twenty Iron Corpses around were all at his command.

Lu Chengyun's heart was no longer calm, and he finally couldn't help but burst into uproarious laughter:

"From now on, this Corpse King, commanding the undead, will obey only my orders!"

"The cultivators of South Yue City, from birth till death, will mine for my Lu Family!"

"The whole of South Yue City will be under my dominance!"

"The skies of this Minor Wilderness State Boundary are about to change!"

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As Lu Chengyun laughed, he suddenly stopped; he remembered Mo Hua.

Now that Zhang Quan was dead, the only other person who knew about the Ten Thousand Corpses Sacrificial Altar was Mo Hua.

Mo Hua had established the Formation eye of the Ten Thousand Corpses Compound Formation and also seen the Formation he had drawn on the Bronze coffin.

In the entire Corpse Mine, aside from himself, Mo Hua knew the most secrets about the Formation...

Lu Chengyun's gaze fluctuated, and his Divine Sense expanded, his expression subtly changing:

"Where has that gentleman gone?"

Mo Hua was startled and quickly held his breath, concentrating and suppressing his aura.

Lu Chengyun's Divine Sense swept across the Corpse Mine, suddenly realized something, and began to scan the altar again, but after a long while, he found nothing...

Frowning with confusion, he mused:

"Where could he have gone?"

At this moment, Mo Hua, who had been hiding behind Lu Chengyun and spying on him all night, dared not even breathe too loudly.

Lu Chengyun pondered for a while but found no clues, becoming somewhat irritable. He again scanned the altar in detail with his Divine Sense.

However, the altar was too large, and he had just been through a fierce battle, so after not searching for long, he began to feel his Divine Sense waning.

Lu Chengyun stopped searching.

Continuing the search might exhaust his Divine Sense, leaving him unable to control the Corpse King, which could lead to disaster if the Corpse King lost control...

Lu Chengyun put away the Contemplation Map, ordered the Corpse King back into the Bronze coffin, commanded the Iron Corpses back into their coffins, then dragged Zhang Quan's corpse and tossed it into an empty nearby coffin.

Though Zhang Quan was dead, his corpse could still be used for Corpse Refinement to serve him.

Lu Chengyun's gaze turned cold, then he looked around, wondering about something before dusting off his sleeves and leaving the altar.

Mo Hua let out a slight sigh of relief.

He waited until Lu Chengyun was far away and showed no signs of returning.

Chapter 517: Feeding Whom (2)

Mo Hua stealthily left the altar and quietly returned to his own room, diving into his bedding to feign sleep. Continue reading on empire

If Lu Chengyun came to inspect the room, he would claim he had been there all along, never having stepped out, pretending to know nothing.

Lu Chengyun knew he was skilled in the Concealment Technique.

Seeing through the Concealment Technique required Divine Sense.

And after the fierce battle between Lu Chengyun and Zhang Quan, the former's Divine Sense was greatly depleted. He'd likely think it was his own exhaustion that had prevented him from discovering him...

Mo Hua thought about it, then suddenly shook his head.

No, this excuse might work, but it still carried considerable risk.

And the situation now was different from before...

Now that Lu Chengyun had killed Zhang Quan and no longer had Zhang Quan as a shield, his attention would turn to him.

Mo Hua's thoughts raced.

He needed to flee!

He couldn't escape head-on; natural boulders served as doors, and two Second Grade Iron Corpses stood watch.

These two Iron Corpses were under control, and he, being physically weak, didn't dare to go close and alter the Sequence on their Spiritual Pivot Formation.

Waiting for other cultivators to attack the Corpse Mine and then escaping in the chaos might be too late.

The Corpse King was refined ahead of schedule, Lu Chengyun made his move early; the crisis had come sooner as well. There was no time left to wait.

Then the only option was to blow it up!

"How do I blow it up?"

Mo Hua pondered.

He couldn't use the Reversed Spirit Formation; with its Formation Collapse being extremely powerful but also too specialized, it was easy to reveal his cards and attract Lu Chengyun's attention.

The Earthfire Compound Formation should be sufficient.

He would set up the Earthfire Compound Formation at the mouth of the small tunnel dug by Little Tiger, where the rock wall was thin; it should be able to blow up a part of the Corpse Mine and give him a chance to escape...

With his mind made up, Mo Hua decided to try it, but before he could start Drawing Formation, he was suddenly taken aback.

His Divine Sense detected Lu Chengyun coming his way.

Mo Hua quickly climbed back into bed, covered himself with the blanket, and pretended to be asleep.

Soon after, footsteps sounded outside the stone chamber.

The sound was very subtle, but Mo Hua could not be fooled.

Lu Chengyun paced outside the room, hesitating as if uncertain about something before finally speaking up with a gentle voice:

"Gentleman..."

Mo Hua ignored him.

Lu Chengyun called out several more times with the same gentle and polite tone as a good old friend.

Mo Hua sensed his Divine Thought was somewhat sinister as if harboring some wicked scheme, but there was no direct intent to kill. Stirring slightly, Mo Hua got out of bed and opened the door.

Before opening the door, Mo Hua tousled his hair, then opened the door sleepily and upon seeing Lu Chengyun, feigned surprise saying:

"Lu Family Head, what brings you here?"

After speaking, Mo Hua rubbed his eyes, his face full of confusion, acting as if he was still groggy from sleep.

Lu Chengyun was slightly taken aback and asked:

"Gentleman, have you been in the room all this time?"

Mo Hua asked with confusion: "It's the middle of the night; if not in the room, where else could I be?"

Then he showed a hint of displeasure, muttering under his breath, "There's nothing fun around here anyway..."

Lu Chengyun hesitated.

For a moment, he wasn't sure whether Mo Hua was acting or not.

Could someone so young possess such depth and sophistication, and yet such pure and impeccable acting skills?

Lu Chengyun furrowed his brows and fell silent.

Mo Hua probed again:

"Family Head, it's so late, what do you need me for?"

Snapping back to reality, Lu Chengyun suddenly smiled and said:

"I came to fulfill a promise to the gentleman."

"A promise?"

Lu Chengyun nodded, "Didn't I tell you before? If you helped me construct the Formation Eye, I would teach you... that Formation..."

Mo Hua's sleepiness vanished, his eyes lighting up:

"Really?"

Lu Chengyun said with a smile: "As the head of a family, naturally, I won't go back on my word."

Not go back on his word...

The scene where Lu Chengyun promised Zhang Quan to see the Ancestral Master Picture, and then without unveiling the picture, cut down Zhang Quan with a sword, flashed across Mo Hua's mind.

Mo Hua internally scorned: I trust you for nothing!

But on the surface, he still acted as if he knew nothing, "Can I learn it now?"

Lu Chengyun shook his head, "Some preparations are needed."

Mo Hua asked in confusion, "Preparations?"

Lu Chengyun sighed: "This Formation is extremely difficult; I too spent decades studying it to achieve a little success."

"What makes this Formation most challenging is Divine Sense."

"The threshold for Divine Sense is too high..."

"Gentleman, your talent is extraordinary, but after all, you are still young. With your current Divine Sense, you probably won't be able to learn it, so before you study this Formation, we need to find a way to enhance your Divine Sense."

Mo Hua was taken aback, then pretended to be shocked: "Enhance Divine Sense? Could it be that..."

"Exactly!" Lu Chengyun nodded, "Gentleman is perceptive and should know... the Contemplation Map!"

Mo Hua gasped in disbelief:

"You actually have a Contemplation Map, Family Head?!"

Lu Chengyun nodded with a meaningful expression:

"This Contemplation Map is, in fact, one that the gentleman has also seen before..."

"I've seen it?" Mo Hua looked puzzled.

Lu Chengyun said: "It's Zhang Quan's Ancestral Master Picture!"

Mo Hua's mouth dropped open, feigning astonishment.

Although his reaction was a bit exaggerated, Lu Chengyun was in the process of luring Mo Hua into a trap, so he didn't doubt him for the moment.

After some thought, Mo Hua blinked and said:

"But when I saw that picture, my Divine Sense did not enhance..."

Lu Chengyun revealed a mysteriously wise smile, "That's because gentleman, you used the wrong method."

"There is another method?"

Lu Chengyun nodded affirmatively, speaking gently:

"Gentleman, follow me..."

Mo Hua looked puzzled but obediently followed Lu Chengyun.

Lu Chengyun led Mo Hua to a secret chamber, which also contained an altar.

Chapter 518: Feeding Whom (3)

This altar was more simply furnished.

Three dishes were offered on the podium.

One held hand bones, another foot bones, and the middle one cradled a skull.

Candles were also lit on the altar.

The candles were white, but the flame cast a sinister green light, and the wax flowed like tears, solidifying at the base of the podium after dripping.

Besides these, there were some strangely shaped utensils and a white coffin.

These arrangements looked very familiar to Mo Hua; they were almost identical to the altar in Corpse Walking Stronghold where Zhang Quan used people's Divine Sense as offerings to the Ancestral Master Picture.

Showing a "frightened" expression, Mo Hua asked,

"Family Head, this is...?"

"This is an altar," Lu Chengyun said.

Seeing Mo Hua's uneasy look, he smiled faintly and said,

"This Ancestral Master Picture is a bit special. It needs incense offerings to be made before Opening the Heavenly Eye to view its true form and comprehend the Dao Laws within to enhance one's Divine Sense."

Lu Chengyun pointed to the white coffin at the side and said,

"I've prepared the incense and the offerings..."

"Next, I will place the Contemplation Map."

"Before that, Little Gentleman only needs to lie in that coffin, let go of all burdens, disregard life and death, and then you will be able to contemplate the true essence of this map and improve your Divine Sense..."

Lu Chengyun spoke gently, his face wearing a soft smile, yet his gaze reflected the chilling green candlelight.

Mo Hua felt scared. "Is that... really true?"

Lu Chengyun's voice deepened, "Of course it's true..."

"But..." Mo Hua glanced at the coffin.

This coffin, similar in design to those in Corpse Stronghold, was crafted more delicately and was smaller.

It seemed to have been tailor-made for himself...

Mo Hua timidly said, "I, I don't want to go in there..."

Lu Chengyun's expression turned grim, his demeanor turning fierce as he commanded sternly:

"Go!"

Mo Hua jumped in fright.

Lu Chengyun's smile was dark, "Little Gentleman, don't let my kindness go to waste!"

Mo Hua's eyebrows furrowed tightly, and after much hesitation, she finally lay down slowly into the small coffin under Lu Chengyun's indifferent gaze.

Lu Chengyun laughed coldly, took out coffin nails, sealed the coffin, and then solemnly retrieved Zhang Quan's Ancestral Master Picture to respectfully offer it.

Incense smoke curled and candlelight flickered.

Lu Chengyun bowed and chanted:

"On this day we unveil the picture, offer incense with reverence..."

"...let white bones be the offering to the forefathers, and human consciousness the feast."

"Zhang Family Ancestral Master above, your junior Lu Chengyun pays homage!"

Mo Hua, lying in the coffin, immediately let out a cry of pain upon hearing this.

He remembered when Zhang Quan offered human sacrifices to the picture; the noises from within the coffin were just like this.

Not to mention the scratching at the coffin with fingernails, creating a harrowingly painful, desperately struggling sound of despair and torment.

But Mo Hua was afraid of pain...

And his little hands probably wouldn't make much noise anyway.

After thinking it over, Mo Hua let out Little Tiger, asking it to scratch the coffin lid in his place.

With Little Tiger's paws fluttering about, the coffin indeed began to produce a heart-wrenching "squeak squeak yaya" sound.

Mo Hua also shouted to go along with it:

"It hurts so much!"

"Ah!"

"Such pain! Let me out!"

...

Lu Chengyun was unperturbed.

After a while of shouting, the coffin became quiet, without any further sound.

Lu Chengyun stood for a long time, then sighed with regret, saying,

"Such great talent, truly a pity. The Cultivation World is perilous, and even prodigies can perish young..."

Lu Chengyun shook his head and left the altar. Continue your adventure at empire

Mo Hua lay quietly in the little coffin, and seeing Lu Chengyun leave, he patted his chest softly, slightly relieved.

Then he thought about the Ancestral Master Picture being presented on the altar above him at that moment, and couldn't help licking his lips, murmuring to himself,

"Is he using me to feed the picture, or is he using the picture to feed me?"

Chapter 519: Sacrifice (1)

"Are they using me to feed the picture, or using the picture to feed me?"

Mo Hua licked his lips, and under the flickering candlelight, the Contemplation Map seemed to shiver.

The coffin was icy cold, yet lying in it was quite comfortable.

Mo Hua waited and waited inside...

But after a long time, there was still no movement.

Mo Hua frowned.

What's the matter?

We had an agreement that I'd be the sacrifice, so why has no one come to "eat" me?

Waiting a bit more, there was still no response from the coffin.

"Is the coffin broken?"

"Or did Lu Chengyun chant the wrong spell?"

"Or perhaps, this Contemplation Map is picky, only accepting feedings from the Zhang Family's disciples?"

That's not right either...

A bunch of zombies, given something to eat, who would care who fed it to them?

"So... could it be my problem?"

Mo Hua was startled and then focused his senses, indeed noticing something unusual within the coffin.

There was a voice inside the coffin.

The voice was faint, drifting and ethereal, fluctuating between distant and near...

Concentrating hard, Mo Hua made out that an old man was speaking, his voice intermittent, filled with allure:

"You... have an exceptional skeleton..."

"... a unique physique, your meridians conceal a top-grade Spiritual Root..."

"We share a destiny, I will impart to you the Great Dao... and assist you in becoming an Immortal..."

...

Mo Hua sneered.

If one could truly become an Immortal, why wouldn't you do it yourself instead of passing it to others?

This voice was clearly that of Zhang Quan, the old ancestor of the Zhang Family.

Mo Hua had heard it many times before.

He thought it over carefully and suddenly felt a light shock.

Could this voice be the key to the sacrifice?

You have to believe his words to be included in the sacrifice?

Because my Divine Sense is profound, my Taoist Heart steadfast, and I don't believe in its nonsense, it can't get into the coffin to "eat" me?

Mo Hua thought it might be possible...

So he convinced himself to pretend to "believe" the old man's nonsense.

Sure enough, shortly after, the voice became clearer and seemed to resonate directly within Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness.

"We are fated, I will help you become an Immortal..."

"Help you become an Immortal..."

The voice was ancient, kind, compassionate.

At the same time, Mo Hua's vision blurred, and an image faintly appeared.

It was the Ancestral Master Picture of the Zhang Family, a masterpiece Mo Hua had coveted for a long time!

Unlike the real one, the Ancestral Master Picture at this moment was wreathed in clouds and mist, with curling incense smoke, and amidst the fleeting lights and shadows, golden radiance could be seen, with all the figures edged with gold.

The historical forebears of the Zhang Family stood like Immortals amidst the clouds, each exceptional and removed from mortal concerns, their immortal aura billowing.

Seeing this, Mo Hua's face lit up with longing, but inwardly he scoffed:

"You can fool others, but in front of your Zhang Family's 'little ancestor,' drop the act..."

"I'm not ignorant that you all are just a bunch of 'never-say-die' old zombies..."

As Mo Hua inwardly sneered, looking at the Ancestral Master Picture of the Zhang Family, he suddenly froze.

Among these "people," he spotted a familiar face.

This familiar person was none other than Zhang Quan!

Standing at the end, his expression respectful, he looked towards Mo Hua with a mix of surprise, resentment, and greed.

Mo Hua was somewhat taken aback.

Was Zhang Quan not dead?

No, or rather...

His physical body was dead, but his Divine Thought was still alive, just like the ancestral spirits of the Zhang Family, his Divine Thought turned into an evil spirit, inhabiting the Contemplation Map...

Mo Hua gradually came to understand. Discover hidden content at empire

No wonder Zhang Quan wanted to see the Ancestral Master Picture of his family before he died.

It was not as he claimed, feeling guilty for failing his ancestors and wanting to kowtow for forgiveness.

Instead, he wished for his Divine Thought to enter the picture after death, to live on as a ghostly retainer in the Contemplation Map.

Whether or not Lu Chengyun activated the picture didn't really matter, as long as he took the Contemplation Map out of the storage bag, it already gave Zhang Quan a chance.

Mo Hua had to admit.

He really underestimated Zhang Quan.

Zhang Quan wasn't as dumb as he thought.

And obviously, Lu Chengyun had not anticipated that Zhang Quan could be so cunning, nor that the Zhang Family could possess such mysterious and unfathomable methods.

Mo Hua frowned again.

"However... surely not every Cultivator who dies can receive this kind of 'treatment'..."

The terror of a dead body and lost path is immense.

Many Cultivators on the brink of death, in their desperation to survive, will resort to any means necessary.

The Old Ancestor of the Qian Family refining Human Life Pills, the Old Ancestor of the Lu Family turning himself into a Corpse, all out of the fear of death, the desire to continue living.

If this picture can truly harbor evil spirits...

Even without a physical body, old scoundrels like the Elder of the Qian Family and the Lu Family Old Ancestor, who have done many evil deeds, would certainly be willing to turn into wraiths and possess the picture...

Mo Hua didn't have much knowledge about the Cultivation of Dao related to paintings, but it surely wasn't this simple...

"Is it the special bloodline of the Zhang Family, or is this Contemplation Map itself somewhat special?"

Mo Hua mused silently to himself.

After pondering for a moment, he remembered now was not the time to consider these matters, for he still had to prepare a "Hongmen Banquet" to entertain his "guests."

And at this very moment, members of the Zhang Family had already entered Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness.

Five people in total.

Two Elders and three disciples, among whom was Zhang Quan.

Zhang Quan was the most junior in the hierarchy but possessed considerable Cultivation, already at the Foundation Establishment Realm, making him the most prestigious among the disciples.

However, facing his own ancestors, he kept a very low profile and spoke with great respect.

After entering Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness, Zhang Quan cautiously asked:

"Elder Song, Elder Si, should we enter first? Shouldn't our Ancestral Master have the honor first?"

"It matters not."

The Iron Corpse Elder known as "Elder Song" calmly said, "The Ancestral Master relies on the Divine Thought offerings connected by our bloodline. The stronger we descendants are, the stronger the Ancestral Master becomes. He doesn't need to personally involve himself in such acts of feeding and enhancing..."

Zhang Quan expressed his admiration, "Such is the glory of our Ancestral Master!"

Elder Song nodded and said, "The methods of the Ancestral Master are not something we later generations can fathom."

He looked at Zhang Quan and praised him, "To Cultivate to Foundation Establishment and advance the Corpse Path is a great achievement indeed... Even if you die in the process, your contribution is significant..."

"Talent, temperament, methods; in our Zhang Family disciples, you can certainly rank among the top."

"Most importantly, your profound filial piety to the Ancestral Master is admirable."

"The Ancestral Master holds you in high regard."

"So, this offering is for you to consume first."

"After you devour the Divine Sense and heal your injuries, gaining strength by leaps and bounds, you must serve the Ancestral Master and the Zhang Family even better!"

With excited expression, Zhang Quan clasped his hands and said:

"Disciple Zhang Quan will certainly not fail the expectations of the Elders and our Ancestral Master!"

Elder Song nodded in satisfaction.

Zhang Quan looked up, his face now that of a zombie.

Glancing at Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness, with saliva on his sharp teeth, he greedily murmured:

"Kid, I never thought you'd have your day..."

The usually silent Elder Si asked upon hearing this:

"Do you know this offering?"

Zhang Quan nodded with resentment and said:

"Truth be told, I have suffered countless losses at the hands of this brat! I've always wanted to kill him quickly, but couldn't!"

Elder Si frowned, "Just a little Cultivator and you can't kill him?"

Zhang Quan immediately explained:

"His Cultivation isn't high, his strength is mediocre, in a direct confrontation I could crush him to death with one hand!"

"But this brat has a deep understanding of Formations, a devious heart, is full of cunning schemes, and excels at hiding; moreover, he has supporters from all sides, making it impossible for me to lay hands on him..."

Zhang Quan ground his teeth in anger.

Elder Song frowned, trying to imagine what kind of brat could be so skilled in Formations, so adept at hiding, with such a scheming heart and full of cunning tricks...

Was this a person or an Evil Monster?

But he didn't care, for to them, whatever he was, he was merely meat on the chopping board.

Elder Song reassured Zhang Quan:

"Now you needn't worry. You've entered his Sea of Consciousness, he can't escape even with wings. He can only be slaughtered by you. In the Sea of Consciousness, we always call the shots. No matter how capable he is, he won't stir up any trouble..."

Zhang Quan felt reassured and laughed:

"What Elder says is very true."

He paused, as if remembering something, then with a sigh, he added:

"But no matter how cunning this brat is, in the end, he was still sacrificed by Lu Chengyun like grinding an old ox—falling to his death, his path extinguished..."

Zhang Quan spoke with fear:

"Lu Chengyun is truly frightful in both cunning and methods!"

Elder Song sneered in disdain:

"There's no need to boost the morale of others and diminish our Zhang Family's prestige!"

"In the eyes of the Ancestral Master, all this counts for nothing."

"This Lu Chengyun is but a pawn of the Ancestral Master."

"When he makes offerings to the Ancestral Master, contemplating the Dao of our Ancestral Master, drawing on his Divine Sense to enhance his own Divine Sense, one day he will become a puppet of the Zhang Family's Corpse Path."

"Neither alive nor dead..."

"Being external to our family, once his body undergoes Corpse Transformation and his Divine Sense can't enter this picture, he will either lose all awareness or become mere fodder."

Elder Song looked at Zhang Quan and said indifferently:

"You may have died, but you are still alive."

"Though he lives, he can't avoid his death!"

"Descendants of the Zhang Family must not suffer indignities from outsiders. We, your ancestors and Elders, will seek justice for you!"

Zhang Quan, elated, hurriedly bowed and thanked:

"Thank you, Elder, thank you, Ancestral Master!"

Elder Song helped him up, speaking softly:

"You are a descendant of our Zhang Family, favored by the Ancestral Master; there's no need for such formalities. The urgent matter at hand is to replenish yourself and recover from your injuries..."

Elder Song looked around, then at all the "people," his gaze hungry:

"It's time... to dine..."

Mo Hua, concealed on the side and having listened to their conversation for quite a while, also nodded.

He thought so too!

Chapter 520: Very Strong (1)

The opponent has five people; it'll be somewhat tricky to fight, so we need to find the right opportunity to strike first...

Find a way to take down a few of them first!

Mo Hua thought to himself.

Meanwhile, Zhang Quan and the Elders of the Zhang Family had already begun to draw upon the Divine Sense within Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness.

Elder Song had only taken one breath when his eyes widened, and he exclaimed,

"This is the purest, most abundant, and profound Divine Sense I have tasted in hundreds of years..."

Zhang Quan was also extremely shocked,

"This Divine Sense, I'm afraid it's reached Foundation Establishment..."

Elder Song slowly nodded, "That's right."

Zhang Quan's heart trembled.

Qi Refinement Realm with Foundation Establishment Divine Sense!

No wonder...

No wonder this kid is so troublesome, no wonder he learned formations so well, and no wonder I couldn't see through his Concealment Technique...

Divine Sense breaking through realms, surpassing levels, what kind of strange creature is this...

Elder Song frowned and asked,

"With such strong Divine Sense... what exactly is this kid's identity?"

Zhang Quan shook his head, "I only know that this kid is a Formation Master, and his mentorship seems not bad, but as for his exact identity, the disciple does not know..."

Elder Song pondered for a moment and then shook his head,

"No matter, what his identity is, it doesn't matter. No matter how good his talent or how strong his Divine Sense, he is but meat on the chopping block for our Zhang Family."

"The stronger the Divine Sense, the more succulent it is, for us, it's a blessing from heaven!"

Zhang Quan also agreed, "The Elder speaks the truth."

After saying this, he was a bit puzzled and asked,

"Elder Song, in the Ancestral Master Picture, some of our ancestors seem to have disappeared; where did they go?"

Elder Song was slightly startled, his brow furrowing even more, "This... I don't know either..."

Zhang Quan was somewhat surprised.

Elder Song said gravely,

"The ancestor calculated but could not determine any traces; they might be trapped by something, unable to break free temporarily, or they could have been slain, their form and spirit both extinguished..."

Zhang Quan felt a chill in his heart, "Slain?"

He found it hard to believe.

Among those missing ancestors were several Elders of the Iron Corpse Realm...

What thing is capable of slaying an Iron Corpse Elder without leaving a trace?

As Zhang Quan was in shock, he suddenly gave a start.

He realized something was amiss...

Without knowing when, many complex and mysterious Patterns had suddenly appeared around them; these Patterns subtly conformed to the Great Dao, intricate and beautiful, with a terrifying aura flowing within them.

Zhang Quan quickly came to his senses and was immediately alarmed,

"Not good!"

Both Elders also noticed and their expressions changed drastically as they tried to leave.

But it was already too late!

The first Golden Lock Formation was completed.

Golden Spiritual Power manifested Spiritual Locks, trapping all of them.

Then, in just a few moments, three Fire Formations materialized on their own around them, like three bright red lotuses ready to burst into bloom, surrounding the group.

The Golden Lock Three Lotus Earthfire Formation was established.

In the corner, Mo Hua silently chanted in his mind,

"Explode!"

The Golden Lock Three Lotus Earthfire Compound Formation suddenly exploded!

Three lotuses bloomed, burst brightly and blinked out; as thin as threads, they surged and intertwined, enveloping Zhang Quan and the others.

A moment later, the firelight dissipated.

Within the Formation, the figures of Zhang Quan and the others were revealed.

Their bodies grew taller, their clothes ragged, their skin an ashen blue, their pupils turned white, and their mouths sported hideous sharp teeth; they had completely transformed into "corpses."

At the moment of the Compound Formation's explosion, they were bound by the Golden Lock Formation, with no means of escape; they could only forcibly undergo Corpse Transformation, relying on an iron-like body to withstand the damage.

Even so, two normal disciples were still killed instantly, turning into two wisps of blue smoke.

Elder Si had the worst luck, positioned at the center of the Formation's explosion, and sustained the most severe injuries, collapsing unconscious to the ground.

Zhang Quan was a bit luckier but also covered in burn marks, with serious injuries.

Elder Song was slightly dimmer in form, also heavily injured.

The Compound Formation's explosion took out three "people," leaving only Zhang Quan and Elder Song.

"Who?!"

Elder Song looked shocked.

How could there be a Formation inside the Sea of Consciousness? And when was this Formation laid out?

And how could anyone paint a Formation within the Sea of Consciousness?

Elder Song didn't understand.

This was completely beyond his understanding of Tao Cultivation...

In the corner, a small figure gradually became visible.

It was a small cultivator, with a fair and lovely appearance.

Zhang Quan's eyes immediately became bloodshot as if he saw his father's murderer, "Is it you??"

Mo Hua disdainfully said,

"Isn't this obvious, if not me, then who?"

Zhang Quan was so frustrated he itched to bite, "How can you be in the Sea of Consciousness?"

Mo Hua couldn't be bothered to answer him.

Elder Song's heart tightened, and his eyes narrowed,

"Divine Sense Manifestation..."

This little cultivator, either had innate talents or had cultivated a Divine Thought spell.

The former would be okay, but if it's the latter, that would be troublesome.

He thought back to the complex Formation Patterns and the terrifying explosive power of the Formation's detonation, and a sense of foreboding came over him.

This little Cultivator is definitely not a kind soul!

This time, in their attempt to feast, they may have bitten off more than they can chew...

Elder Song's thoughts shifted slightly as he said loudly, "Little Taoist friend, let's talk this over."

Mo Hua's eyebrows raised, "What do you want to say?"

"You killed two of my Zhang Family disciples and severely injured Elder Si, but it's okay, we can let bygones be bygones..."

"Elder!" Zhang Quan said urgently.

Elder Song gave him a look, signaling him to be quiet, and then continued:

"Let's live and let live, pretending nothing ever happened. Little Taoist friend, just let us leave and that will be fine..."

Mo Hua's smile was ambiguous, "Let you go so you can call more people to come and devour me, is that it?"

Elder Song's expression remained unchanged, but his heart skipped a beat.

"This kid is indeed as Zhang Quan said — astute and crafty, not easy to deceive..."

Elder Song responded, "I swear, after leaving here, I will not trouble the little Taoist friend anymore."

Mo Hua snorted internally.

These days, not even human words can be trusted, much less the words of a "ghost".

Mo Hua frowned slightly, feigning hesitation, and asked doubtfully:

"Are you serious?"

Elder Song felt a glimmer of hope and hurriedly nodded, "My word is as good as gold, of course I'm serious!"

"Good!" Mo Hua nodded.

Elder Song was delighted, but in an instant of carelessness, he realized that fiery-red Formation Patterns had suddenly appeared under his feet.

Elder Song was taken aback in shock and hastily retreated, but he still got caught by the blast of the Earth Fire Formation, the fire's Spiritual Power invading his body and aggravating his injuries.

He couldn't help cursing loudly:

"You little devil, you're dishonest!"

Mo Hua looked innocent, "How have I been dishonest?"

"You said you'd let us out!"

Mo Hua replied, "You said your word is as good as gold and that you were serious. I just said 'good,' but I never said I'd let you go..."

After speaking, Mo Hua muttered again:

"Could it be that living so long has made you hard of hearing? You can't even understand what is said..."

Elder Song was enraged, "You..."

Zhang Quan hurriedly stopped Elder Song, suggesting from experience, "Elder, don't talk to him!"

Otherwise, he'll make you so angry you'll die, don't ask me how I know...

Zhang Quan silently thought to himself.

Elder Song was still seething with anger, yet he heeded the advice and did not foolishly engage Mo Hua in argument any further.

Zhang Quan, on the other hand, glared at Mo Hua and said to Elder Song in a low voice:

"Elder, this little devil is cunning and sly; we can't deceive him, we must kill him, otherwise, keeping him will surely be a disaster!"

Elder Song pondered for a moment before responding with hatred in his voice:

"Fine, we'll join forces to kill him! To flay him alive and consume him!"

Zhang Quan was overjoyed, "Good!"

He had long wanted to kill Mo Hua, and now, in the Sea of Consciousness, with the experienced and profound Divine Sense of the Iron Corpse Elder to aid him, the timing couldn't be better.

Zhang Quan charged at Mo Hua with all his might.

In his mind, with his charge and Elder Song backing him up, the two of them together would surely be able to take down Mo Hua.

Little Mo Hua, who only knows underhanded tactics like the Formation's Concealment Technique, would surely crumble in direct combat.

However, reality turned out to be somewhat different from what he expected...

Mo Hua raised his hand, and first came a Fireball Technique, fast and accurate, unavoidable, and exploding directly on Zhang Quan's face.

Zhang Quan's figure staggered, his body igniting with intense flames, causing excruciating pain.

Enduring the pain, he continued to charge forward, but within a few steps, he was immobilized by the Water Prison Technique.

Then came another fireball.

And again the Water Prison Technique, followed by another Fireball Technique...

...

The Water Prison Technique controlled him, the Fireball Technique was fierce.

Without even reaching Mo Hua, his Divine Sense was overwhelmed, and he knelt to the ground.

From beginning to end, Mo Hua stood in his place without moving a step, just extending his little hand and casting a few spells, and Zhang Quan was brought to his knees.

Zhang Quan felt a chill in his heart.

What's going on?

Why is this little devil so terrifying in the Sea of Consciousness?

Even more horrifying than the impression given by Lu Chengyun.

Could it be, he felt... despair?

How could there be such a huge gap between his Divine Sense and this little devil's?

Zhang Quan was utterly baffled.

Just then, another thought struck him:

Where's Elder Song?

Barely managing to look back, he only saw the frantic silhouette of Elder Song making his escape...

He's running away?!

Zhang Quan spewed out a mouthful of blood.

We had agreed to join forces and kill this little devil, but while I charged in, Elder Song ran off!!

Why?

You, a dignified Elder, are you really that cowardly?