

Worth 451

Chapter 451: Master, I Had a Dream

The vast cosmos was filled with dazzling stars, swirling galaxies, and the infrequent meteors and adrift dust. They all pointed to how real everything was.

Sudden confusion and bewilderment overwhelmed the recently awakened Wang Baole and shone in his eyes. Before he could speak, the elder standing in front of him turned around. His kind gaze met Wang Baole's eyes, causing Wang Baole to freeze. The elder's voice was like a slight breeze that brushed past Wang Baole's body and sank into his soul. It made Wang Baole shudder suddenly...

Then... a flood of memories surged in his mind. It swept away his bewilderment and the remnants of his dreamscape. He seemed to have truly awakened then. He remembered his name in those dreams. He was called... Wang Baole!

He had come from the planet Sang Lun and had entered the Dark Sect when he was seven years old, becoming a disciple of the Dark Sect's inner sect. The elder before him was his master, one of the nine Grand Elders of the current generation of the Dark Sect!

He was called... Ming Kunzi!

He was his master's youngest disciple. His master had brought him away from the Dark Planet to a planet that was about to pass. They were headed there to ferry the dead souls on behalf of the Heavenly Dao. They were to bring balance to life and death.

To guide souls to their rebirth, that was the Dark Sect's mission. The Dark Sect wielded the power of death in the universe, which was why the disciples of every generation needed to learn the ways to ferry the dead. That was why his master had brought him along, so that he might witness the entire process with his own eyes and gain greater knowledge of the Dark Art.

All his memories surged to his mind at that moment, and Wang Baole took a deep breath. He was no longer lost but fully awake. However, he still couldn't forget what he had dreamt. As his master looked at him with kind eyes and spoke to him in a kind voice, Wang Baole got to his feet hastily and bowed.

"Master... I had a dream just now. When I woke up, I was slightly lost, and I couldn't tell if everything that had happened in the dream was true or merely an illusion," Wang Baole said. He felt uneasy since he had fallen asleep in front of his master. He might get a scolding from the latter for that.

The elder gazed meaningfully at Wang Baole, then shook his head and smiled.

"What dream?"

"Ah?" Wang Baole released a sigh of relief when he realized his master didn't intend to reprimand him. After some thought, Wang Baole began to recall everything that had happened in his dream. The look in his eyes gradually grew distant. He seemed to be remembering. After a long while, he spoke softly.

"Master, it was a strange dream. In the dream... I was also called Wang Baole, but I wasn't in the Dark Sect. I don't know how many years had passed, but I was on a planet called Earth..."

“The greatest sect there was something called the Federation... I remember that in my dream, I had an ambition, I wanted to become the Federation President... Right, the Federation President was something like the sect lord of that sect.” After saying that, Wang Baole seemed slightly embarrassed. He felt his ambition in his dreams was quite a load of rubbish.

“Don’t misunderstand, master. This isn’t a case of my thoughts in the day appearing in my dreams at night. My dream is to become the sect lord of the Dark Sect, this will never change. Who cares about the Federation President? It’s just a whole load of dog sh*t!” Wang Baole hurriedly thudded his chest and proclaimed loudly.

The elder stared at Wang Baole, with what was seemingly a smile on his face. He didn’t say anything.

Wang Baole seemed slightly sheepish when he saw the smile on his master’s face. He thought about changing the subject and hurriedly said, “Master, don’t you find it strange? I, Wang Baole, am the most good looking in the entire Dark Sect. In my dream, I was also the most good looking in the entire Federation. In my dream, countless beautiful women went head over heels for me. They adored me and wanted to have my children... what a chore!” Wang Baole sighed.

“Master, I’m already living like this in the Dark Sect, I’ve had enough of it. Who knew that it would be the same in my dreams. What do you think I should do? I’m so troubled.” Wang Baole had intended to change the topic, but as he went on, he became distracted by his own words. The expression on the elder beside him grew strange. In the end, he could listen to Wang Baole no more, so he coughed.

The sound of the cough echoed in Wang Baole’s mind and interrupted what he was saying.

“Baole, we’ve arrived.” As he said that, the elder raised his right hand towards the skies before them and waved. A loud deafening boom thundered in what had been a peaceful starlit sky. It seemed unable to withstand the elder’s power. It was as if a pair of invisible hands had ripped the skies apart, and an enormous tear appeared in the heavens before the elder!

It was as long as a planet and split open like a wide chasm. One could hardly see where it ended if one stood too near it. From afar, it looked like a scar inflicted on the universe!

The sight sent Wang Baole reeling in shock. His breathing quickened. He couldn’t imagine the extent of power required to create such an awesome sight. Not to mention, the elder had only waved his hand.

The tear that he created was enough to destroy an entire planet!

That wasn’t the end of it. Through the tear, Wang Baole could distinctly see another world lying beyond. Perhaps it might be more accurate to say that this tear was like a form of teleportation—the world within lay an immense distance away from where they were.

The universe within the tear contained a single planet, one that was red in color and exuded an extreme heat. One could vaguely see a civilization present on the planet. There were countless lives on it. However, this civilization was about to experience mass sorrow and despair...

This was because a huge meteor had just crashed into the planet. The planet shuddered. It didn’t collapse or disintegrate, but calamity descended. It swept across the entire planet and countless people perished!

As these lives faded, their souls littered the heavens, some even drifting further into the stars. The living couldn't see them, but they were clear to the eyes of one from the Dark Sect. The countless souls of the dead wandered beyond the planet, amongst the stars. They wept and clustered together. There were countless of them...

The planet faded from its deep red into a gray color. It seemed like the planet... was also marching towards death!

The sight stirred Wang Baole's heart once again. He felt that this was a familiar sight. It seemed that he had seen something like this in his dreams, on a wall painting. There was a striking similarity with what he was seeing now.

"Baole, you must remember, the Dark Sect's responsibility is to serve on behalf of the Heavenly Dao and ferry the dead souls. We have to guide them to where they are supposed to go, instead of allowing them to wander the universe..."

"Watch carefully..." the elder said. He raised the lantern oar in his hand and shook it lightly. Wang Baole couldn't tell what spell he cast, but as the lantern oar shook, the dead souls on the planet and in the universe within the tear trembled in unison. They no longer howled. They were like a drowning man who had just grabbed hold of stray straws. They seemed to have seen a lighthouse in the midst of overwhelming darkness. The dead souls turned their eyes towards the elder instantly. In the next instant, they fled towards him!

Countless souls passed through the tear, traveling from one end of the universe to the boat where Wang Baole and the elder stood. They gathered and formed a river of dead souls!

It was a vast river without an end in sight. This river of souls carried the lone boat as it drifted into the distance...

The tear slowly shut. As it disappeared, Wang Baole caught a glance of the planet inside the tear. It had turned completely gray.

Shocked, Wang Baole stared at the river of souls around him before he turned and looked at his master. It was then that his master's quiet and calm voice echoed in his ear.

"This is the Dark Sect's mission. We ferry all dead souls in the entire universe... Baole, why are you in a daze? Start singing the Soul Song!"

Wang Baole shuddered. He opened his mouth instinctively, and a strange melody, like a form of chanting, rang out and echoed in the heavens. It drifted alongside the river of dead souls...

"When the heavens and earth separate, the cycle of fate stops..."

"Knowing what happened in the past, the one who suffers now is..."

"Knowing what's to come in the future, the one who is working hard now is..."

As the song drifted into the distance, countless faces appeared within the river of dead souls. There were faces of the young and the old, of men and women. Some of them appeared to be human, others monsters. They had a look of peace on their faces. They seemed to be filled with joy. There was no pain. They gathered around the boat and moved with the Soul Song.

They traveled into the distance... towards the Dark Sect!

Eons ago, what had been the pinnacle and most glorious era of... the Dark Sect!

From afar, the river of souls seemed vast and endless. A lone boat drifted on the river. On it should have been two figures, one old and one young. However, at that moment, the silhouette of the elder seemed faint and slightly blurry. Only Wang Baole's form grew ever clearer.

Chapter 452: Corpse Face!

Wang Baole's memories regarding the commencement of this journey were blurry. It seemed that his dream had seemed too real, which made everything around him now seem familiar yet foreign to him.

On their way back, after he had sung the Soul Song repeatedly, Wang Baole gazed at the starlit heavens. He couldn't help but think of his dream.

He could vaguely remember that he had really appeared to be the most good looking person in the Federation. He had even had a few romantic partners. Like Bunny, like Zhao Yameng, like Li Wan'er, like Li Yi, like Li Xiu...

That's not right, Li Yi wasn't one of them! Wang Baole thought for a bit. He was slightly confused. He remembered Li Xiu was a man, but his memories weren't clear. This sent him reeling back in shock. He was both doubtful and afraid.

That's impossible... in my dreams... no, I, Wang Baole, am not that sort of person! Wang Baole twitched in fear. He tried to remember what had happened in his dream. He gradually recalled something. He remembered that Li Xiu was only the brother of one of his confidants. That made him sigh with relief.

However, as the memories of his dream surfaced, waves of unwillingness and nostalgia surfaced in his heart unknowingly. They were feelings for his parents in his dream, his friends, his romantic partners, and the Federation...

It's only a dream... Wang Baole sighed in his heart. The elder standing in front of him turned and stared at Wang Baole. He said softly.

"Baole, are you still thinking about the Federation in your dream?"

Upon hearing that, Wang Baole lifted his head and looked at his master. He thought for a bit, then asked, "Master, why do people dream? This dream about the Federation felt too real..."

The elder stared at Wang Baole. There was tender love on his face. He patted Wang Baole on the head, then spoke kindly.

"Baole, as a Dark Child, you must know that there are no dreams in this world. What you see as a dream... is but another you!"

"Another me?" Wang Baole was slightly confused. He was about to question further when he looked down at his master's hand and saw a finger vanishing. He immediately forgot all about his dream. He gasped and shouted.

“Master, your finger...”

The elder lowered his head and looked at his finger. He smiled. There was no hint of surprise or shock in his eyes. When he gazed at Wang Baole again, the kindness in his eyes grew.

“It’s alright, this is an old wound.”

Wang Baole wanted to pursue the matter, but the elder had already turned around. He moved the lantern oar and set the boat drifting into the distance. Slowly, it began to cross the heavens. A long time passed... before a dazzling starlit zone appeared around them.

This field of stars was littered with dazzling planets. The planets numbered in the millions!

On each planet was an illusory gate many times larger than the planet. They stood on each planet and seemed to all look the same. Every gate exuded an ancient aura and looked majestic, providing a spectacular sight.

From afar, one would see endless planets and hence endless gates... Rivers of souls flowed through every illusory gate, circling the field of stars.

There was a large horde of cultivators flying around in the skies. They seemed to be both guides and guards. They bowed respectfully towards Wang Baole’s master when they saw the latter. It was clear from their eyes that they respected the elder deeply and genuinely.

The elder found it difficult to return each greeting, only nodding slightly. He spoke softly, as if to himself and at the same time, as if trying to explain something.

“This is the Gate of Rebirth!”

“The Gate of Rebirth...” Wang Baole murmured. He was filled with awe. The boat had brought them to the center of this galactic domain, and in the middle of it was... an immense and vast planet that exceeded the size of the Solar System!

When Wang Baole saw this planet, shock and awe surged through him.

The planet was simply too big. It was speckled with bright, even colors, and a large horde of souls flew out from within the planet. From afar, it looked like the source of the Dark River. The souls that departed from it formed a river that spread and split into smaller streams. They flowed through the multiple Gates of Rebirth around the planet!

“This is the responsibility of the Dark Sect—rebirth!” The elder’s calm voice rang out. Wang Baole had long since been blown away by the sight before him. He stared with wide eyes and an open mouth until the boat entered the planet that was the size of the Solar System. He then saw countless vast mountains and rivers on the surface of this planet. There was also... a palace that stretched endlessly into the horizon!

In the distant lands, he could see miles and miles of beasts. They didn’t seem violent at all. They appeared to be peaceful beasts, and they were aiding the cultivators in constructing... a majestic stone monument!

The stone monument seemed to be in the beginning stages of construction. Despite that, it already seemed to stretch into the skies. It was a spectacular sight!

Countless Dark Sect cultivators wandered the planet and in the field of stars. Everything felt strange and unfamiliar to Wang Baole, but he kept telling himself that these were all familiar to him. The two vastly different feelings clashed inside him. His breathing grew uneven, and he felt lost and confused most of the time.

Finally, his master's boat brought him to the highest mountain range on this planet. Palaces were in groups, spanning the entire width of the horizon with no end in sight. It wasn't only the land that was littered with countless grand halls and cultivators; the skies were the same. Countless palaces floated in the skies, and countless cultivators made their way around them. Enormous, Kun Peng-like beasts swam in the skies.

Every single thing sent waves of intense emotion through Wang Baole. He didn't even notice that his master had landed the boat outside a palace and had left him. It was only when a voice protested in his ear that Wang Baole finally returned to reality.

"Why are there so many this round? We're going to be so busy. Baole, why are you in a daze? It's not like you haven't seen this before. Quick, come over and help me!" It was a youth who spoke to him. He wore black robes, and there were freckles on his face. The expression on his face was one of exasperation. He stared at the sky and at the wide river formed from the great crowd of souls that Ming Kunzi had ferried over and sighed.

Wang Baole turned his head hastily. A familiar feeling rose from his memory as he looked at the youth. He could tell that this was his senior brother, so he hurried over. Only, he didn't know what to do. After some hesitation, he asked, "Senior Brother, what should I do?"

"Are you trying to shirk your duties again? Baole, there are too many dead souls this round. Your senior brother won't be able to handle them all, so you can't sneak off again this time!" The youth grabbed Wang Baole's arm and pulled him into a great hall that was half the size of a city. It was expansive, and it had nine statues erected inside, one of which was a statue of Ming Kunzi!

It was clear that the other eight statues held the same status as Ming Kunzi... they were of the other Grand Elders of the Dark Sect!

In the center of the nine statues were bronze mirrors the size of a man. There were countless mirrors—at least a million of them. Before every bronze mirror sat a Dark Sect cultivator, who drew continuously in front of the mirror...

Amongst the million or so bronze mirrors, two mirrors stood out. They were not only bigger, but they were of a different color. The rest were all bronze while these two were purple. They seemed to be the primary mirrors!

Wang Baole was yanked along by his senior brother. They swept past the greetings from the rest and arrived before the two main mirrors. His senior brother seemed determined not to let him escape.

Wang Baole's head swelled. Everything around him seemed foreign yet familiar, but he really didn't know what he was supposed to do next. He scratched his head and asked again.

“Senior Brother, what exactly should I do?”

The youth with freckles on his face gave Wang Baole a deep, long look. He asked softly.

“Baole, don’t you know how to draw the Corpse Face?”

Corpse Face! Wang Baole shuddered. He stared at the purple mirror before him. He could see a soul forming in the mirror. It cupped its fists towards Wang Baole, and its face was formless and without features...

“Baole, don’t do a hasty job. When souls arrive here, the faces of their past lives would gradually fade away. You have to listen to the guidance of the Heavenly Dao and draw them a new face. What you draw will determine what they will be born with in their next life!” Having said that, the youth ignored Wang Baole. He used his finger as a brush and painted the face on the dead soul in the mirror.

Wang Baole’s breathing grew uneven. He naturally knew how to perform the Dark Corpse Face Art. What he didn’t know was whether he had originally known how to do it, or if he had learned it in his dream. His memories were in a mess. He could see the dead soul waiting, so he set his thoughts aside and lifted his right hand. He shut his eyes. The Dark Corpse Face Art, which he had learned, appeared in his mind.

First, the Corpse Eyebrow, then the Corpse Eyes, followed by the Corpse Nose and the Corpse Lips, finally forming... the Corpse Face!

A moment later, Wang Baole opened his eyes. Just as right index finger was about to land as he began to start painting, a sudden consciousness descended in his mind. He could somehow see a baby girl being born on a planet. He could see her entire life, from birth to death...

This wasn’t the soul’s past life, but that of its next!

He couldn’t clearly discern its fate, but he could see what it was supposed to look like. Its face... etched itself into his mind as a force guided his hand. Slowly, he began to draw...

Chapter 453: Senior Brother Chen Qing

Wang Baole remembered the girl to be very pretty and very good-looking. But she was too thin... it seemed as if a breeze would knock her over.

Her thinness was what resulted in her weak immunity. In this strange state of consciousness, Wang Baole seemed to remember that in her next life, she had perished because of this exact reason.

Wang Baole felt that he should help this soul while he was painting the Corpse Face. He added a few additional strokes while following the image that had surfaced in his memory... Finally, he was done. He looked at the chubby-looking soul in the mirror and smiled, pleased with himself.

With a wave of his hand, the bewildered soul vanished, only to be replaced with another soul...

Wang Baole began his life of painting at the Dark Sect. He painted Corpse Faces every day. The fewest he painted were ten thousand faces, the most forty to fifty thousand faces a day. He had still been

unfamiliar with the art, but he soon got used to it and began to paint with ease. He improved at a startling rate.

He didn't even need to look at the mirror. He could simply lift his hand and paint. Such an ability would prove to be useful and extremely effective when facing opponents in battle.

Time passed. It had been two weeks since Wang Baole returned to the Dark Sect. During this period, besides painting Corpse Faces, the face that he saw the most was his freckle-faced senior brother.

After finding out that Wang Baole had a dream while following their master off to ferry souls, and had woken up feeling slightly confused, his senior brother, Chen Qing, expressed great sympathy towards Wang Baole. He helped him organize his memories. This allowed Wang Baole to slowly recollect and clarify his memories during this period.

His memories prior to entering the Dark Sect remained vague, but his memories of the Dark Sect grew clearer. He knew that he wasn't only Ming Kunzi's disciple but that he also had more than a hundred senior brothers...

They were all Ming Kunzi's disciples. Their ages differed, with the eldest of them having already trained for nearly half a century. He himself had many disciples as well. Wang Baole was the youngest of all these disciples. Despite his young age and his later admission to the sect, his rank was considerably high.

This resulted in a great many disciples addressing him as Uncle-Master or other respectful terms when he was in the sect. Wang Baole felt extremely pleased with their address. This also further strengthened his resolve to become the sect lord of the Dark Sect!

He felt that this was the path that most suited him. The Federation President was something that happened in a dream. Even though he felt it quite a loss when he thought back about it, he reminded himself that he had simply woken up too soon. Else, he firmly believed that he would've become the Federation President in his dream.

As his memories of the Dark Sect came back to him, he also remembered the status that the Dark Sect held in this part of the universe. The Dark Sect controlled rebirth and death in this part of the universe. All that had perished were under its jurisdiction. The Dark Sect reigned supreme here, over countless civilizations and countless sects. It represented death!

This could clearly be seen in the name of this part of the universe. It was called... the Dark Universe!

The universe of the Dark Sect!

The place Wang Baole was only formed a small part of the Dark Universe. The Dark Sect was spread out across nine parts in the universe. These nine starfields were scattered across space, and a Grand Elder presided over each starfield. This region was presided over by Ming Kunzi!

While the Dark Sect was strong and powerful, the sect wasn't without its foe. Its archenemy was... formed from numerous powerful entities and civilizations that didn't wish to die. As a result, they came together and formed... the Never-Ending Clan!

They were called the Never-Ending Clan because "Never-Ending" represented the absence of an end. It stood for their desire to live forever. There would never be a day where they would face true death.

Even if they should fall from grace, they would be reborn according to their own will instead of entering the cycle of rebirth, where all traces of their past lives would be wiped away before they were reborn into the next life!

The two entities were like life and death. They clashed numerous times in space. However, there seemed to be a pattern to their dance. There were never large-scale wars or battles. A balance had been struck. This was because the Never-Ending Clan didn't have full confidence of victory against the Dark Sect.

The Dark Sect had no ambitions of their own. The mission of the Dark Sect was to ferry the souls of the dead. They were to serve on behalf of the Heavenly Dao!

They didn't act in aggression. After all, balance was also a part of the Heavenly Dao!

Everything should be strange and foreign to him, but Wang Baole could still sense familiar memories surfacing clearly in his mind. He finally had a basic grasp of the Dark Sect and the universe.

He also realized what the stone monument the huge hordes of beasts and cultivators had been trying to construct on that planet was...

"This is the Dark Child Monument!" Wang Baole's senior brother, the freckle-faced youth, gazed at the distant stone monument and told Wang Baole. There was a tinge of pride in his eyes when he said that, as well as a deep fervor.

"Dark Child, this is an identity and a symbol!

"Only when one becomes a Dark Child could he venture out alone and be qualified to ferry the souls of the dead... There are two ways to become a Dark Child. One is what you and I did, which is to become a disciple under the nine Grand Elders. By doing so, you'll automatically be seen as a Dark Child!

"But that is only a reflection of your status... it doesn't mean that you're a real Dark Child. To become a real Dark Child, there is only one way, the second way. That is... to get your name on the Dark Child Monument!

"You can't do it yourself. Only a Grand Elder has the right to put a name there. After that, whether the name remains on the monument is yet another important step. This would involve the approval and recognition by the Heavenly Dao!

"Baole, if the Heavenly Dao acknowledges you, your name will remain on the stone monument. If it doesn't, the Dark Child Monument will wipe it off after our master has carved it into the monument!"

"As for my name... our master will carve it into the monument after this Dark Child Monument is built. I believe that the Heavenly Dao will recognize and approve of me. That's why you have to buck up, Baole!" There was a fierce light shining in Chen Qing's eyes. At this moment, he wasn't the youth that had been painting Corpse Faces with Wang Baole. He was one of the disciples of Ming Kunzi, whose cultivation might not be the highest, but whose natural gifts and talents were incomparable!

After regaining his memories, Wang Baole remembered that Chen Qing's gifts were so great that they were beyond this world. The other Grand Elders in the Dark Sect had said that he had surpassed all limits. In fact, he might even become the tenth Grand Elder many years later!

His cultivation was also extremely powerful currently. In Wang Baole's memories, the Dark Sect categorized the levels of cultivation into five great realms: the Spirit Immortal realm, the Planet realm, the Eternal Star realm, the Galaxy realm, and the Universe realm!

Each great realm was further split into different stages. For example, the first Spirit Immortal realm was divided into the Foundation Establishment realm, the Core Formation realm, the Nascent Soul realm, the Soul Conduit realm, and finally, the Spirit Immortal realm!

The Planet realm, the Eternal Star realm, and the Galaxy realm worked the same way. The final Universe realm was the only exception. It was mysterious and unfathomable. At present, only the ninth Grand Elder had reached the Universe realm!

The other Grand Elders were all at the perfected Galaxy realm. The next step towards the Universe realm was extremely challenging.

Chen Qing himself wasn't yet three hundred years old, but his cultivation had progressed at an astonishing rate. He had a breakthrough six months ago, advancing from the final stage in the Planet realm into the first stage of the Eternal Star realm!

Such natural talent could even be deemed as a gift from the heavens!

Wang Baole looked at his overperforming senior brother, who had stolen all the limelight, and sighed secretly. He felt such immense stress. As his memories returned to him, he began to remember what freaks his senior brothers and senior sisters were. Each one of them was worse than the next. The strongest of them was already at the Galaxy realm.

The weakest of them was already at the Planet realm... he was the only one still at the perfected Foundation Establishment realm within the Spirit Immortal realm. He hadn't yet even reached the Core Formation realm...

While Wang Baole was lamenting inwardly, Chen Qing, who had been bursting with passionate, heartfelt emotion, seemed to have suddenly remembered something. He looked around, then lowered his head and grabbed hold of Wang Baole's shoulder. He had a mysterious look on his face as he whispered, "Baole, do you know whose soul I met when I drew the Corpse Face yesterday?"

Wang Baole eyed his senior brother, who was trying to act mysterious but had a perverted look on his face. He rolled his eyes.

"Senior Brother, I've regained a significant portion of my memories. You don't have to scare me..."

"When the living perishes, unless there are massive deaths that might have been a result of the destruction of a planet, we of the Dark Sect are often not required to ferry those souls personally. The Heavenly Dao would lead and guide them to the nearest Rebirth Abyss of the Dark Sect, and the souls will enter our Corpse Face Mirrors. We will then paint the faces for their next lives..."

"When we are painting the Corpse Faces, the will of the Heavenly Dao will descend upon us and let us know what the soul will look like in their next life. We can paint their faces, but we won't be able to know this soul's past life or how they looked in that past life. That's why you won't be able to recognize anyone, no matter who appears in the mirror!"

Chen Qing stared. He looked around, then leaned closer to Wang Baole and whispered.

“Of course, I’m aware that we can’t see the past life of the dead soul, but I can see its next life. Yesterday... I met a soul and saw her next life. She’s going to be my Dao partner! She’ll accompany me by my side. We will love each other for the rest of our lives, until the end of time. We’ll even have three children...”

“That’s why I got excited. I unleashed a hundred and twenty percent of my ability and painted her into a beauty. Both her figure and her face aligned perfectly with my aesthetics!” At that, Chen Qing smiled happily. He had a look of anticipation on his face.

“You mean you can do that!” Wang Baole was stunned. He found that incredulous.

Chapter 454: The Dark Art, Soul Guidance

As Chen Qing continued to bask in his self-satisfaction, and as Wang Baole looked on with incredulity and envy, a soft cough sounded behind them. It echoed and made the self-satisfied Chen Qing shudder violently. He turned around hastily, the happiness on his face being replaced by a serious expression. His earlier perverted look transformed to one of righteousness as he lowered his voice and bowed.

“Greetings, Master!”

It had to be said that Chen Qing was indeed very experienced. That was why he had been able to react so quickly. Wang Baole was comparably more inexperienced and slower on the uptake. It took him a moment to turn around and see his master, Ming Kunzi, standing behind them.

“Greetings, Master!” Wang Baole bowed hurriedly. He didn’t think that he had been slow to react, but that his senior brother, Chen Qing, must have felt sheepish at his own behavior and thus reacted more quickly.

Wang Baole noticed that their master, Ming Kunzi, didn’t seem to notice Chen Qing. He was instead gazing kindly at him.

“Baole, how’s your Corpse Face coming along?”

Wang Baole hastily replied upon hearing what his master said.

“Dear master, your humble disciple has already familiarized himself with the Corpse Face Art. I’ve followed the will of the Heavenly Dao exactly when I painted the Corpse Face for the dead souls. In addition, every time, sympathy and compassion would rise in my heart, so I’d draw a few more strokes for them.” Wang Baole was extremely pleased with his painting skills. When he said that, Chen Qing, who was standing beside him, blinked. He seemed to find his master’s question slightly strange. Feeling slightly guilty, he decided to steer the conversation away. At present, his Junior Brother Baole was the best way to change the topic.

He spoke hastily, “Master, don’t listen to Junior Brother Baole speak rubbish. I was next to him and saw very clearly that Junior Brother Baole has been mischievous. His Corpse Faces were indeed decent, but this guy... I don’t know why, but he kept painting fatties... It didn’t matter if they were men or women, they all turned out to be fatties. I can almost imagine the future, when this batch of souls is reborn, that

the world would suddenly be filled with a whole lot of fatties...” Chen Qing sighed. He lowered his head and winked at Wang Baole. He wanted to tell his Junior Brother that he was sorry, but this senior brother had no other choice. He could only use his Junior Brother as a distraction.

Wang Baole glared. He wanted to explain himself, but then he saw what his senior brother was trying to hint at him. He held back his feelings of injustice and began to sulk. He didn't say a word.

Ming Kunzi didn't seem to pay much mind to what Chen Qing said, nor did he pursue it further. Instead, he gave Wang Baole a few tips on the finer details of painting Corpse Faces. Next to them, Chen Qing appeared obedient. He nodded from time to time, as if agreeing with what his master had just said, as if his master was simply too amazing.

After a while, Ming Kunzi left. When he was leaving, Wang Baole noticed his master's right hand. It appeared more blurry than before. It was like what had happened on the boat, when he had seen his master's finger.

The sight shocked Wang Baole. He was about to ask his master about it when the latter went away.

“What is the reason behind that?” Wang Baole hesitated before he communicated his doubts to his senior brother. When Chen Qing heard his question, there was surprise and shock on his face.

“You must have made a mistake, I don't see anything.”

Wang Baole was caught in a slight daze. He thought hard about it and wondered if he had indeed made a mistake. The next day, when he went to visit his master again, he paid greater attention and observed that his master's hand appeared normal. He couldn't help but rub his eyes. He thought perhaps there really was something wrong with his eyes.

The doubts in his heart didn't lessen though. He simply kept them to himself.

Time passed steadily. Another two weeks passed. During this period, Wang Baole continued to paint Corpse Faces every day. With the great number of paintings he did, his Corpse Face Art reached great heights. In addition, with his senior brother helping him to regain his memories, he began to recall the second level of the Dark Art.

The second level of the Dark Art was called... Soul Guidance!

The first level of the Dark Art is Corpse Face, and the second level is Soul Guidance. This is a divine power and a cultivation technique... the Dark Fire is like Spirit Qi. It will continue to accumulate inside the body... As Wang Baole's memories continued to surface, he consolidated what he now knew about the Dark Art in a manner coherent to himself.

He also knew that the Dark Corpse Face Art was akin to a cultivation technique that was taught to Foundation Establishment realm disciples in the Dark Sect. By mastering this technique, one might be able to achieve a breakthrough in the Foundation Establishment realm and form the Dark Core, and, after which, begin to practice Soul Guidance. However, this way of training was no longer in fashion.

To those who were gifted, the Dark Sect would have the disciple practice Corpse Face until they reached the perfected Foundation Establishment realm. After which, they would begin to practice the second level of the Dark Art, Soul Guidance. This would spur the mutation of the Dark Fire inside their body, and

the Dark Fire would grow in strength and number. When the disciple formed their Core, it would be stronger for it.

This was because the Soul Guidance technique accelerated the absorption of Dark Qi and compressed the Dark Fire inside one's body.

This allowed multiple Dark Fires to appear. The number of Dark Fire appearances would differ according to each individual's natural talents.

According to the Dark Sect's records, the highest number of times the Dark Fires multiplied was eighty-one times. This meant that eighty-one Dark Fires layered over one another and eventually formed a Dark Core. Its power was immense. The person who had achieved such a feat was... the Senior Brother beside him, Chen Qing!

Others had managed to reach a couple of dozen layers as well.

As a means of attack, the Soul Guidance technique would summon a Dark Hand from inside one's body. This Dark Hand could pierce through the flesh of all living creatures and grab hold of its soul!

This was Soul Guidance!

Powerful beyond measure!

If a Dark Core realm cultivator unleashed this technique, its power would be even greater!

After regaining these memories, Wang Baole's breathing quickened. Besides painting Corpse Faces every day, he began to practice the Soul Guidance technique. It was still a struggle for him to practice this divine power, but its effect of increasing one's Dark Fires was clear, especially where Wang Baole was concerned. The Dark Fires inside his body grew from its original three to four, then five, then six, then seven...

At the end of the two weeks, he had seventeen Dark Fires inside his body. When they were layered together, their combined power surpassed that of what he had in the past!

Now, when he walked around in the Dark Sect, the mere aura that he exuded would strike fear and awe into the hearts of those souls outside the sect who had sinned greatly in their past lives and had been punished and made into servants. When they saw him, they would quake in their boots and prostrate themselves before him.

This was an awesome aura that Wang Baole hadn't possessed when he had first returned to the Dark Sect!

Wang Baole had thought that the days that followed would be as peaceful as they were now, that they would pass quietly. However, after seven days passed, suddenly, one day at noon, sudden winds swept into the Dark Sect. Lightning descended, and the heavens boomed with thunder. The skies darkened as an overpowering aura descended from the starry skies!

The aura was simply too overpowering. There were seven presences, and six of them had surpassed the power of a heavenly presence. When they descended, the entire sky quaked, and the planets beyond the Dark Sect shuddered. All living creatures felt a weight upon them. It was as if time itself had slowed down.

They were secondary to the seventh presence. As soon as it appeared, all planets beyond the Dark Sect let loose a loud booming sound. It was as if they were about to collapse into themselves. One could even see lines of fractures appearing on each planet. The Gates of Rebirth on the planets began to sway, and their brightness dimmed. The rivers of souls passing through the gates trembled and froze, seemingly unable to move.

Every Dark Sect disciple on the planets began breathing quickly and unevenly. Alarm and shock rose like waves in their minds. It was the same for the giant planet that the Dark Sect was on. Giant beasts trembled, countless souls shrieked, the earth shook, and the heavens thundered. In the skies above the Dark Sect appeared... seven suns!

Amongst the seven suns, six were crimson red. Only one was purple!

As soon as they appeared, a voice filled with intense fury and violence howled from within the purple sun!

“Ming Kunzi, hand over my daughter’s soul!”

As the howl thundered out, an intense purple light exploded from the purple sun. The same happened with the surrounding six red suns. Light blanketed the entire region in an instant. Violence and heat, carrying infinite destruction, seemed to be threatening the complete annihilation of the region! It appeared as if it was about to crush and turn everything into dust!

As the overwhelming power erupted, within the Dark Sect, an equally overpowering aura erupted. Numerous moons rose to the skies. There were thirteen bright moons, and each one of them exuded a power that rivaled the red suns. They pushed back the intense aura of the red suns, and it was then that the fourteenth moon rose into the sky!

The color of this moon was black!

Chapter 455: No Future!

“You’ve gone too far!” The instant the fourteenth moon rose into the sky, Ming Kunzi’s voice thundered out from within, answering the voice within the purple sun. Ming Kunzi’s voice was laced with ice. It was devoid of all emotions and seemed to contain the will of the Heavenly Dao as it echoed in the heavens.

As soon as the voice appeared, the region, which had been quaking and weighed down by the appearance of the seven suns, seemed to recover from said appearance. It was as if everything had been erased in that instant. It was as if... the Heavenly Dao had descended suddenly and enveloped the Dark Sect. The Heavenly Dao was turning the tables on the seven suns that had intruded into the space and began a counterattack!

The heavens thundered, and the seven suns shook. The purple sun shone even brighter as a figure appeared within the sun. It was a middle-aged man wearing a purple-colored robe. Behind him was a gigantic illusory figure. It seemed to be fused with the sun and had three heads and six arms!

“Ming Kunzi, your Dark Sect dares ferry the souls of my children. For this... we, the Never-Ending Clan, demand an answer!”

“Every living thing is a part of the cycle of rebirth. The Heavenly Dao itself is a cycle. One who has awakened has no need for dreams. There is only the next life... this principle cannot be changed!” Ming Kunzi, who was wearing a black robe, stepped out from the fourteenth black moon as his words rang out. He stood in the sky as he spoke coolly.

“Cannot be changed?” The middle-aged man stepped out from the purple sun. In his anger, he laughed. He raised his right hand. Instantly, a blinding light erupted from the six red suns surrounding him, and light flooded the entire area in an instant. From afar, it was like a red sea, which roared and surged towards Ming Kunzi.

Ming Kunzi snorted. He waved his hand as well, and a black light spread out instantly. It was like the dark night, and it clashed with the incoming red light. The two began a battle in the sky, in a manner that Wang Baole found incomprehensible!

The heavens shook, and the entire region quavered. No one could be seen in the fight though. It was only red and black clashing back and forth in the sky, pushing against and devouring each other!

Even the passing of time seemed to be affected. The time governing heaven and earth was no longer the same, and a breath on the earth was a day to the two entities in the sky!

It was then, as Wang Baole’s breathing grew uneven, that a large hand appeared from inside the red light in the sky. It went through the sea of light and headed towards the palace where the Dark Sect was, making a sudden grab!

“How dare you!” Ming Kunzi’s roar boomed and resonated in the heavens. A lantern oar suddenly reached out from within the black light in the sky. It expanded without stopping, growing until it could hold the heavens up. Then, it slammed towards the giant hand!

It was still too late. The other had come prepared. With a single grab, the giant hand pulled a soul out from within the Dark Sect’s Rebirth Hall!

It was the soul of a woman whose Corpse Face had been completed. She was beautiful, and her eyes were shut as if she were sleeping. If not for today’s incident, she might have been led away under the laws of the Heavenly Dao a few days later, to be reborn and begin her next life.

She had been forcibly pulled out because of what was happening today. However, just as she was led out, Ming Kunzi’s lantern oar had come slamming forward to stop the giant hand. The giant hand was unable to withstand the attack and disintegrated instantly. The shockwaves from their collision contained the immense power of destruction. An Eternal Star realm cultivator wouldn’t have survived it, much less a mere soul.

Before the eyes of everyone in the Dark Sect, the soul was destroyed by the shockwaves of this collision. In an instant... it was disintegrated and turned into dust!

No one could tell if the Never-Ending Clan had made the killing blow or if Ming Kunzi had been the one who had done it. Regardless, the soul had been torn apart. It had disappeared from this world and no longer existed.

The hurricanes that erupted from the collision between the lantern oar and the giant hand hadn’t only destroyed this soul, but they formed waves that swept through the entire Dark Sect. Despite the

protection of array formations, a blow from such a powerful cultivator of the Never-Ending Clan was still immensely powerful. All cultivators whose cultivation was below that of the Planet realm were assaulted by a loud buzzing in their heads.

Wang Baole was only at the perfected Foundation Establishment realm. He only heard a loud buzzing explosion in his ears before his vision went black, and he passed out.

After an unknown period of time, he finally woke up. The fight had already ended. The first thing he saw when he woke up was his master Ming Kunzi's back.

After inspecting Wang Baole and ensuring that there was nothing wrong with him, Ming Kunzi left. Before he left, he saw the hesitation and doubt in Wang Baole's eyes. He gave Wang Baole a deep, meaningful look.

"Baole, we of the Dark Sect serve the Heavenly Dao. No matter who we were in the past, this is our mission now. You must remember this... we must not reverse the cycle of life and death!" After saying that, Ming Kunzi turned around and slowly walked away.

Wang Baole was silent. He had mixed feelings regarding this. He couldn't tell if the Never-Ending Clan was right or if the Dark Sect was right. After doing some research in the Dark Sect, he soon found out that the person who had barged into their sect that day was Tuo Mu. He was one of the nine Great Emperors of the Never-Ending Clan!

The red suns were the six Divine Kings under his charge!

Their cultivation had exceeded the Eternal Star realm, and they were at the Galaxy realm. They were the most powerful cultivators in the entire universe. As for the daughter... during the long eons, perhaps even Tuo Mu himself wouldn't remember how many daughters he had.

After Wang Baole read through those documents, he fell silent. He didn't understand what was going on, but he knew that there was a possibility that the Emperor of the Never-Ending Clan hadn't come knocking at their door because of his daughter's soul!

Wang Baole wasn't sure of the exact reasons. He could not find any answers. But, having seen the truly powerful, he began to experience intense anxiety regarding his own cultivation. Compared to them, he felt he was too weak. He was as fragile as a twig in a storm.

After waking up, Wang Baole began to concentrate on his training. He could sense that his senior brother had also gone into seclusion as he hadn't seen the latter for a long time.

Another month passed. Wang Baole's Dark Fires grew to as many as thirty-seven. It was then when Ming Kunzi brought him to a great hall inside the Dark Sect one day. The great hall was filled with black mist.

The great hall was surrounded by a thick mist, as was the inside of the hall. One could only see the center of the hall, where there was a big, colorless pool. Black mist rose from the pool, and bubbles kept forming and bursting inside it.

This was the Soul Pond!

There were many Soul Ponds in the Dark Sect, and this pond was only one of them. After dead souls were led to the Dark Sect, they would first gather here. They would then enter the Corpse Face Mirror

and have their Corpse Face painted by a disciple. After, they would either be sent to the Path of Rebirth or the Rebirth Hallucination Array Formation. Through the hallucination, they would have their characters reformed. Finally, they would await the Heavenly Dao to lead them into the river of souls, where they would flow through the Gate of Rebirth.

There were countless souls in the river of souls that tossed and turned in the pond. Some struggled to climb out with the rising bubbles, while more rose to the surface of the pond and revealed their faces.

There were men and women, old and young. Some faces were peaceful, while others were furious. Some wept, while others laughed. They were of different colors as well. Some were the same color as the pond, while others were pitch-black. Even the waters of the pond couldn't cleanse them within a short period of time.

"The colorless ones are the ordinary souls. The black ones mean that they carry an intense grudge within them. Baole, unleash your Soul Guidance technique and draw three souls from the Soul Pond. Purify them and put them to use for your future Dark Artifacts... as your Artifact Spirits!" Ming Kunzi spoke slowly as Wang Baole stared at the Soul Pond. He had a deep, unfathomable look in his eyes as he stared at Wang Baole.

"Artifact Spirits?" Wang Baole could feel his memories blurring.

"A Dark Child requires three Dark Artifacts, a Boat Spirit, a Black Robe, and a Lantern Oar. These are items that every Dark Child should have. The Artifact Spirits within these Dark Artifacts should be chosen by yourself." Upon saying that, Ming Kunzi spoke no more.

Wang Baole thought for a while. He vaguely remembered that this was indeed the case, so he didn't think further. Instead, he turned and stared at what rested beneath the pool. After a moment, he took a deep breath and activated his Dark Fire, attempting to unleash the Soul Guidance technique. After failing six times, he finally succeeded on his seventh try, successfully unleashing the Soul Guidance technique!

An illusory large hand suddenly reached out from within his body and dipped into the pool, grabbing hold of three souls!

The first was a large, fearsome-looking man!

The second was a sullen-faced elder!

And the last... was a young boy of seven or eight!

Chapter 456: The Three Intractable Souls

Wang Baole himself didn't know how he had managed to pull those three souls out. Perhaps some powers that he had led his Soul Guiding Hand to plunge itself into the pool and pull them out naturally.

"Every Dark Child's fate is entwined with the Artifact Spirits in their Dark Artifacts. It seems like the three souls in this Soul Pool are going to belong to you." Ming Kunzi smiled faintly as he watched Wang Baole unleash the Soul Guidance technique and pull out three souls from the Soul Pool.

“But they are all black souls. It means that they’ve sinned gravely in their past lives. They cannot yet enter the cycle of rebirth. You have to purify them. Since your fate is linked with theirs, you have the responsibility to cleanse them of their sins and their grudges. You have to make them willing to follow you and become your Artifact Spirits!”

After hearing that, Wang Baole looked at the three souls he had caught and their pitch-black forms. At present, they were caught in his illusory hand. They appeared to be nervous, but they were all displaying different behaviors.

The young boy had a face dark with violence. It seemed that the more nervous he was, the angrier he got. He stared unblinkingly at Wang Baole. It was as if he would swallow Wang Baole whole as soon as the opportunity presented itself.

Compared to the young boy, who had every emotion shown clearly, the elder next to him was different. He had looked sullen earlier. Now, however, he had calmed down. He cupped his fists towards Wang Baole and lowered his head. It seemed as if he was submitting himself to Wang Baole, but Wang Baole could feel his true feelings while he was held within the illusory hand. The elder was obviously devious and cunning. He appeared submissive but was actually filled with malicious intent!

The tall, fearsome-looking man seemed to be more simple-minded. Although he appeared fierce and frightening, after being caught and pulled out of the pool, he began to look around nervously. When he saw the Soul Pools surrounding him and the few female disciples guarding the pools, his eyes brightened immediately. There was a perverted look in his eyes. He almost drooled. Of course, as a soul, he had no saliva to speak of.

His perverted and excited appearance made it clear that he was a pervert!

“This... master, it’s going to be a challenge purifying these souls.” After examining the three souls, Wang Baole’s head began to throb. He wondered if he should discuss further with his master and if he could make a second attempt and get another new batch of souls.

Ming Kunzi seemed to have guessed what Wang Baole was thinking. He glared at Wang Baole, ignored the latter, then turned and left. Before he left, he gave Wang Baole a deadline to cleanse these souls.

“Stop having random thoughts. You have a month. You must complete the purification!”

Wang Baole saw his master’s sudden insistent stance and his head throbbed. Exasperated, after his master left, he brought the three souls back to his residence at the Dark Sect.

He released the three souls in his residence. As soon as they appeared, they immediately checked out the residence. Wang Baole didn’t pay them much mind and said, “Let’s talk this through. You’ve sinned gravely in your past lives and lost the right to be reborn. Your only option is to become my Artifact Spirits. That’s why...”

Just as Wang Baole said that, before he was even done with everything he wanted to say, the boy’s eyes flashed. He retreated hastily and instantly. It seemed like he wanted to escape this place. There was an array formation placed in Wang Baole’s residence, however. With a thunderous boom, the boy’s head slammed into the array formation. He cried out in pain and retreated immediately. Violence flashed in

his eyes, and he howled and lunged at Wang Baole. It seemed like he wanted to swallow Wang Baole whole.

Before he could draw near, he was burned by the Dark Fire that had leaped out from Wang Baole's body. He screamed again. He finally stopped his malicious acts and instead began to shudder. When he stared at Wang Baole, though, his eyes remained bright with violence and madness. He seemed untameable.

Wang Baole began to feel unhappy. He glared at the young boy, then turned his eyes towards the other two souls.

The pervert seemed scornful towards the young man, and his attitude towards Wang Baole was the same. He yawned. He did not try to flee, but the look on his face seemed to say it all. You want to let me become your Artifact Spirit? Impossible!

Similarly, the elder didn't attempt to escape. Compared to the other two souls, his expression remained the same, revealing neither joy nor anger. His head was lowered like an elderly servant.

"I won't mince words with you. If you don't agree to become my Artifact Spirits, your souls will be destroyed and turned to dust!" Wang Baole was beginning to grow annoyed. He felt that trying to cleanse these three souls was just a waste of his time. He couldn't see the sins that they had committed in their past lives, but from the color of their souls and their current attitudes, he could somewhat guess the kind of raping and pillaging, as well as the murder and savagery, they had committed!

"You want to make me your Artifact Spirit? Impossible. My dream is to never grow old and for my parents to take care of me and be by my side forever. I've already gotten that and enjoyed it for quite a while, so I don't care if you kill me. So what if I die? It's not as if I haven't done that before!" The young boy sneered, his voice shrill.

Wang Baole was shocked by the boy's words because the young boy looked to be about seven or eight years old. He thought about what the latter had just revealed as his ambition and didn't say anything.

The pervert next to him kept yawning, giving Wang Baole a sideways glance. He eyed Wang Baole's thighs and his chest and immediately looked bored.

"If you'd been a woman and had been willing to play with me, I might have agreed after enjoying myself. You just do whatever you like. Kill me. I'm not afraid! Even if my soul turns to dust, millions of like-minded comrades will receive my will. They will conquer all the opposite sex in the world. That is my ambition!" The pervert proclaimed proudly, standing taller as he spoke.

Such grand ambitions made the expression on Wang Baole's face turn even odder. He nodded his head, then turned towards the old fox that gave the appearance of an old servant.

The old pervert smiled and cupped his fists towards Wang Baole in greeting.

"Esteemed Dark Child, I cannot agree to this matter. I won't hide the truth from you. I was the State Preceptor of the Ku Ling kingdom in my past life. I reported to one man while tens of thousands of men reported to me. My only regret is that I was only able to serve my office for three hundred years. I haven't had enough, so how could I become your Artifact Spirit?"

Wang Baole nodded again as he stared at the three souls filled with pride and arrogance. Then, he laughed suddenly, pointing at the small boy.

“You want to never grow up and for your parents to take care of you and be by your side forever, right? You’re a good kid, so I’ll help you!” With that, Wang Baole lifted his right hand and grabbed hold of the boy. With a series of hand seals, he threw him into the array formation inside his residence.

The array formation started transforming. It was like a hurricane, and it swallowed the young boy’s soul instantly. Wang Baole made a series of hand seals and adjusted the array formation. Then, he looked at the pervert.

“You want to conquer the opposite sex of the entire world, right? That’s easy. I’ll fulfill your wish!” As soon as Wang Baole said that, he didn’t give the pervert any time to react. He waved his big hand and pulled the pervert into the hurricane. He adjusted the array formation once again before he turned and looked at the elder.

The elder had been reeling back with alarm. He didn’t know what was going to happen to the other two souls, but he sensed that his fate after being thrown in the array formation was going to be worse than death. He was about to speak, but it was too late. Wang Baole’s large hand had grabbed hold of him and flung the old fox into the array formation. He thought he heard Wang Baole snorting just as he entered the array formation.

“Weren’t you regretting the fact that you were only State Preceptor for three hundred years? No problem, I’ll help answer your prayers, I’ll make sure you have no regrets!”

After saying that, Wang Baole adjusted the array formation once again. The array formation that he had thrown the three souls into was the Rebirth Hallucination Array Formation of the Dark Sect. The array formation was used to reform a dead soul’s character, to ensure a clean break between his past life and his next life. It was also used by disciples to gain enlightenment. They could enter it for training. After all, the Rebirth Hallucination Array Formation was linked to the will of the Heavenly Dao. It could conjure the cycle of life, death, and rebirth.

At the same time, with sufficient access rights, it could also create specific illusory worlds. Both people and souls thrown into this world wouldn’t be able to discern truth from illusion. The person controlling the illusion could also control the passing of time in this world.

For the old fox who had been a State Preceptor in his past life, he created a universe filled with war. He would once again take up the office of State Preceptor in this world...

For the great pervert, the task was simpler. Wang Baole adjusted the array formation and created a world where he was the only man in a matriarchal society...

As for the young boy, the task was equally simple. Wang Baole answered all his wishes and created a perfect world according to his dreams.

The key point was in the passing of time in these worlds. He had synchronized the worlds such that... a day in the outside world would be equivalent to ten thousand years in the illusory worlds!

Having done the above, Wang Baole began to practice his Soul Guidance technique. Three days later, the three souls were shelved to the back of his mind. Two weeks passed...

Chapter 457: Master, You've Finally Arrived!

Wang Baole had grown more familiar during the two weeks' training with Soul Guidance, the second level of the Dark Art. However, his success rate remained dismal. He didn't even want to think about using it as a form of attack successfully.

Wang Baole knew that this was all because of his cultivation. After all, this was a technique meant for one at the Core Formation realm.

What he needed to do wasn't to wield the Soul Guidance technique but to use it as an aid to strengthen and grow his Dark Fires. He needed to use it to multiply his Dark Fires and prepare for his Core Formation.

At present, he had increased the number of his Dark Fires to sixty-three Dark Fires. Every eruption of his cultivation was an incredible display of power. It was many times greater than what he had been capable of in the past!

The Dark Sect had a minimum requirement for gifted disciples at the verge of Core Formation. They needed to have at least thirty-six Dark Fires. Wang Baole had surpassed the minimum requirement vastly. However, he felt that he still had room to grow!

During his training, Wang Baole completely forgot about the three souls he had thrown into the Rebirth Hallucination Array Formation. The deadline his master had given him to purify the vengeful souls slowly approached. Another seven days passed. Wang Baole, who finally managed to reach seventy Dark Fires, suddenly remembered the assignment his master had given him.

I think I've forgotten something... Wang Baole blinked. He stared at the array formation sheepishly.

I recall I adjusted the passing of time such that ten thousand years would pass in the illusory world for every day in the outside world... Wang Baole coughed awkwardly. He decided that the three souls had carried their dreams and ambitions into the illusory worlds. Even though he had almost forgotten about their existence, but... now that he thought about it, this wasn't really a mistake on his part.

His mind was put to ease at that thought. He stood before the Rebirth Hallucination Array Formation, raised his right hand and performed a series of hand seals, then pressed his hand on the array formation. His vision was a sudden blur. It seemed as if his soul had stepped out from his physical form and gone wandering. He entered the array formation to retrieve the three souls.

The first mirage he entered was the young boy's.

It was a world without cultivators. To a certain extent, this society resembled the Federation in Wang Baole's dream. It was like the Federation a thousand years ago. Peace reigned over the entire world.

The city that the boy resided in was a big capital city in this world. In the day, people bustled about, while in the night, neon lights lit the skies up. It was a prosperous place filled with wealth and luxury.

Wang Baole arrived during the early morning of this world, while the sun was shining brightly and vehicles streamed down the roads. Wang Baole appeared in a school district in the city.

My senses tell me that the kid should be here. Wang Baole floated in mid-air as he rubbed at his chin. He began to search. It didn't take him long to find a seven- to eight-year-old young boy in an alley. He was in uniform and carrying a huge, and what seemed to be extremely weighty, school bag... He trudged along wearily, looking like he was about to cry.

Behind him followed a middle-aged couple. They were clearly the boy's parents. They carried even heavier school bags and kept up a constant litany of reminders as they walked.

It was a heartwarming sight. Wang Baole was comforted by the scene. Even though he might have been late, the sight of the family basking in love and tenderness reminded him of his own parents.

Wang Baole suddenly froze at that thought. He realized that he had a blurry image of his parents in this real life, but that he could clearly remember his family in his dream of the Federation.

Wang Baole began to feel lost and confused. He instinctively looked at the world around him. It was extremely realistic. Whether it was the stirring of the gentle breeze or the distant bustling of the city crowd, nothing gave off a hint of them being a mere illusion to his senses.

As Wang Baole continued to feel shocked and intrigued, the voices of the boy's family drifted into Wang Baole's ears as they approached.

"Xiao Bao, you must be diligent in your studies. Stop thinking about playing video games and spending money. When you grow up, you won't have us nagging you anymore!"

"Stop scolding the child. Xiao Bao, your father is doing this for your own good. You're still a child. It's your birthday today though, which is why I've discussed it with your father, and after school ends today, you can relax for a bit. We'll only run through eight lessons today, and complete twenty practice papers, then, memorize fifty classical poems. After that, you'll get to have cake!"

"Xiao Bao, you're still so young. Stop sighing all the time. You must treasure your time in school. After all, there are only thirty thousand years to your graduation from elementary school. I've discussed it with your father. For the next two hundred thousand years in junior high, we'll find you an even better after-school class!"

There was confusion in the young boy's eyes. He almost wept when he heard what his parents said, but he had long since cried all his tears. The eye bags under his eyes were charcoal black. He seemed to be on the verge of a mental breakdown. He didn't know how he had managed to survive the past two hundred thousand years... every day he had to go to school, attend tutoring after school, do practice papers, memorize all sorts of information...

The days repeated themselves. The years repeated themselves... Under the care and company of his parents, he kept on studying, and studying, and studying...

He had thought about resisting and fighting back, but it didn't matter what methods he resorted to. Even when he had tried to kill himself, he would wake up the next morning as if nothing had happened. He would carry on studying and going for tutoring...

The only thing that was keeping him sane was the thought that everything was false. He knew that Wang Baole was going to come for him one day, so he kept on waiting. He waited for two hundred thousand years, but Wang Baole didn't come.

Wang Baole had a strange look on his face when he heard the conversation between the boy's parents. Shock stirred inside him when he saw how miserable the boy looked, and he felt some pity for him. He coughed.

When the cough rang out in the air, the entire world froze instantly. Everything fell still. Only he and the boy remained untouched by the spell.

The boy hadn't noticed anything amiss at first. He had continued to lug his school bag and drag his feet forward, loss and misery clear on his face. After a few steps, he finally noticed something was wrong. He lifted his head abruptly and stared around him. When he saw Wang Baole, he was immediately overcome with excitement. He burst out into tears and leaped towards Wang Baole. With a thud, he fell to his knees.

"Master, you've finally arrived! I was wrong. Please take me away. I don't want to stay here. I don't want to go for tutoring anymore. I want to return and be an Artifact Spirit. Please, master, take me away, please..."

The young boy sobbed terribly. He seemed afraid that Wang Baole would ignore him, so he hugged Wang Baole's thigh tightly. His weeping grew louder.

Wang Baole could only put a look of exasperation on his face. He led the boy out of the Rebirth Hallucination Array Formation. After some thought, he headed into the world which contained the sly fox who had called himself a State Preceptor.

The vastness of this world exceeded that of the young boy. The stars stretched on endlessly into the horizon, and it resembled the real world to a certain extent. There were cultivators here, even extremely powerful cultivators. However, regardless of how powerful they were, no one noticed when Wang Baole entered this world. With a single thought, Wang Baole could destroy this entire world.

He entered the world and found the old fox that had been a State Preceptor in his past life. He was... running for his life!

He was fleeing madly. He appeared to be in a wretched state, and his hair was in disarray. Regardless, he fled at an astonishing speed. He seemed to be running for his dear life without care for anything else in the world.

Behind him were countless people in pursuit. Amongst them were countless cultivators and a great number of cruisers clustered together and crowding the sky. They chased after him relentlessly.

It was clear that both the cultivators and the cruisers didn't belong to the same faction. On closer examination, it seemed that they belonged to at least a dozen different camps.

Wang Baole might not have been so surprised if they had only been chasing after the sly fox. However, this was a different sort of pursuit. The expression on Wang Baole's face grew odd... the pursuers were running and shouting at the same time. There was hostility amongst the different factions, and they seemed to be fighting amongst one another.

"State Preceptor, you are no longer young. You shouldn't be running so quickly. Be careful not to injure yourself."

“State Preceptor, don’t go. Our country cannot live without you. Its tens of millions of citizens cannot live without you!”

“State Preceptor, the emperor has decreed. If you do not return, he’ll kill himself...”

“State Preceptor, we’ve discovered another galaxy. There are thousands of civilizations there, waiting for you to become their State Preceptor!”

The cheers of those in pursuit echoed and rang out in the air. The old man fleeing in front was about to go mad. His unbound hair flew in his face, and his eyes were red as he howled in fury and sorrow.

“Scram, all of you. I’m not the State Preceptor. You’re the State Preceptor. Your whole family are State Preceptors!” As he said that, his tears began to flow once more. A deep sorrow filled his heart.

Chapter 458: The Great Emperor’s Many Empresses!

He recalled his experiences for the past two hundred millennia. Everything had started out fine. As a State Preceptor of a small kingdom, he had enjoyed an elevated status. He had grown ambitious and had soon discovered a more powerful kingdom that needed a State Preceptor. The kingdom had extended a sincere invitation, which he had accepted. Years later, another even more powerful kingdom had required a State Preceptor and invited him to join them...

At that time, his ambitions remained grand, so he had gone to them. Every time he had become the State Preceptor of a new kingdom, he would find another even more powerful kingdom in need of a State Preceptor soon after. The cycle repeated itself. He had been doing the same thing for the past two hundred millennia. He couldn’t even remember how many kingdoms he had been State Preceptor of.

He had grown tired of this office. He had done it so many times that he had been about to throw up... There had been no end in sight. He would continue to discover more kingdoms that needed a State Preceptor... Finally, he had gone completely mad. He could no longer take it anymore. Even hearing the words “State Preceptor” would drive him to the verge of a breakdown.

That was why he had started to run away. But he had never managed to escape successfully. They had always managed to catch him and bring him back, where he would continue his office of State Preceptor... He had thought of every means and ways. He had even resorted to destroying an entire kingdom. Regardless, there would still be new kingdoms waiting to capture him and invite him to become their State Preceptor...

He had been weeping tears of blood by then. The old fox let loose a heart-wrenching howl. What he desired the most now was to have a peaceful life. He no longer desired the position of State Preceptor. As long as he could have an ordinary life, he was even willing to become an Artifact Spirit.

That was why when he saw Wang Baole as he was fleeing, he burst into tears. He fell to his knees immediately and prostrated before Wang Baole. He began howling.

“Master, you’ve finally arrived. Please take me away. I agree to become an Artifact Spirit. I no longer wish to be a State Preceptor... Why was I such a fool, thinking about staying a State Preceptor?”

Wang Baole led the weeping old fox away. He couldn't help but lament. He felt as if he had just gained a deeper understanding of human nature.

They should thank me. I am the one who made them realize what it is that they truly need!

Becoming my Artifact Spirit, that is what they desire the most! Wang Baole patted his tummy with great satisfaction. He suddenly found the gesture extremely soothing and did it a few more times.

Seems like I'm still missing something... Wang Baole thought hard about it. After thinking for some time, he finally realized what it was he was missing.

What a pity, the dream's still better, there were snacks. Wang Baole shook his head with great regret. Then, he soon developed a great interest in the world that the extremely perverted man was in.

I remember putting him in a matriarchal world where he is the only man. Wang Baole's eyes shone brightly. With a series of hand seals, he entered the world of the pervert.

This world began as a rather primitive one. However, after two hundred thousand years of development, it grew into a world with multiple empires. The empires had constant skirmishes and clashes with one another.

Everyone, from the empress to the foot soldiers, were women. There were no men. Their reproduction systems were unique, and they were able to give birth to the next generation of women after carrying out a certain kind of ritual.

Rightfully speaking, if a pervert was thrown into such a world, he should be basking in female company and enjoying a blissful, happy life...

In reality, it was quite an exaggeration to say that he was basking in female company, and barely truthful to say that he was enjoying a life of utter bliss and happiness. When Wang Baole arrived in this world and found the pervert, he noticed that they were holding a grand funeral...

Countless women in armor guarded the area. Every single one of them was extremely beautiful and had well-formed, voluptuous figures. The mere sight of them would incite a primitive urge in the opposite sex.

They surrounded a raised platform that served as an altar. Above the altar lay someone. He was extremely thin, almost skeletal, and there were many tubes injected into his skin, all over his body. Great volumes of fluids serving as nutrients were being pumped into this person's body.

This person... was the great pervert that Wang Baole had thrown into this world two hundred thousand years ago.

There was bewilderment in his eyes, and his entire body shuddered as the fluids continued to flow into his body. They kept him alive, no matter how much he wanted himself dead. Beside him were a dozen women dressed in clothes befitting a female empress. They surrounded him, and every single one of them was staring at the pervert with lust in their eyes.

They stared at one another with enmity and hostility in their eyes.

Wang Baole was stunned at the sight. Before he could ponder further on the matter, the empresses began to speak.

“Esteemed Emperor, the funeral has ended, so let us get down to serious business!”

“That’s right, Great Emperor. Our empire has more than thirty million female subjects awaiting the Great Emperor’s service. They wait for you to grant them bliss. We implore you to make a visit!”

“That won’t do, he’ll have to come to us first. I have more than fifty million subjects in my kingdom, and they have been waiting for the Emperor for a very long time. I fear disaster if he doesn’t pay us a visit soon!”

“All of your requests can be delayed. I have two hundred million subjects that were about to revolt when I left. If I don’t bring the Emperor back with me, they’ll come charging here!”

The empresses continued their endless dispute until one of them frowned and said coolly.

“Let’s not fight. We have to seek the Great Emperor’s views. As a last resort, we can place him on the altar, and our subjects may make a visit themselves. We can even earn considerable fees this way, but we’ll have to arrange for guards to ensure that the Emperor is unharmed.”

As soon as she said that, the pervert lying on the altar, who had no love for this living world, suddenly widened his eyes. Tears began to flow from his eyes as he struggled to speak in his weakened state.

“Please, I beg you all, let me go. I really can’t do it anymore...”

The high-spirited and ambitious pervert had reached the end of his rope. He broke down and wept loudly. However, no matter how much he cried, the empresses seemed to have reached a consensus. They had decided to leave him on the altar...

It was then that the man, at the depths of his despair, saw Wang Baole hovering in mid-air. He started to howl excitedly when he saw Wang Baole.

“Master, save me. Please, save me. As long as I get to leave this place, I’ll do anything you want. I’ll... I’ll become an Artifact Spirit!”

Wang Baole looked at the man with great sympathy. With a wave of his hand, the illusion vanished. When he reappeared, he was back in his residence. In front of him were the three souls, and they fell to their knees before him. The vengeful aura surrounding them had faded away considerably. They hadn’t yet been completely cleansed, but they no longer resisted the idea of becoming an Artifact Spirit. They even seemed to look forward to it.

Wang Baole was greatly consoled when he saw that. He felt that he was still quite charismatic, considering the three souls willingly decided to devote their loyalty to him. Then, he stared at the young boy and the sly State Preceptor again. Doubt flickered in his eyes.

When he had first seen the two, he had felt they were familiar, but he hadn’t been able to recall why. Now that he was looking at them again, the sense of familiarity intensified.

I should've met them before... Wang Baole rubbed at his forehead. He thought for a very long while but couldn't come up with anything. He decided to set this matter aside. He reported to his master with the results of his attempts to make the three souls submit to him.

Ming Kunzi didn't ask about the details of how Wang Baole had managed to purify and cleanse the three souls within the time limit given. He led the three souls away so that he might craft Dark Artifacts for Wang Baole and infuse the artifacts with Artifact Spirits.

At the same time, he gave Wang Baole another assignment.

"Go to the Ten Thousand Art Pavilion of the Dark Sect. Read everything about the Dark Sect and the dark mystic arts and techniques. Even if you cannot learn them all, you should still know and understand these mystic arts and techniques. When you are able to gain certain enlightenment, you can then try to break through the Foundation Establishment realm and enter the Dark Core realm!"

Wang Baole followed his master's instructions obediently. He realized that there was still something amiss as he began to regain his memories, but he didn't have his entire memory back. He needed to read up on the various information on the Dark Sect and their sect's divine powers and information so that he might try to regain more control over his memory.

In the following month, Wang Baole spent almost all his time in the Ten Thousand Art Pavilion. He browsed through collections of books and scrolls on mystic arts and techniques. His knowledge of the Dark Sect and the Dark Art grew considerably.

The Spirit Immortal realm is divided into five minor realms—the Foundation Establishment realm, the Core Formation realm, the Nascent Soul realm, the Soul Conduit realm, and the Spirit Immortal realm... The corresponding levels of Dark Arts are the Corpse Face, the Soul Guidance, the Soul Fracture, the Burial Procession, and the Abyss Return! Wang Baole's eyes shone with a bright light. He learned from the documents that the various levels from the Corpse Face to the Abyss Return formed the first tier of the Dark Art!

The Dark Art... had seven tiers!

In addition, Wang Baole also found an extremely unique divine power after reading through the various materials. It was similar to the Rebirth Hallucination Array Formation and yet different.

Its name was... the Dark Dream!

Chapter 459: The Dark Core!

The Dark Dream was extraordinary and bizarre. It was mystic art that pulled one into the dreamscape. It was formed from a Daosource that was in turn formed by exhausting one's own vitality. Only someone who had reached the Eternal Star realm could perform it!

This mystic art could be used against one's enemy. However, it was often used by the great and powerful to pass down knowledge and mystic arts and techniques to their descendants and heirs. Time in the dreamscape passed differently than in the real world. It could be manipulated. Knowledge about a mystic art could be seared directly into one's soul. It could be fused directly with one's spirit. The

challenges that one met during training could be circumvented. This mystic art didn't allow the transmission of one's cultivation to another, which would enable them to become instantly powerful. However, most cultivators, having reached a certain stage in their cultivation, required enlightenment towards the Daosource and the principles of Dao rather than greater cultivation.

This Dark Dream Mystic Art could achieve this flawlessly!

It could also bring about other effects. For example, the effects of all serious injuries would be dampened in the dreamscape. There would be sufficient time for one to recover.

However... such an extraordinary mystic art required a great deal of energy to be expended by the person performing it. Few would use this mystic art unless it was their last resort. It was considered a pseudo-forbidden art in the Dark Sect.

Deliberation colored Wang Baole's eyes after he read the details of this Dark Dream Mystic Art. After a long while, he shut his eyes. When he opened them again, he gazed around silently.

Fifteen minutes passed. Wang Baole took a deep breath and continued to keep his eyes shut in this Ten Thousand Art Pavilion. He began his training of the Soul Guidance technique.

Despite not having reached the Core Formation realm and facing difficulty in mastering Soul Guidance, with his constant practice, he was able to make use of the Soul Guidance to strengthen and grow his Dark Qi. The Dark Fires in Wang Baole's body gradually multiplied.

Time passed steadily as he continued to train. Three months went by in a blink of an eye.

During this period, Wang Baole focused entirely on multiplying his Dark Fires. They reached as many as seventy-eight. He was only a few steps away from the highest record of eighty-one Dark Fires.

He should have met with some challenges along the way. However, said challenges never occurred to Wang Baole. It was as if he was naturally suited to learning the Dark Art.

This made Wang Baole ponder more deeply. Suspicions began to surface in his mind, and they clouded his thoughts. After a long while, he finally suppressed these thoughts. He was about to continue his training when the jade slip in his storage bracelet vibrated. Wang Baole pulled it out and released a long sigh.

The sigh was colored with complicated emotions, regret, and confusion.

"Junior Brother, I'm leaving the sect for some time to train. There are some things that I have to think about... take care. I'll return when I've thought things through!"

The voice transmission jade only had that single message. The person who had said that was his senior brother, Chen Qing!

Wang Baole had spent most of his time in meditation during his three months of seclusion. However, he still kept himself updated on some things that were going on in the sect. For example... what had happened to his senior brother, Chen Qing!

This extremely talented and gifted senior brother had secretly told him something that day with great happiness and anticipation... He shared that his Dao partner in his next life was going to be the daughter of the Never-Ending Clan's Emperor!

Chen Qing hadn't known the identity and family background of the soul he had painted a Corpse Face for prior to the arrival of the Never-Ending Clan's Emperor. He had only known that this soul was going to be his Dao partner after she was reborn. This was what the Heavenly Dao had willed. This was what the fates had dictated.

He had been extremely happy. When he had painted the Corpse Face, he had secretly made her more beautiful and more pleasing to his eye. He had been filled with anticipation.

However... the shocking harsh reality had come crashing down on him too soon. With the arrival of the Emperor of the Never-Ending Clan and with the unfolding of the incredible and terrifying battle, he had seen with his own eyes, his wife of the next life being pulled out and turned into dust. He had fallen into a dead silence.

Even though his destiny was to be entwined with this soul in their next life, and even though they hadn't truly made contact and come to know each other, everything had come to an end then—before anything had started. He remained lost. He didn't truly ache for the woman's soul, but his faith in his own Dao had been shaken.

He didn't know who was wrong, whether it was the Emperor of the Never-Ending Clan or the Dark Sect, but he knew one thing—the soul did nothing wrong.

Was the Dark Sect in the wrong? The Dark Sect simply served the Heavenly Dao. The Heavenly Dao was the culminated form of the laws of the universe. It was the origin of Dao for all Dark Sect cultivators.

In his lost state and in his need for answers, he decided to leave for a while. He decided he needed to think this through carefully. He needed to find an answer. After becoming a silent and solitary shade of his past self, he then decided to leave.

Wang Baole had mixed feelings regarding this matter as well, but he was powerless to solve it or his doubts. He had thought about what he would do if this had happened to him instead.

Wang Baole set the question aside. As he continued to muse quietly on the matter, his training went ahead without pause. Another month passed, and the Dark Fires inside his body multiplied to eighty-one Dark Fires!

When his Dark Fires reached as many as eighty-one, his entire body shuddered. He could feel the eighty-one Dark Fires layering atop one another, burning brightly inside his body. With each intense eruption, they began to shrink and compress themselves. They compressed further and further, gradually forming a Core!

During the entire process, waves of spirit energy that surpassed the Foundation Establishment realm erupted from this ever-compressing Core made of Dark Fire. It felt as if millions of rivers were surging through the meridians throughout Wang Baole's entire body. They flooded all major and minor meridians in a blink of an eye. Power permeated his entire body and surged outward into the physical world.

At that moment, as Wang Baole sat cross-legged, invisible hurricanes seemed to appear around him. They roared and spiraled around him. The power was insignificant to the truly powerful. After all, this was only a breakthrough from the Foundation Establishment realm to the Core Formation realm. However, this was Wang Baole's first time experiencing this. His entire body shuddered, and he felt his cultivation erupting and increasing without pause!

Thunderous booms erupted inside his body. The hurricanes around him turned into an ocean of fire as icy flames spread outward. There was no end to its increasing power, and it continued to rise.

The meridians inside his body shuddered, his flesh and blood shook, his cultivation churned, and the Dark Fires inside his body compressed further and further inward. Under the compression, his Core became more and more distinct. It was going to take physical form any time now!

It was then that Ming Kunzi appeared soundlessly before Wang Baole inside the Ten Thousand Art Pavilion. His eyes were soft as he gazed at Wang Baole with kindness. His form wasn't clear, appearing to be slightly indistinct. It looked like his finger and his hand that Wang Baole had seen previously. At present, the gradual disintegration had spread to Ming Kunzi's entire body.

Even so, he still lifted his hand and pointed at Wang Baole's forehead!

As soon as the finger landed, Wang Baole shuddered violently. Thunder-like crashes rumbled inside his body. The formation of his Core inside his body sped up suddenly, and within a blink of an eye, it transformed and became... a Dark Core!

As soon as the Dark Core was formed, a power that belonged to the Core Formation realm erupted from Wang Baole's body and filled the air. Wang Baole opened his eyes.

His breathing was quick and uneven, and there was a lost look in his eyes. Memories of the Federation—what he had thought was merely a dream—surfaced in his mind again. They grew increasingly distinct. He remembered in his dream that he had been pursued by three extraterrestrial cultivators. He had entered the Dark Artifact and entered a cave in the underground city. He had sat on a lone black boat...

He remembered before he had fallen into a deep sleep that an old, familiar voice had sounded beside his ear. It had said two words...

"Dark Dream..."

Wang Baole was silent. After a long moment, he lifted his head and stared at his master Ming Kunzi, who had appeared before him.

"Master... I..." Wang Baole murmured to himself. Before he could finish speaking, he noticed his master's form fading away. It faded away more quickly as he spoke.

Wang Baole shuddered. He had only been dazed at the sight. Now, however, an answer was gradually forming inside his heart. Perhaps... everything happening around him now was also a dream.

It was an indescribable feeling. It felt as if he was hovering between sleep and wakefulness. It was as if he knew that he was dreaming. The Dark Dream Mystic Art surfaced in his mind then. After running through his thoughts and confirming his guesses, he finally arrived at an answer.

There were still too many questions and doubts in his mind. He was silent for a while. Then, Wang Baole got to his feet and cupped his fists towards Ming Kunzi. He bowed deeply!

“Senior...” Wang Baole froze as he said the word. He fell silent. Then, after taking a deep breath, he opened his mouth and called out again. He used a different form of address this time.

“Master!”

Chapter 460: Waking From a Dream

Ming Kunzi heard how Wang Baole addressed him. The smile on his kind face became gentler. He seemed comforted by the fact, and it showed in his eyes. His aged voice was tinged with a certain hollowness, like an echo that had traveled across time and space and was now ringing within the Ten Thousand Art Pavilion and inside of Wang Baole’s mind.

“You’ve realized?”

After hearing that, Wang Baole’s breathing quickened. He had realized that everything before him might have been a dream, that perhaps his memories of the Federation were real. However, after hearing what Ming Kunzi had said, ripples of shock still stirred in his heart.

“Have I...” Wang Baole murmured as he looked at the buildings around him. These were as Ming Kunzi was, slowly fading away, and his gaze could see through them. He saw the mountains and the palaces that lay beyond in the outside world. He saw the vast heavens and white clouds. He saw the familiar silhouettes of Dark Sect disciples leaping in the air, moving from place to place.

He could hear the bells of the Dark Sect ringing in the distance, muted and faint in his ear. He could even conjure the scenes of him painting Corpse Faces and other familiar sights before his eyes.

After a long while, Wang Baole asked softly, “Master, is this a Dark Dream...”

Ming Kunzi didn’t give Wang Baole an answer. His smile only became softer and gentler, and his form became fainter. As he raised his right hand, three black glowing lights shot out from the opening of his blurry sleeves and hovered before Wang Baole.

Each one of the black glowing lights was only the size of a fist. However, the power and energy waves that surged from each one of these black lights was immense. It overflowed and spread outward. In this immense energy dwelled nomological power.

He looked more closely. Within these three black lights were separately... a Lone Boat, a Black Robe, and a Lantern Oar!

“The disciples of our Dark Sect can only become a Dark Child after reaching the Spirit Immortal realm. They will receive three Dark Artifacts that will allow them to ferry souls in this universe... on this day, times have changed. The Heavenly Dao has fallen, and these laws and rules no longer apply.”

Ming Kunzi said softly. His ancient voice grew ever more distant. With a fling of his sleeve, the three black lights entered Wang Baole’s body. They entered his Dark Core and became three Dark Seals!

“The three souls that you cleansed then, your master, I, have infused them into this Dark Artifact and turned them into Artifact Spirits... Even though everything is happening within a Dark Dream, it is one that I created especially for you... this Dark Dream!

“That’s why, when you wake up later, you only need to unleash the power of the Dark Core to inject everything that’s happened in this dream into the memories of the three souls. Their original memories will be replaced, and they will truly belong to you then!”

Upon hearing that, Wang Baole shuddered. He understood that this was the time for farewells. The memories he had during his time surfaced before his eyes, and a sense of reluctance unfurled in his heart.

“Master, are you... inside the Dark Artifact on Mars? The one who’s been calling for me, is that you?” Wang Baole was silent for a long while before he spoke softly.

Ming Kunzi sensed Wang Baole’s unwillingness to leave. He lifted his blurry hand and patted Wang Baole on the head, and his smile grew kinder. After a moment, he sighed softly.

“It is both me and not me.

“Baole, the Dark Sect has fallen. Even I am left with only a remnant of my will, barely surviving in the homeland of the Dark Sect... When you first developed your first Dark Fire, I sensed that and woke up. I’ve been watching you since then. Until today, I used the Dark Dream Mystic Art to pass down the teachings of the Dark Art... Even I don’t know if admitting you into the Dark Sect is the right or wrong thing to do.

“But you must remember... there is no true right or wrong in this world. The Dark Sect might have fallen, but there is no good or evil, no hatred or grudge. There is only the war of the Great Dao!

“We, the Dark Sect, willingly became the servants of the Heavenly Dao because this was the Dao of the Dark Sect!

“The fall of the Heavenly Dao resulted in the collapse of the Dark Sect’s Dao. Because of that, the Dark Sect declined and fell... You may be the only Dark Child left of this generation. All you need to do is follow your heart’s desires!”

He made himself very clear. Even though Wang Baole had been admitted into the Dark Sect, what he had learned were only the sect’s mystic arts and techniques. He wasn’t obliged to follow the Dao of the Dark Sect. He had said the same thing after the fight with the Emperor of the Never-Ending Clan, only mentioning the past and the present without mentioning a single word about the future!

Ming Kunzi seemed to sigh at this point. His gaze was distant. It was as if he was remembering the past. He murmured, “I had an extremely gifted disciple in the past. Unfortunately, following one’s heart was something that I only began to understand after the Dark Sect had fallen. Else, if I had enlightened him then...” Ming Kunzi shook his head and sighed softly. His form grew more and more faint, and he was about to end the Dark Dream with a wave of his hand. It was then that Wang Baole, who had heard what Ming Kunzi had just said, froze and suddenly said softly.

“Master, are you talking about Senior Brother Chen Qing?”

This should have been an ordinary question. After what Ming Kunzi said, Wang Baole had naturally guessed the disciple he was speaking about. He didn't expect Ming Kunzi to suddenly raise his head when he said that. There was shock in Ming Kunzi's eyes, and his breathing quickened. The world within the Dark Dream trembled, appearing to be on the verge of collapse!

Clearly, everything was because of what Wang Baole had said. The shock that it had caused Ming Kunzi was unprecedented!

"Baole... how do you know about Chen Qing? Did someone tell you, or did you... see him?" Ming Kunzi stared at Wang Baole and spoke slowly, in an extremely low voice.

Wang Baole was shaken. He grew more confused.

"I saw him. Didn't you see him too, Master..." When Wang Baole said that, his eyes suddenly widened. An incredulous thought suddenly rose in his mind.

"So you saw him..." Ming Kunzi murmured. He raised his head and looked around him.

"That's interesting, but Baole, this Dark Dream was something your master created for you specially. There is truth and there is illusion, but regardless of which it is, within this dream... there shouldn't be someone called Chen Qing!"

Ming Kunzi's words made Wang Baole gasp violently. That was what he had guessed, and his master just confirmed it. The shock he was feeling intensified.

"No such person... then why did I see... Senior Brother Chen Qing even taught me how to paint the Corpse Face. He told me his secret..." Wang Baole muttered to himself, and Ming Kunzi suddenly laughed aloud.

"Baole, this senior brother of yours is indeed extraordinary. While I've been casting a Dark Dream for you, he's been... casting one for me!" Ming Kunzi seemed to have thought of something. He lifted his face skyward and laughed out loud. His laughter was tinged with memories and complicated emotions. Finally, he raised his right hand and tapped Wang Baole on the forehead.

"Baole, the fates dictate that our path ends here. As for your future path, simply follow your heart's desires. Now... it's time to wake up!"

Wang Baole shuddered. He felt heaven and earth turn upside down. Everything became a blur, and the sound of mirrors shattering rang in his ears. His consciousness seemed to have left his body as it flew towards the starlit heavens. During its flight, time appeared to pass at a different speed. It sped past, as if compressing millennia into a single moment!

He saw the starfield where the Dark Sect had been located. Many years later, a great battle took place. He saw the Emperor of the Never-Ending Clan and countless other powerful cultivators instigating a galactic war.

The war was but a blur in his eyes. Then, the entire Dark Sect... was reduced to dust.

The shattering of mirrors in his ears grew louder until the noise reached an extreme. Wang Baole's vision turned black. In the next moment... in the Solar System, beneath the Martian soil, in the

underground world within the Dark Artifact, in the pitch-black abyss, sat cross-legged on a solitary black boat, an asleep Wang Baole suddenly shook and opened his eyes!

As soon as his eyes opened, the Dark Fires inside him immediately rumbled, and a chill erupted from them. It was as if everything that had happened in the Dark Dream had been brought back with him! Within the blink of an eye, his Dark Fires increased multifold and compressed together to form a Dark Core. Wang Baole's cultivation erupted!

At the same moment, beyond the Solar System, in the depths of this endless universe, there was a region that had been marked as one of the ten forbidden areas in this Never-Ending Universe! It was filled with spatial tears and fractures, countless bones, and star-destroying hurricanes. Any living thing that entered stood little chance of leaving alive!

At present, within this region, amongst the countless bones, the ruins of a stone monument drifted gradually in space.

Standing beside this damaged stone monument was a middle-aged man. His hands were behind his back as he stared silently at the stone monument. He wore an ancient-looking black robe, and his cultivation couldn't be discerned. When the terrifying spatial tears came into contact with him, they imploded. This mere display showed that his cultivation must have reached an incredible and unfathomable realm!

The stone monument before him exuded the aura of age. It seemed to have existed for too long a time. There might have been many names carved on its face. However, now, they had all dimmed in brightness. Only one name remained bright and shining with a strange light.

The name was... Chen Qing!

If Wang Baole were here, he would have recognized the stone monument to be the Dark Child Monument of the Dark Sect. The middle-aged man was his senior brother, Chen Qing, in his Dark Dream. Except for the changes that came with age, he looked almost exactly the same!

This person was Chen Qing!

Chen Qing stared at the stone monument and at his own name for a very long time. Then suddenly, he raised his right hand. With his finger, he carved, stroke by stroke, three characters next to his own name.

It was... Wang Baole!

As soon as the name appeared, it sparkled for a few moments then immediately dimmed. It was as if the stone monument didn't recognize and approve of it. Just as Wang Baole's name was to disappear, Chen Qing spoke casually.

"You didn't approve of my name then, and I destroyed half of this monument, half of your form. Now, you can try to erase my junior brother's name. Try it, and see what that'll get you!"

After Chen Qing said that, the stone monument immediately trembled. After a long while, with great resentment, it seemed to have chosen to compromise. Wang Baole's name was no longer dim. It began to sparkle with a bright light!