

# THE GREAT MING IN THE BOX

## Chapter 3: The Little Figures Are Alive?

The scenic box momentarily grew quiet. All the broken houses in the village opened their doors. Ragged villagers emerged from the houses. They gathered around the mountain bandits that Li Daoxuan had flattened, whispering about something and occasionally looking up at the sky.

Li Daoxuan sat outside the box, staring at his hand.

His palm had turned bright red, stained with the red liquid from the plastic figures.

No, it wasn't red medicine!

A strong bloody odor filled his nostrils. Though the blood from one figure was minimal, after squashing dozens of them repeatedly, his entire palm was steeped in red, and the scent became thick, pungent, and unpleasant.

The villagers now clustered around the corpses of the mountain bandits, murmuring softly and intermittently peering upward at the sky. Some of them surrounded the girl figure, asking her questions.

Their voices resembled faint ant chirps; unless they yelled loudly, Li Daoxuan couldn't make out anything they said clearly.

A bizarre thought struck him: these figures weren't acting out a pre-written storyline, were they?

The girl figure's gaze had locked with his. She had been praying to him earlier, and after he crushed the mountain bandits, the villagers' actions shifted with the unfolding events.

Li Daoxuan studied the blood on his hand intently, then leaned forward to inspect the figures inside the scenic box.

"These figures have consciousness!"

This discovery startled Li Daoxuan.

He hurried to the bathroom to wash the blood off his hands. Returning to the box front, he peered inside. The villagers had grown busy already. They collected the weapons from the mountain bandits, distributing one to each household. They stripped the mountain bandits' clothes off, giving one piece per household. They dug a pit in the yellow earth beyond the village, buried the naked corpses inside, and covered them with soil.

Then they wrapped the corpses of the villagers killed by the mountain bandits in straw mats, carried them out of the village, dug several pits to bury them, and chopped tree sections to fashion makeshift gravestones.

It seemed no one in the village could read or write. Not a single word was written on the gravestones; instead, they carved crooked marks with knives to signify which family each grave belonged to.

The girl figure knelt before one of the graves, tears streaming down her face, and fiercely kowtowed several times...

Li Daoxuan watched the figures toil peacefully for an extended stretch, from dusk to dawn, then from dawn to dusk again. The time inside the box advanced to the evening of the next day. The figures all retreated into their houses to rest. The girl figure also returned home, clutched her mother's relic, wept silently, and drifted into a deep slumber.

The box froze into a “non-still scene,” leaving nothing worthwhile to observe further.

Li Daoxuan yawned. He realized he, too, hadn't slept for two days and one night.

He rubbed his weary eyes and throbbing temples, hauled his exhausted body to the computer area. His head swirled with questions. Out of ingrained habit, he powered on the computer and logged into the military history forum he frequented. He posted anonymously: “The figures in the scenic box suddenly came to life. How should I handle this?”

Reply 1: “You should see a doctor.”

Reply 2: “Pinch yourself hard, and you’ll wake up.”

Reply 3: “Is there a girl figure? Spy on her changing clothes.”

Li Daoxuan: “...”

No one could grasp what he felt at that moment.

He opened work QQ and found the boss’s avatar flashing wildly. Clicking to view it, he saw that while he had wasted the entire day staring blankly at the scenic box, the boss had sent multiple messages: “Still sleeping? The client hated your design from yesterday; several parts need fixing. Contact me instantly when you wake up.”

“XXX initiated a video call with you... canceled...”

“What time is it still asleep? The client is pushing me hard.”

“Dammit, it’s noon already. Are you pretending to be dead?”

“XXX initiated a video call with you... canceled...”

“It’s 2 PM. Are you acting this way?”

“XXX initiated a video call with you... canceled...”

“At 6 o’clock now. No reply yet? Screw it, take your wages for the last half month, and get the hell out.”

“XX transferred you ¥2350.”

Li Daoxuan: “...”

He had lost his job!

But it was neither surprising nor upsetting—he'd long since wanted to quit this lousy job. Losing it actually left him feeling relieved.

Fatigue washed over him. How long had it been since he'd slept properly? Might as well seize this chance to rest thoroughly.

Too lazy even to wash up, he staggered to the bed and flopped down, instantly dead to the world.

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July 12, 2023, Summer, Shuangqing City.

By the time Li Daoxuan woke up, it was already past 10 a.m. the next day.

A headache from sleep deprivation still throbbed. Out of habit, he turned on his computer, then remembered he had no work today. Starving, he'd stared blankly at the scenic box all day without eating a single grain—no wonder he was ravenous.

Still groggy, he wandered into the kitchen, boiled water, and tossed two eggs in.

As his mind gradually cleared, he remembered the scenic box. In a flash, he darted from the kitchen to the living room.

The scenic box still sat in the living room. The tiny figures within had woken up and were bustling about the village.

Li Daoxuan quickly spotted the girl figure. There she was, carrying her bamboo basket again, searching for grass roots in the yellow sand outside the village...

Having just lost her mother yesterday, grief surely lingered, yet she'd already been forced to search for food.

Li Daoxuan sighed lightly and murmured, “This girl suffers so much.”

The moment he spoke, the girl figure abruptly looked up. As if she’d heard something, she gazed skyward, searching for a few seconds before her eyes locked onto Li Daoxuan’s position.

Instantly, Li Daoxuan felt it again—his eyes meeting hers.

Eye contact!

Their gazes were complex.

Li Daoxuan’s held pity and sympathy; the girl’s brimmed with sorrow and pleading.

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Summer, Year Seven of Tianqi (1627), Chengcheng County, Shaanxi, Gaojia Village.

Gao Yiye had lost her mother. Now, she was utterly alone.

But grief was a luxury. With no grain left in the house, survival demanded action. She couldn't afford to be a useless waste, clutching her mother's belongings and weeping.

Early in the morning, she rose, basket in hand, and stepped outside the village, heart heavy with sorrow.

She first kowtowed at her mother's grave, then spat toward the mound where the bandits lay buried. Trudging onward, she scanned the ground for any patch where weeds might once have sprouted.

This stretch of sand had been combed through countless times. Digging up grass roots grew harder by the day.

Her arms and legs felt leaden, her body swaying unsteadily.

She didn't know how much longer she could hold on. Tomorrow? The next day? Or perhaps the day after that. One day soon, she'd fail to find enough roots—too weak from hunger to forage any longer. Then, it would just be waiting for death at home.

She knew that day was nearing.

Just then, she heard a sigh drift down from the sky: "This girl suffers so much."

The voice... it sounded vaguely familiar...

Gao Yiye snapped her head up. Peering through the clouds, she saw the face of a young man. Their eyes met—his filled with compassion and profound sympathy.

The girl knew rescue was at hand. Once more, she bowed deeply and pleaded, “Great Deity, I’m so hungry. I can’t hold on much longer. Show mercy, I beg you. Save me.”

...

Living creatures could neither enter nor leave the box. Worries over insects were unnecessary; any eggs attached to food instantly vanished into nothingness upon touching the box, erased by an unseen force.

Naturally, the protagonist chosen by heaven was an exception.