

Longevity 31

Chapter 31: Finely Grind the Confusing God Sand, Tao Qian Deceives Old Fox

"Wu Ming, your fate is truly fraught," sighed Tao Qian inwardly as he stepped into the area.

Almost immediately, clusters of Ghost Fire surged, seemingly eager to illuminate the path for Tao Qian.

Several cultivators and magicians who had entered at about the same time felt neglected as a result.

One of them, a man with a face as large as a plate and disheveled hair, couldn't help but complain, "These days, even these Green-scaled Demons are snobbish, always flocking to the good-looking ones, pah."

After he finished speaking, a female magician nearby, draped in numerous garments and with a plump figure, her face covered in yellow dust, glanced at Tao Qian and then seemed to understand.

Then, speaking in a Southern Land dialect, she said, "You don't know squat, this young man has Dragon Qi in him. These Green-scaled Demons instinctively want to get close, and the bolder ones might even secretly draw a couple of breaths. But you're right, this young man does look quite pleasing."

While they spoke, a head-sized Green Phosphorus Fire rushed to get close, positioning itself right above Tao Qian's head.

Tao Qian looked up just in time to see a pale green face flickering within the firelight, squeezing out a pleasing smile.

It was fortunate that Tao Qian was becoming used to his identity as a cultivator; a mortal would have been terrified by that smiling face.

With a source of light present, Tao Qian did not mind the light being too green.

Ignoring the two magicians and maintaining a proud and aloof demeanor, he strode into the area.

A few breaths later, he appeared before the largest stall in the area.

Though it was called a stall, it was actually more of a small shop.

The stall owner had found some petrified wood to construct a frame, and had hung some curtains around it.

Dimly visible inside was the brilliance of Merfolk Pearls, though rather cramped, imparting a sense of another world.

Of course, the most enticing items were the books of varying thickness laid out on the wooden shelf.

"Hiss,"

Tao Qian distinctly heard nearby cultivators, magicians, and even some intelligent demons and monsters breathing more rapidly.

In the Cultivation World, the most precious items were always the Books of Skills.

The small shop already had quite a few figures inside when coincidentally, at that moment, a simple-minded man came out carefully cradling a book as if it were a treasure, looked around, and then quickly left.

Tao Qian looked at the man and the book, wanting to say something, but ultimately held his tongue.

Instead, he simply flashed by, taking the man's place.

As he entered, the curtain fell and a wooden sign popped out with the word "Full."

As soon as Tao Qian stepped inside, he saw directly in front of him at the counter, a Devil standing there.

Indeed, it was an Old Fox, with a slim figure, standing upright, a bushy fox tail sweeping the floor.

His head was that of a human, complete with a beard and even glasses, making Tao Qian almost mistake him for an old scholar from the Mortal World.

However, the cunning glint in the fox's eyes could not be completely concealed.

Upon seeing him, Tao Qian paused, quickly comparing the description in the Nameless Secret Manual and confirming this Old Fox's identity.

"It is indeed a coincidence, though somewhat changed, it's not hard to see that this Old Fox was the one who once cheated my predecessor Wu Ming."

"By means of some trick, he has transformed his head into that of a human, but the nature of the fox remains unchanged—sly and despicable."

While Tao Qian critiqued internally,

The Old Fox also looked over, his eyes glittering behind his glasses.

Tao Qian felt as if he could hear the Old Fox's inner voice shouting, "A big sucker has arrived, time to make a killing."

Suppressing a snicker inwardly, on the surface, Tao Qian maintained the demeanor of a wealthy patron.

Just by his dragon-like appearance, no one would suspect anything.

Who would have thought?

This wretch only had fifteen coins on him, simply pitiable.

As described in the Secret Book, the Old Fox Demon had clearly made a fortune, upgrading his small stall into this quaint and elegant shop.

Even better, he had recruited several female foxes as sales clerks.

Seeing Tao Qian enter, the Old Fox, like a phantom, teleported ahead, reaching Tao Qian first and waving off the approaching female foxes:

"A distinguished guest arrives; let Old Fox personally attend."

After speaking, the Old Fox's furry paw gestured to the side, leading Tao Qian deeper inside.

Very politely, making one feel as if bathed in the warmth of spring, he asked:

"Our shop has been open in Tengshe Square for quite some time, yet it's the first time we've had a guest of such stature."

"I wonder what sort of Book of Skills the honorable guest wishes to find. Although our shop is humble, we will do our best to gather what you need."

Looking at the reverently respectful Old Fox, Tao Qian once again felt the importance of lineage.

His cultivation in Energy-Introducing Realm, while not considered bottom in Tengshe Square, was indeed not rare.

Had he entered with the appearance of a human cultivator, he would never have received such respect from this truly opportunistic Old Fox.

But with Tao Qian presenting the face of a Bo Dragon, the treatment was entirely different.

Just like the Plague Golden Toad, which would mistake Tao Qian for the illegitimate child of some Dragon Species Great Demon, a True Dragon Bloodline, who could not be slighted.

The Old Fox was no different.

As a person from Earth, facing this enthusiastic sales pitch, Tao Qian resorted to a universally effective phrase:

"Let me have a look!"

With these four words, he silenced the Old Fox and walked over to a bookshelf, casually picking up a thin book enveloped in a faint green light.

On the cover, four ancient seal characters were inscribed.

Qingming Sword Technique!

Tao Qian's eyes immediately brightened, piqued with interest.

This was too normal; which man doesn't have a dream of being a swordsman?

Especially with such a remarkable sounding sword technique name.

Tao Qian, while unleashing his "Extraordinary Perception," was filled with curiosity about flipping to the first page.

Chapter 32: Finely Grind the Confusing God Sand, Tao Qian Deceives Old Fox_2

Most workshop bookstores that sell books of skills follow these rules: a thick book allows browsing of the first three pages, a medium book two pages, and a thin book one page.

Every book is enchanted with a forbidden technique that prevents people from seeing the pages beyond; if an attempt is made to snatch it, the book can even destroy itself.

However, stealing books of skills is such a foolish act that neither demons nor cultivators would do it, as it would be a direct provocation to the big powers behind the workshops and tantamount to seeking death.

These are just the stall rules. If you are in a guaranteed shop, you're not even allowed to flip through a single page; the shopkeeper will have prepared an introduction to the book instead.

Tao Qian had originally hoped to enjoy the Cultivation Sword Technique, but as soon as he activated his perception, he couldn't help but be startled.

A throbbing sensation?

Indeed it was there, but what emerged in his mind was not information about the book.

[Record Name: Confusing God Sand.]

[Record Type: Alien.]

[Record Description: This substance is produced by a special devil known as the Gongsheng Demon, which is often a human examining student who participated in the imperial examination but failed to achieve a title, transformed into a deceitful object due to intense resentment and some peculiar incidents. It frequents the households of scholars, smearing books to muddle the readers' spirits. This deceitful object excretes every nine days, grinding its feces into fine sand to smear on books and other objects, producing a confusing effect that convicts people into believing whatever book they hold is the one they desire.]

[Note one: The sand loses its effect upon contact with water or fire, and reveals its true form when blown by the wind.]

[Note two: Prolonged contact with the sand will result in constipation.]

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Tao Qian stopped flipping through the pages, silently placed the "Qingming Sword Technique" back on the shelf, and fully opened his Extraordinary Perception.

Indeed, the same throbbing sensation came from all the bookshelves around him.

That is to say, all the "books of skills" in this shop were fakes.

Every single one was a phony, merely smeared with that Confusing God Sand, leading people to mistake every book for a Cultivation Method with "Abnormal Traits."

He stared at Old Fox for a moment, struggling not to show a look of disdain.

That guy, sure enough, couldn't change his ways.

In fact, most of the cultivators, demons and alien species that come to this area are aware that the books of skills sold here come with no guarantees.

Yet customers still come in an endless flow, partly because they have an inexplicable confidence in their own judgment.

And also because everyone knows:

Cultivation Methods, Transcendent books, and the like are completely different from ordinary books.

Cultivation Secret Manuals are extremely important to cultivators; they are not things you can simply read a few times and memorize in your heart.

During practice, one must always refer to them.

Even a slight mistake can be fatal for the practitioner, leading to an instant mutation or death on the spot.

Many Cultivation books are actually hard to come by, requiring the writer to pour their spirit into them to take shape, like the "Nameless Secret Manual" that once benefited Tao Qian greatly. It would be unique and impossible to print in large quantities as in the Mortal World.

The widespread dissemination of something like the "Bai Qin Play Secret Manual" without a doubt, always has a catch.

And this is why?

Among the Four Beasts of She County, Zhang Xian and Yang Ding always carry with them the Meat Demon Possession Technique and Earth Element Manual.

It's not because they are too stupid, but because they must.

"This old fox's shamelessness could make even the most unscrupulous merchants in the mortal world feel inferior."

"You open a bookstore, at least put a few real ones in there, it's just too much that they are all fake."

At that moment, Tao Qian understood the feelings of his senior, Wu Ming; this old thing indeed deserved a good thrashing.

Just as Tao Qian was about to leave in anger, suddenly the door curtain of the shop was forcefully flung open.

A simple and honest-looking man barged in, full of rage, and directly threw a book called "Cow Demon Strength" into Old Fox's arms.

Accompanying the spray of spittle, the man roared, "Old man, give me my money back, your book is fake!"

Originally planning to leave, Tao Qian immediately stopped upon seeing this scene.

The other customers, meanwhile, cast doubtful glances and called off the deals they were about to make with the vixens.

Seeing this sudden turn of events, Old Fox immediately became anxious, fury filled the fox's eyes behind the spectacles.

But he was obviously experienced and remained calm, pinching the book and brushing a furry paw over it before starting to flip through the pages.

As he flipped, a faintly abnormal trait seemed to emanate from the book, even carrying the weak roar of a Cow Demon.

Any cultivator with a bit of experience would recognize this as a Cultivation Secret Manual upon seeing it.

The doubt in the eyes of several customers in the shop dissipated considerably.

Only then did Old Fox leisurely address the honest-looking man,

"Honored customer may have seen, our shop has always enjoyed an impeccable reputation, do not wrong Old Fox."

"One of our store's policies: once money and goods have exchanged hands, returns are categorically not accepted."

"Honored customer, please understand."

While speaking, Old Fox passed the "Cow Demon Strength" back to him.

Unexpectedly, the man came prepared, slapping away the Secret Book and bellowing angrily,

"Don't think you can deceive me again, old thing, my sister just joined Joyful Tower, and she was very angry to see me tricked."

"She said you've been swindling around in several workshops, specifically conning the lower-class cultivators of the Cultivation World and some naive newcomers. Other stalls sell a mix of real and fake goods, but only your shop turns out to be all frauds."

"I don't know what kind of ghostly trickery you used to make these books exhibit special abilities."

"My sister has found out: you, old thing, have no significant backing, and your own cultivation is weak and pitiful. You're only supporting an Energy-Introducing Realm vixen from your clan, said to be your old mother, and presumably the old arms and legs don't have much fighting strength."

"Today, you will have to refund the money, whether you like it or not."

These words caused the situation in the shop to turn on its head.

Those customers who had just let go of their suspicions, glanced at the vixen sharply and left the shop one after another, lifting the door curtains on their way out.

The shop emptied in no time.

The bottom exposed, Old Fox's face turned from pale to green and back again.

The pair of fox eyes glared at the honest-looking man, the pupils flashing, clearly calculating something.

After a moment's hesitation, he gritted his teeth and said fiercely, "For such wild and absurd accusations, sullyng our shop's good name, don't blame me..."

Before Old Fox could finish speaking, his vision suddenly blurred.

It was the big man taking out something that looked like a token from his bosom and just flashing it in front of Old Fox's eyes, causing him to swallow back half of his harsh words.

The anger on his face turned into an obsequious smile, as he bent over and said,

"You are right to reprimand, sir, this money must be refunded, it certainly must."

"Quickly, bring the Silver Coin that rightfully belongs to the customer."

"Add an extra hundred Joyful Money to the account, as it is only right to compensate for the oversight and loss caused to the customer."

...

After dozens of breaths, Old Fox, with a smiling face and all the niceties said, finally managed to send off the man who was full of rage and apparently had a strong backing.

He twisted inside thinking about the Silver Coins he lost as well as the customers that had been scared away, and turned around intending to blame the vixen attendants for not properly investigating the sucker's background, leading to his loss.

But as soon as he turned around, he saw that the clearly noble Half-Dragon Demon was still lingering in the shop and hadn't left.

Just as he fancied himself lucky, thinking he had encountered a dumb Devil who might help recover his losses,

Suddenly, he saw the Half-Dragon Demon's golden pupils slightly squint, revealing a dazzling smile, accompanied by a sly and scheming aura that felt eerily familiar to Old Fox.

The next moment, he heard Tao Qian slowly begin to speak.

"To err is human; to change, divine. I never expected a fox of your alien species to possess such a rare quality."

"Given that, let's also discuss the matter of compensating me."

Just from these two opening sentences, Old Fox felt as if something went "boom" in his mind, as if his skull would explode, and his face completely froze.

Chapter 33: Secret Demon Fragmented Books, Sacrificing One's Life with a Sword

Old Fox was intimidated by the brute using the momentum of Joyful Tower, and then got startled by Tao Qian's sudden remark, briefly panicking.

His subconscious reply stumbled slightly.

"Esteemed guest, are you not jesting with me?"

Fortunately, Old Fox regained his usual demeanor after uttering that sentence.

His fluffy paw pushed up the old-fashioned glasses that came from the secular world, carefully examining Tao Qian a few times without waiting for Tao Qian to respond, Old Fox continued:

"Esteemed guest, please do not joke. Although my old bones are failing me now, my memory is still quite good."

"Such an elegant and extraordinary figure as yours, if you truly had bought a book from Old Fox, it's impossible that I would have forgotten it."

Convinced in his assertion, he was sure that this half-dragon demon before him was either joking or attempting extortion.

Regardless of which, he would not accept it.

That brute was able to get his money back because his sister joined Joyful Tower.

For anyone else, even if they were a cultivator of higher cultivation level, what of it?

Unless they could surpass the protection that Joyful Tower extends over this place, he would never compromise.

Even if his reputation went sour, he could just pack up and scuttle off to the next workshop; he had always done so.

After all, the "scapegoats" of the Cultivation World are never-ending; he never worries about lacking a market.

For years, relying on this operational model, not only had he made a fortune, but he had also supported a sizable tribe of fox demons.

And within his tribe, there were already two who were in the Energy-Introducing Realm.

One of them was his elderly mother.

Another was his grandson.

Cultivators who were not strong enough yet wanted to cause trouble would inevitably face his harsh retaliation.

Old Fox was resolute when suddenly, Tao Qian nodded and straightforwardly admitted, "You are right, I have never bought a book from you, this is my first time at Tengshe Square, and it's even my first time leaving home to travel."

Hearing this, Old Fox was just about to relax.

But instantly, he saw those cursed eyes of the half-dragon demon squinting again. At first glance, they seemed warm, but a sinister smile hidden beneath that look started showing, fixating on him with such a sinister interest while mentioning offhandedly:

"My family just took in an old servant. Knowing I was about to travel, he specifically shared some insights to prevent me from being duped by bad people."

"This old servant is named Wu Ming; he said that years ago, he bought a book called the Wild Fox Zen Scripture from a fox demon here in Tengshe Square. It cost him three years' savings, a total of five hundred Joyful money."

"Who would have thought that the scripture was counterfeit? When he sought accountability from the fox demon, he was brutally beaten and even mocked that he won't have a peaceful death."

"Shopkeeper, can you say whether the actions of this fox demon were reasonable?"

While saying this, Tao Qian casually paced around, his glances skimming through the surroundings.

Soon, he stopped in front of a particular bookshelf.

Seemingly nonchalant, he reached out a hand and then returned with an extra book in hand.

On its cover, four ancient seal characters were inscribed.

Indeed... the Wild Fox Zen Scripture!

Tao Qian turned back only to see Old Fox, typically shameless and flexible, suddenly turning pale.

At the bottom of his heart, a furious roar was surging.

What is going on today?

Could it be that he was cursed?

Why are there two difficult customers in a row, and both of them he can't afford to offend?

At this moment, Old Fox momentarily stopped thinking about tricking others; he just wanted to close up shop and take a moment to calm down.

However, after all these years of scamming, he had encountered all sorts of difficult people; his face was as unshakable as a copper wall and iron barrier.

This half-dragon demon before him seemed formidable.

But his background was still unknown; how could he be sure that this creature wasn't just bluffing?

Old Fox forced up his energy, squeezed out a smile, completely ignoring the Wild Fox Zen Scripture that Tao Qian was holding up, and argued:

"Esteemed guest, when you go out to gain experience, you still need to have some judgment of your own."

"That old servant's words may not all be true."

"And even if it's all true, the only principle that can be discussed here is 'once sold, no returns.' Money paid, goods taken, absolutely no refunds."

"In any workshop that sells books and cultivation techniques, this is the rule. If people could return things after regretting their purchase, who would want to engage in such a business?"

"If you lack perception and knowledge, you better not enter the workshop to trade. Better go home early and find your parents."

"Esteemed guest, isn't that right?"

As he spoke, Old Fox felt justified, and his words flowed smoothly.

Planning that if Tao Qian argued back, he would use his silver-tongued advantage to taunt this "greenhorn," this "little hatchling" until he couldn't fend for himself.

Unexpectedly to him, Tao Qian, upon hearing this, actually nodded again, acknowledging his point.

With the precedent of that brute successfully recovering his debt, how could Tao Qian foolishly make a mistake by engaging in a quarrel with this crafty Old Fox.

Strike the snake at its seven inches; although Tao Qian could not leverage the power of Joyful Tower, he just happened to know Old Fox's Achilles' heel.

Tao Qian turned around, still holding the copy of the Wild Fox Zen Scripture, smilingly gazing at Old Fox, and seemingly pretending to nonchalantly observe the various arrangements in the shop.

Then, he spoke: "O sir, though your shop is small, you have indeed set up all the protective forbidden techniques against water and fire, and against wind and rain."

Before an anxious Old Fox could respond,

Tao Qian's expression suddenly turned solemn, as if turning his face, and blurted out:

"People can't see through your deceptive tricks, that's why you've fooled them so far."

"But I am different, having learned from many teachers, I naturally know more."

"Although I don't know where you found so much 'Confusing God Sand,' it's quite simple to nullify its effects."

"Boom"

As he spoke, a terrifying aura burst forth from Tao Qian's body.

The Bo Dragon Bloodline activated, creating wind, rain, thunder, and lightning in an instant. Dazzling rainbow light danced around Tao Qian.

Yet Tao Qian didn't immediately destroy the Confusing God Sand adhering to the nearby books; instead, he looked at Old Fox with an almost-smiling gaze and asked, "Store owner, speak further—what do you think the consequences would be for you and your fox demon clan if such secrets were to be exposed?"

That statement completely shattered Old Fox's psychological defenses.

The previously complacent old face now showed panic and even fear.

It wasn't just the suppression by the Bo Dragon Bloodline; he could also foresee a tragic future.

He finally realized that this half-dragon demon in front of him was much more difficult to deal with than the brute from before.

The previous one was merely a sister who had joined Joyful Tower, obviously not of high status.

But this half-dragon half-human demon, whether in speech, demeanor, or the now revealed bloodline divine power, all these sent intense danger signals to Old Fox.

He was just a small stall owner in Tengshe Square, a bottom dweller in the Cultivation World—how could he provoke such a being?

What puzzled him more was how that seemingly unfortunate old fellow managed to join the family faction of this half-dragon demon?

It was truly unbelievable!

Yet he had to believe it, as the details spoken could not have been faked.

Old Fox fully realized his situation, gave up any illusion of luck, and immediately bowed deeply, shaking his hands while shouting in panic,

"Respected guest, please restrain your divine power. Old Fox was wrong; Old Fox was blind not to recognize your venerable servant."

"Please, esteemed guest, speak your terms for punishment and compensation. Old Fox will not hesitate."

While pleading for mercy, Old Fox also knew it would not end quickly. He was ready to stoop to any level to resolve the wrath of this terrifyingly enigmatic demon.

But before he could finish speaking, Tao Qian actually withdrew his divine power.

Casually, he tossed the Wild Fox Zen Scripture back to its place, and with those golden dragon eyes, looked at him almost smilingly,

"You said it yourself."

"My relationship with Old Wu is good; naturally, I must stand up for him."

"So, old store owner, try not to be too heartbroken."

Hearing Tao Qian's words, Old Fox opened his mouth, but didn't know how to respond.

His heart seemed to ache—it was the sign of an impending major loss.

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About thirty minutes later, the store that had hung a "Full" sign for a long time finally opened its curtains from within.

Tao Qian emerged with a pleased expression.

Behind him, Old Fox, leading several charming female foxes, kept bowing deeply, respectfully seeing him off.

Tao Qian waved his hand, signaling Old Fox not to be over-polite.

Then, he leisurely strolled to the next stall, store after that.

Above him, the Green-scaled Demon, very diligently followed; from time to time, when Tao Qian wasn't paying attention, it secretly absorbed something from the void, its dreadful green face immediately showing joy.

Tao Qian himself harbored the same expression.

If not for maintaining his demeanor, Tao Qian would have already reached into his inner pocket and taken out that stack of silver coins to count.

Tao Qian himself hadn't anticipated—his journey of picking up bargains hadn't even started yet.

He had already gotten rich by "extorting."

"What a sensible old man, knowing I was strapped for cash, he immediately offered three thousand Joyful Money."

"It's just a pity that, in the end, I couldn't help Wu Ming retrieve five thousand Joyful Money for a ten-times compensation achievement."

"Fortunately, not everything in Old Fox's inventory was fake; I managed to extract a True Secret Technique."

Muttering to himself, Tao Qian silently felt the thin book in his bosom.

The format information related to it; he had already sensed and triggered it back in the store.

To Tao Qian, this was the real surprise.

Because the secret technique recorded in that book was exactly what he needed at the moment.

[Record Name: Secret Demon Sacrifice Body Sword Technique (fragmented book)]

[Record Type: Alien Species]

[Record Description: This complete book originally came from the Major Sect of the Demon Path, "Secret Demon Sect," which caused great chaos in the Cultivation World hundreds of years ago, fighting against many great Daoist sects and large Buddhist temples. After several suppressions, the Secret Demon Sect suffered great losses and mysteriously vanished, with appearances unrecorded for hundreds of years. Sacrifice Body Sword is one of numerous sword techniques included in the large book "All Heavens Secret Demon Scripture" within the sect. Its power is formidable. If one can cultivate with the complete book, achieving mastery would allow one to roam thousands of miles, slaughtering demons, ghosts, exotic beasts, and immortal gods. This fragmented book unfortunately only contains one sword technique, significantly reducing its power.]

[Note 1: The remaining technique is called "Selfless"; deploying this sword technique allows 선택 extraction of Source Qi, Essence Blood, Spirit, and Soul etc. from the user's body. The more extracted, the greater the power.]

[Note 2: After releasing this sword, no matter what is extracted, it cannot be recovered; hence, cultivators can only perform this sword technique four times in their lives. The fourth sword, called "Selfless Soul," guarantees the user's dissolution and death regardless of whether the opponent dies.]

[Note 3: Once this technique is cultivated, until abolished, the body cannot accommodate a second sword technique, or else irreversible conflicts occur, and the cultivator will surely die violently.]

[Note 4: The irrevocable costs and death consequences can be exempted, but one cannot cultivate another type of sword technique before abolishing this one.]

Chapter 34 Fierce Ghost Dwarf, infant demon death aura

"If one only looked at the information up front, they might think they've hit the jackpot and stumbled upon an incredible opportunity."

"Unfortunately, this sword technique is merely one of the hundreds contained within a sub-volume of a Sect's Great Lifebook Scripture."

"What's even more regrettable is that only the last move remains, yet the cost is still as severe."

"The so-called 'Sword Out No Self' means certain death after the fourth strike, but in reality, after the first strike, one loses all their Source Qi and reverts to being an ordinary human; with the second strike, the body becomes an empty shell; and upon executing the third strike, one ends up completely foolish, in a state worse than death. Who could anticipate a fourth strike, considering it's truly the 'Sword Out No Self'? Wanting to kill the opponent, must one kill oneself first?"

"It's no wonder Old Fox was willing to compensate the final Joyful Money with this volume, and even played some tricks, allowing me to read the entire volume, presumably because he knew only this move remained, which was easy to master."

"Just reading that thin sword manual allowed me to initially grasp that 'Sword Out No Self' essence and also inevitably attracted me with its terrifying power."

"Old Fox probably thought I was still a naive baby in the Cultivation World, easily distracted by secret books without care for Silver Coins."

"But it's all right, one move is still one move, exactly what I urgently need now for fighting and killing."

"As for that terrible cost, being exempted to the point of only being unable to learn a second sword technique is indeed a great fortune."

Several thoughts flashed through Tao Qian's mind, filling him with great pleasure.

Sensing something, he turned his head back to the shop and indeed saw Old Fox, leading a few vixen, quickly packing up the stall.

Before long, they were seen running off, disappearing with heavy bags and bundles.

Tao Qian chuckled to himself, thinking that Old Fox had drawn a major blood debt and was unlikely to appear in Tengshe Town for a while.

"Extortion is never the right way, it's unsustainable."

"Scoring a find, that's the proper business."

"Next stall!"

With great anticipation, Tao Qian once again started his passion for finding bargains.

Before, he only had fifteen coins on him, so poor that he jingled wherever he went, and naturally had little confidence.

Now, with Old Fox's generous donation, and carrying three thousand Joyful Money, he suddenly felt wealthy and powerful, walking as if he carried the wind with him.

Thus, under the illumination of the Green-scaled Demon's phosphorescent light, Tao Qian began moving from stall to stall.

It's unclear why, but in this area, the stall and shop owners were seldom human; most were strange species and demons like "Old Fox," each more bizarre and terrifying in appearance than the last.

Of course, in terms of cunning, they were not inferior to, or even more scheming than, humans.

Tao Qian had thought, with his own information perception resembling an "Extraordinary radar," coupled with the ample Joyful Money, he might not be able to stumble upon a Great Lifebook Scripture.

At the very least, he thought he should collect some decent secret techniques and manuals.

However, fifteen minutes later, Tao Qian was disappointed again.

He finally understood why Old Fox, selling only fakes, not only hadn't been killed but still managed to drift among the various markets.

The reason was crude and frustrating.

Other sellers were somewhat better, but only marginally so.

That old trader used Confusing God Sand to sell all fakes, while other stall owners in the area mixed a large number of fakes with a few real items.

And even those "real" items were tampered with to some degree.

Others might find it difficult to discern, but Tao Qian, with his transcendent information perception, knew everything about them with just a touch.

Over the past few cups of tea, Tao Qian was not only deeply disappointed but also felt he had greatly broadened his knowledge on counterfeiting.

Just talking about those so-called true secret manuals, true skills.

Some books only had one or a few pages that were genuine, the rest being forgeries. If that one page were like the "Secret Demon Sacrifice Body Sword" as a standalone technique, that was still acceptable; purchasing it would still be considered a find.

However, buyers were never as savvy as sellers. Those genuinely authentic pages contained obscure, incomplete mnemonics, or peculiar symbols and mysterious patterns, which were ultimately unusable for cultivation.

This was an immeasurable occurrence.

After strolling around for a while, Tao Qian gradually came back to his senses.

"I get it, this place is essentially the Otherworld, a Cultivation World version of Pan Garden?"

"Even with my cheat-like abilities, finding bargains here is still difficult."

Tao Qian stood in the path, having just finished muttering these thoughts.

Not far ahead, a new stall was just being set up.

The stall owner had an extremely bizarre and eerie appearance.

His small body was like a Fierce Ghost Dwarf, his exposed skin was dark blue and covered with rotting lesions.

His face was most terrifying, filled with tusks, with just two hollow indentations where the nose should be, no eyelids, and a pair of bloody, indefinable eyes that seemed unable to close.

At that moment, no one could distinguish.

Was it a Cultivator mutated into a deceitful object? Or was it originally a demon or monster?

It seemed to have immense strength; upon claiming the spot, it slammed its large and heavy bundle on the ground with a thud.

While spreading it out, a strong earthy smell mixed with a peculiarly eerie whisper impacted the area within a ten-meter radius instantaneously.

Though the impact was fleeting, it still drew the attention of several dozens of clients including "Tao Qian."

Seeing the crowd look over, the stall owner grinned and said in a hoarse voice,

"I just dug these up from underground yesterday, the tomb owner was a Qi Refining Realm cultivator who died from out-of-control mutation. He dug his own grave before dying; books, Exotic Treasures, weapons, and other burial objects are all included."

"The good stuff is already processed by Joyful Pavilion. These are the leftovers, cheap to sell."

It was hard for Tao Qian to imagine how a dwarf fierce ghost could pitch its goods.

Until that moment, he saw it with his own eyes.

The scene was inexplicably comical, which diluted the sense of horror somewhat.

However, there were no ordinary humans here; no one cared about the vendor's appearance.

In the Cultivation World, what strange things weren't there?

Although any cultivator or demon with a bit of intelligence wouldn't easily believe the words of the Fierce Ghost Dwarf,

out of curiosity and by fluke, there were still about fifteen customers who gathered around.

This naturally included Tao Qian.

It wasn't that he believed what the Fierce Ghost had said, but at that moment, Tao Qian had a very distinct and familiar "throbbing sensation."

A pleasant surprise?

With anticipation, Tao Qian even walked to the forefront.

After positioning himself in front of the stall, his gaze immediately fell on a large pile of items on the ground.

Indeed, as the Fierce Ghost vendor had said, there were books, exotic objects, and weapons, each emitting a faint abnormal aura.

Could they all be genuine?

Before entering, Tao Qian might have thought this.

Having been disappointed many times before, Tao Qian was extremely experienced in discerning abnormal auras.

He casually picked up a "Jade Ring" streaked with crimson and triggered his Extraordinary Perception instantly; however, the format of the information in his mind was about a different item.

[Record Name: infant demon death aura.]

[Record Type: Exotic Treasure.]

[Record: The Heterodox Sect has a Great Book "Infant Scripture." Anyone who has cultivated this Lifebound Scripture and entered the "Qi Refining Realm," once perished, the land where their body decays will be contaminated by corpse blood. If ordinary items are buried among it, after several days mutations and some abnormal traits will occur, though it won't last long. It will dissipate in a few days, but during this period, it will cause concealed harm to the holder. If one's cultivation is insufficient, they will mutate and die violently.]

[Note one: The burier themselves will suffer more severe contamination. If they persist in this act long-term, anyone whose cultivation has not reached the Qi Refining Realm will undoubtedly die.]

[Note two: During the burial process, if the body comes into contact with corpse blood, mutations will secretly arise that night. If not removed within three days, no medicine can cure it.]

...

"Bang"

With astonishing speed, Tao Qian threw the Jade Ring back.

At the same time, looking at the information perceived in his mind, his expression turned very ugly, his eyes revealing a strong disgust.

This change naturally caught the attention of the other customers.

Simultaneously, the stall owner's bloody, fierce Ghost Eyes glared over.

With claws glowing a faint blue hue, it suddenly targeted Tao Qian, the voice hoarse and full of malice, "Customer, if you have damaged my treasure..."

Tao Qian was already prepared to deal with the maliciousness of this Fierce Ghost Dwarf, but who could have expected.

Before it had even finished speaking, a terrifying change occurred suddenly.

Its originally shriveled blue belly suddenly swelled, as if something alive was wriggling inside.

Accompanied by a series of gulping sounds, the Fierce Ghost Dwarf could no longer hold back.

"Ugh"

Along with a loud retching sound, the Fierce Ghost violently turned sideways to the ground, and with a "splash",

A large number of bizarrely shaped "Insect Eggs" mixed with mucus and pus blood poured out like a waterfall from the mouth of the Fierce Ghost dwarf.

The mucus pus blood clearly had corrosive properties; as soon as it hit the ground, it sizzled and quickly eroded a water pit.

What was more horrifying was that as soon as those insect eggs emerged, they immediately began to hatch.

With the first "crack" sound, a vile insect with a body consisting of small, cystic flesh pieces, equipped with eyes, mouth, and nose, and fringed with velvety tentacles, broke through the egg membrane and crawled out.

As soon as it was born, this disgusting insect began voraciously consuming the mucus and pus blood.

Despite the presence of cultivators and demonic beings, everyone was quite frightened by this sight.

However, the Fierce Ghost vendor, unruffled, took out a red fruit from his bosom without hesitation, stuffed it into his mouth, and began to chew quickly, juice splashing about.

Half a breath later, the Fierce Ghost bent down and opened its mouth again, and a drop of red saliva was about to drip from the corner of its mouth.

However, the next second, with a "boom", a visibly high-temperature scarlet flame surged down, completely covering the water pit.

Inside, the sounds of sizzling combustion mixed with the cries of the insects and a putrid smell that drifted slowly through the air, enough to make one want to vomit out meals eaten days ago.

This incident occurred rapidly and ended just as quickly!

Seeing that people were looking over, the Fierce Ghost vendor, while wiping his scorched lips, grinned and said:

"My apologies for making you laugh."

"This is an old problem of mine. In my youth, I received teachings from a strange person, but who would have thought that something would go wrong during cultivation, transforming me from an ordinary Confucian youth into what I am now."

"I take risks descending into tombs, competing with beings like the Pangolin and Mountain Worm for burial objects, and traveling through all the markets, all to earn more Joyful Money in hopes of obtaining better manuals or Exotic Treasures and Immortal Items, longing to restore my original appearance."

"There's always a price to pay in cultivation."

"You need not sympathize with me too much. Please continue to choose; if you see anything you like, speak to me. I might give you a discount as an apology for the disturbance."

While speaking, the Fierce Ghost Dwarf even gave the cultivators and demons a Confucian bow.

With these words, his credibility shot up instantly.

Aside from Tao Qian, the majority seemed to believe him.

Chapter 35: Brass Bell, Nascent Soul Escaping Skill

A spectacular and eerie performance, coupled with a story that sounded incredibly real and believable, left most people without any suspicion of the Fierce Ghost merchant before them.

Even because of this interlude, the dozen or so customers who crowded around began excitedly picking out items from the stall.

According to the Fierce Ghost Dwarf, these were the treasured relics from the tomb of a "Qi Refining Realm cultivator," a rare find indeed.

Under normal circumstances, Tao Qian should have left by now.

After all, the place reeked, the cries of those disgusting strange insects had just ceased, and he had a slight conflict with the Fierce Ghost Dwarf.

But Tao Qian's feet seemed nailed to the ground, unmoving.

His golden vertical pupils watched the Fierce Ghost wiping its mouth corner and comforting its belly, his thoughts spinning a few times, faintly guessing the creature's condition.

Its claims were half-truth, half-false.

"This Fierce Ghost is mutated from a human cultivator, and this is likely true, as such cases are extremely common in the Cultivation World."

"But it vomiting these insect eggs is probably due to contact with the infant demon corpse blood, causing the mutation; seeing how skillfully it handled it, it's clearly not its first time."

"That is to say, it has been over three days; this guy is doomed."

"Still resorting to deception now, perhaps to gather more Joyful Money to seek medical help, but alas, it's a dying struggle."

While Tao Qian speculated, his eyes also scanned the stall.

He did not believe the story the Fierce Ghost Dwarf told, but he trusted his own Extraordinary Perception.

Many items on the stall gave him a similar "thrill," he now knew was actually the infant demon death aura.

But amidst the subtleties, he sensed a faintly different fragrance.

Hidden amidst the infant demon death aura, extremely weak, but distinctly different in Tao Qian's perception.

Tao Qian squatted down and casually picked through the items, pretending as if nothing had happened, as if the accident had merely resulted from his hand slipping.

The Fierce Ghost Dwarf glanced at him, chuckled sinisterly, and also tacitly did not drive him away, thinking to itself:

"Who knows where this mixed dragon whelp came from, triggering my mutation sickness and making me waste a Red Flame Fruit."

"Just wait and see what you choose, I'll be sure to extort a good sum from you, hmm."

Of course, Tao Qian was unaware of the mental gymnastics of the Fierce Ghost merchant right before him, plotting to fleece this fat sheep.

Pretending as if casually, Tao Qian quickly picked out two items.

An iron flute rusted over and a brass bell, both musical instruments, revealing his related interests.

Quite reasonable, making it hard for anyone to hold any suspicion.

As Tao Qian picked up the items and signaled the Fierce Ghost merchant to ask for the price.

The creature opened its large mouth, its sharp teeth clacked together with a click, its bloody tongue flapping as it said:

"Noble guest, your taste is indeed excellent. Both of these items are ancient treasures. Although their names are unknown, each possesses divine abilities and are sound attack instruments of considerable power."

"If the noble guest likes them, give me 500 Joyful Money, and you can take them."

The price had just been announced when Tao Qian's classic national curse also immediately reached his lips.

Other customers also cast surprised looks.

The reason was simple; the price was too steep, outrageously so.

Usually, items of unclear origin, poor quality, and indeterminate powers, usage, and prohibitions did not sell for more than a hundred Joyful Money.

The same was true in his workshop.

It's known that even some Book of Skills, if the price was too severe, would only sell for a few hundred cents.

Two mere items with a unique aura, labeled as "ancient objects," definitely could not fetch 500 cents.

Clearly, the stall owner was trying to extort like slaughtering pigs and shearing fat sheep.

Initially, upon hearing this price, the other customers also felt a common indignation, debating whether to suppress the stall owner to prevent him from wildly making up prices.

But as the customers looked up and saw Tao Qian's expression, thinking about the previous minor conflict, they suddenly understood.

Well, this dwarfish ghost sure bears petty grudges, now taking revenge.

The customers kept silent, and Tao Qian did not indulge the creature either, throwing the two items back onto the stall and scoffed:

"Seems like you, this green-skinned imp, are crazed for money. Wanting 500 cents for these pieces of junk, do you think I look like a fool who doesn't know any better?"

"They are just supposed to be cleaned up and used as decorative playthings. If you don't want to sell them, forget it, keep them for yourself to blow and listen."

With that, Tao Qian turned to leave.

Although he was very eager for those items, at this moment, he absolutely could not let himself be extorted. Losing money was a minor issue, but he feared agreeing might stir up troubles and let the almost-captured prey escape.

As expected, as soon as Tao Qian turned, the Fierce Ghost Dwarf panicked.

The mouthful of satisfaction was momentary joy, but it almost forgot it urgently needed Joyful Money.

The being was continuously paying the price of transformation within its body and had also gotten involved in the "Deceitful Objects Fake," inexplicably contracting a dreadful sickness.

Desperate to live, it was doing everything it could to make money, couldn't afford the luxury of losing face.

Thoughts flashing quickly, it shifted with a ghostly blur, grabbing Tao Qian's arm with its sharp claws, cautiously retaining him.

At the same time, the Fierce Ghost immediately displayed its shameless ability to bend and stretch, smiling with its mouth stretched wide, trying desperately to appear simple and honest, although its ghastly face was indeed hard to look at.

"Noble guest, don't be angry, don't be angry. I was agitated by that sickness, momentarily misremembered the price."

"But indeed, the quality of these two items is also not bad. Both possess an ability to disturb the mind, confound the soul."

"Esteemed guest, if you could figure out the usage and taboos, the value would surely be even higher."

"How about this, take two hundred Joyful Money and it's yours."

During this exchange, the Fierce Ghost Dwarf suddenly reached out with another claw, eerily stretching it to grab both the rust-spotted Iron Flute and Brass Bell from the stall.

Then, it took out a soft piece of silk cloth, wrapped both items in it, and handed them to Tao Qian.

Seeing that the atmosphere had peaked, Tao Qian no longer continued to force the act.

He reached into his chest and took out two pages worth a "hundred yuan," engraved with exquisitely eerie Joyful Gold Banknotes.

Once Tao Qian got those items, he maintained his demeanor, scoffed coldly, then turned and left.

The transaction was complete, and while both parties were delighted, deep down, they both cordially wished each other well.

Tao Qian took the items and did not linger in the area, driving away the Green-scaled Demon that was about to pounce on his head and then returned to the main street of the workshop.

He found a loft along the street, paid a Joyful Money, and quickly acquired a spacious quiet room for rest and contemplation.

He sat down cross-legged and confirmed with his perception that there were no prying eyes around.

Suddenly, Tao Qian chuckled, took out the silk cloth from his bosom, and unfolded it directly.

His palm first grabbed the misshapen rusted Iron Flute, squeezing with his fingers, accompanied by a crackling and hissing sound.

In no time, the Iron Flute was gone, leaving only a small piece of iron slag cleansed of the infant demon death aura, which Tao Qian discarded to one side.

Next, Tao Qian looked at the brass bell, which was still in fairly good condition and about the size of a baby's fist, with eyes full of surprise.

His palm also grasped it, gently emitting Source Qi to expel the infant demon death aura attached inside.

Upon contact, a sense of perception instantly arose in Tao Qian's mind.

Oddly enough, it wasn't information about the bell but another spell.

[Name: Small Innate Nascent Soul Escape Technique.]

[Record Type: Deceitful Objects.]

[Record: This technique originates from the Heterodox Great Book 'Infant Scripture' and is one of the numerous escape techniques. Although called a minor technique, it is a lifesaver for cultivators below the Foundation Establishment Realm. This technique requires refining a breath of Nascent Soul Source Energy; once mastered, it allows one's body to emit a fragrance naturally, making bees, wasps, and even fierce animals not assault, birds not snatch, and the gates of heaven and earth wide open to the eye without significant barriers, as free as fish in water, following the heart's desire and for the cost of one breath can escape hundreds of miles.]

[Note 1: A cultivator practicing the Infant Scripture perished in the wilderness, and before his death, he scattered his Nascent Soul Source Energy into his Essence Blood. All his Divine Skills and magic were also imprinted in his blood. Unfortunately, this method does not last long, and all imprints nearly vanished due to wind, rain, and the scorching sun, only this escaping technique remained preserved in the bell's inner wall for a few days.]

[Note 2: Refining the corpse blood inside the brass bell allows one to immediately learn this escape technique, but it comes with contamination from the corpse blood, and there's even a chance of being seized by a cultivator's Heart Demon, resulting in body snatching.]

[Note 3: Even if not body-snatched, and contamination is countered, once you learn this escape technique, you must not eat grains or touch meat. Violating this would transform you into something like an infant demon or Devilish Infant.]

[Note 4: Exemption from contamination, body snatching, and dietary restrictions.]

"Great escape technique!"

Tao Qian, clutching the tarnished Brass Bell, wore a face brimming with joy.

After a night of hustling, he finally got his wish, successfully finding a bargain for the first time.

This technique called the "Small Innate Nascent Soul Escape Technique," although deemed a minor technique,

To Tao Qian, was genuinely a treasure.

Of course, that's assuming all costs were exempted.

Had he still needed to handle the contamination, the risk of body seizing, and the prohibitions against eating grains and meat... all these troubles, Tao Qian would only find himself conflicted, thinking the bell was as tasteless as chicken ribs but too precious to discard.

But now, Tao Qian felt couldn't be more perfect.

"If not for this gain, after returning, I'd still have to go and hunt those Earth Centipedes, one by one consuming them to practice the Earth Element Manual."

"Hard training yields only a few miles of Subterranean Evasion and reaching the Great Achievement Realm would only extend it to several tens of miles—an extremely mediocre effect."

"But this Nascent Soul Escaping Skill is different; using one breath, I could escape hundreds of miles. If my Source Qi is abundant, wouldn't I escape even farther?"

These thoughts flashed through his mind, and the next moment, Tao Qian acted.

Given all costs were exempt, what was there to hesitate about?

His fingers suddenly tightened, and with a burst of massive power, the brass bell was crushed into powder.

Immediately, an utterly bizarre event occurred:

From the brass powder, strange tadpole-like blood-red symbols crawled out. They wriggled and hopped, emitting a faint Exotic Fragrance that was refreshing and reminded one of a newborn baby—a pure and clean scent.

However, the characters seemed demonic, having a life of their own, rabid and aggressive, burrowing deep into Tao Qian's skin.

Before Tao Qian could stop them, in the blink of an eye, they succeeded and buried deep within his flesh, disappearing with a flash of blood.

Simultaneously, a hoarse voice emerged in Tao Qian's mind.

The voice urgently and crazily chanted cryptic mnemonics, trying to penetrate deep into Tao Qian's Soul.

However, before it could succeed, a force beyond description or imagination surged from deep within Tao Qian's Soul, shattering the bizarre Heart Demon.

Tao Qian, like those previous times, shivered intensely.

Then, Tao Qian felt something extremely special.

His mind inexplicably gained some new memories, carrying a technique called "Small Innate Nascent Soul Escape Technique."

The entire content of this technique, specific facets, cultivation experience, and more were all complete.

It was as if Tao Qian himself had chanted it many times, difficult even to forget.

Chapter 36: Tao Qian's Concubine, Miss Xiao Qing

"One thought to Infant, and I can escape for hundreds of miles."

In the quiet room, Tao Qian felt the Exotic Skill he had newly acquired.

Although it was called a minor skill in the Record, that was clearly in comparison to the Great Book, "Infant Scripture."

To Tao Qian, who was still at the bottom of the Cultivation World, and had in his possession low-grade Evil Techniques like the "Earth Element Manual" and the "Meat Demon Possession Technique," this "Small Innate Nascent Soul Escape Technique," which was considered a heresy, was of decent grade and efficacy, perfect for someone like him who needed an Escape Skill.

"Now that I possess the Power of the Bo Dragon Bloodline, the Secret Demon Sacrifice Body Sword Technique, and this Small Innate Nascent Soul Escape Technique."

"The first two will allow me to maintain my combat power, while the latter will keep my life safe."

"The only problem is that, to use the Nascent Soul Escaping Skill continuously without hindrance, Nascent Soul Source Energy is needed, which is something only cultivators who have practiced the 'Infant Scripture' Great Book possess."

"Although the Bo Dragon Source Qi within me can also drive the Nascent Soul Escaping Skill, the effect will be greatly reduced. And that's because I've already exempted the associated price."

"If it were someone else, forcibly driving Divine Skills with Alien Species Source Qi would certainly lead to backlash, loss of control, or mutation, which is highly likely to happen."

"On the other hand, that Secret Demon Sacrifice Body technique, since it draws from consumptive Sword Techniques, does not have such great restrictions."

"Compared in this way, the Nascent Soul Escaping Skill seems less valuable than the Earth Element Manual."

"In fact it's not, using the Earth Element Manual also requires Source Qi, but the difference is the Source Qi needed for the manual comes through the 'Swallowing Earth Beetles' method. Once practiced, one must eat daily, monthly, yearly; no matter how well one practices, they can only escape through the earth for some tens of miles at most."

"But the Nascent Soul Escaping Skill is different, even if I use the Bo Dragon Source Qi to drive it, I can still escape through the earth for tens of miles; it just won't be as smoothly and satisfactorily."

"Moreover, the blood of a Nascent Soul cultivator contains three strands of Nascent Soul Source Energy, and if I were to release that in one breath, I could instantly escape for three hundred miles, truly as carefree as an Immortal among men."

Tao Qian's mind was swirling with these numerous thoughts.

However, soon he remembered there was still important business to attend to.

The true purpose of Tao Qian's journey, apart from treasure seeking, was to attempt to gain access to some Great Lifebound Scriptures.

He had long understood a great rule of the Cultivation World: without the Great Book for a single day, one is always an ant.

Before, he was somewhat ignorant, but now with more magic skills and Secret Techniques, Tao Qian became more and more clear on the importance of a Lifebound Scripture.

Where in Tengshe Square could there be a Great Book?

Naturally, it would be those shops with a Great Cultivator standing behind them.

Even though those shops couldn't possibly have something on the level of "Infant Scripture" or the "Great Reincarnation Scripture."

But some widely spread, thick manuals that could allow cultivators to break through to the Qi Refining Realm or Foundation Establishment Realm, those shops did have them.

Of course, the selling price was terrifyingly high.

Before extorting the Old Fox, Tao Qian had not stepped into them, not because he didn't want to, but truthfully because he was financially embarrassed.

Now having obtained thousands of Joyful Money, along with some Deceitful Objects and Exotic Treasures he carried, Tao Qian barely had some confidence.

"It's time to increase my knowledge."

Tao Qian, a Cultivator at the bottom of the Cultivation world, stood up, patted the Joyful Gold Banknotes in his bosom, and said so.

Before long, his figure appeared in front of a pavilion built from strange jade, Deceit Wood, Exotic Stones, and many other extraordinary materials.

The entire building emitted an abnormal aura, seeming to lower guards, cease hostilities, and awaken a strong desire for knowledge in anyone, making them want to go inside and explore.

Above the entrance hung a sign with four large characters:

Joyful Treasure Pavilion!

Seeing this sign, Tao Qian's face showed clear recognition.

In his mind, he recalled the Banquet Buildings he passed when moving up the mountain, filled with prostitution, gambling, drugs, along with eating, drinking, and merry-making, and couldn't help but inwardly criticize:

"Who would have thought that one of the top manipulative powers within the Southern Yue Province, adept in the business of entertainment venues, would be a Great Sect."

"Since they monopolize all sorts of underhanded businesses, then opening a Joyful Treasure Pavilion specifically to sell Exotic Treasures, Deceitful Objects, Cultivation Manuals, and attract high-end clients from the market is also a very logical move."

"Trying to scoop up all benefits, and succeeding at that too, no wonder they have grown to such extent."

Tao Qian muttered to himself, yet his body very honestly stepped into the pavilion.

As soon as he entered, Tao Qian hadn't yet made out the interior layout.

But his gaze was immediately drawn to a large number of graceful figures.

Behind a purple-red counter not far away stood more than a dozen transcendent male and female cultivators, as well as Alien Species Demons.

Each of their bodies could only be described as stunning.

Tao Qian had encountered a "Desire Slave" at the Desire Pavilion who made people's desires rise, but that Desire Slave was a soul transformed from the dead; it was refined from the "Original Desire Five Immoral Banner."

After all, that was merely an illusion and couldn't be taken as real.

But those in front of him, they were as real as they come.

There was a female sword cultivator in a bright red robe, resembling a rebellious heroine from worldly society, a boisterous Alcohol Sword Immortal loudly reciting poems while drinking, a fluffy young Half-demon with a jade-like face, and a voluptuous female ghost in bridal attire... In short, they were incredibly real and each had characteristics beyond ordinary people.

Tao Qian even thought, if they were to appear in a TV drama from his previous life.

Then each one of them would undoubtedly be the protagonist.

Mere mortals, faced with them, would have to feel endless admiration.

And for a cultivator like Tao Qian, seeing them, he too couldn't help but feel a bit of affection.

He even wished to walk arm in arm with them, discussing life and the universe.

Tao Qian hesitated for half a second, but soon grasped the norms of this place.

Without a doubt, these enchanting beings were... receptionists?

Tao Qian's thought was quickly confirmed.

Upon seeing Tao Qian enter the pavilion, the dozen or so attendants' eyes lit up, but no quarreling ensued.

Instead, the one at the forefront, a woman clad in green attire reminiscent of a classical lady, approached him.

Slim and frail, her skin pale as though devoid of any blood, a single dab of red adorned her forehead. She seemed as delicate as a willow in the breeze, her slender eyebrows slightly furrowed, involuntarily evoking feelings of tenderness.

As she drew closer, she spoke in a soft, Wu dialect-like voice,

"Welcome, honored guest, to our Joyful Treasure Pavilion. I shall be at your service during your visit."

"You may call me Xiao Qing. Whatever your needs may be, I shall endeavor to fulfill them."

"Please, follow me!"

As she spoke, this Miss Xiao Qing drew nearer, but not overly so, unlike the Desire Slaves outside the Desire Pavilion.

She was like a frail, charming maiden from an official's household, standing prettily next to Tao Qian, accompanied by a soft voice and an intoxicatingly fresh fragrance.

Tao Qian let out a soft sigh, then followed Miss Xiao Qing.

Although Tao Qian saw through the Joyful Treasure Pavilion's scheme, he indeed found the company of this young lady quite pleasant.

Tao Qian guessed that if he wished, he could request a different attendant.

For instance, the gentle woman with ample bosom and long legs, black hair cascading over her shoulders, and a robust figure standing eight feet tall.

Yet, oddly enough, Tao Qian had no desire to do so.

"This is an art, a profound knowledge indeed, the inhabitants of Joyful Tower are simply geniuses."

"One suspects that if some deviant, mutated Great Cultivators were to arrive, this tower would also have receptionists capable of making them take a liking to them without realizing it."

"Joyous indeed, the name truly fits the style of this organization."

While Tao Qian mused, he followed Xiao Qing into a small yet classically decorated and fresh-looking private room.

Throughout the process, Tao Qian noted many such rooms within the tower.

Quite a few already had guests.

Once inside, the seemingly fragile Miss Xiao Qing adeptly prepared tea, a variety of snacks, and rare fruits for Tao Qian.

Afterward, she inquired with a voice that could soften bones, "Honored guest, what are you looking to purchase? Be it Cultivation Manuals, Exotic Treasures, or other rare and odd items, please do tell, and our Joyful Treasure Pavilion will do our utmost to satisfy your needs."

Here was the highlight.

Tao Qian had initially thought that Joyful Treasure Pavilion facilitated a free-form shopping experience, only to discover it was more of a club-style one.

To avoid showing weakness, Tao Qian did not even offer a smile to Miss Xiao Qing.

Rather, maintaining his aloof demeanor, he considered his fabricated story, ensuring there were no logical flaws.

Only after making sure did Tao Qian speak in a stiff tone,

"This young master has recently taken a human female as a concubine. Before she met me, she practiced only two or three inconsequential skills and couldn't even break through the Energy-Introducing Realm."

"Now, I need a comprehensive manual for her. She cannot practice my family's Dragon Technique, and the several human Magic Skills in our collection are too profound for her."

"Just as this young master is venturing out for the first time to train, I have conveniently come to your human town's territory to procure one or two volumes."

"Such great volumes, your Joyful Treasure Pavilion wouldn't lack them, right?"

As Tao Qian finished speaking, Miss Xiao Qing nodded immediately.

Without even pausing to think, she naturally replied,

"Rest assured, honored guest, your request is not difficult."

"You seek a Lifebound Scripture for your concubine, correct? Ordinarily, a cultivator would practice only one Lifebound Scripture in a lifetime; such a decision requires great care."

"If your concubine does not wish to abandon the Exotic Skills she has learned, nor the Source Qi she has already accumulated..."

"Then you must inform me of all this information, Xiao Qing, to aid in selecting the optimal great volume for your concubine's cultivation."

"As I am sure you know, all acts of cultivation come with a price."

"Even when one is a blank slate, one must carefully choose their Lifebound Scripture. Forcing one's way through with a mismatched match will carry horrific consequences akin to seeking death."

"We will select the most suitable great volume for her based on the related Exotic Skills she has practiced, the existing Source Qi within her, among other details."

"And rest assured, this all remains within the Joyful Tower's strictest confidence without worry of leaks."

"Of course, if you had brought along your concubine's blood or the lady herself, it would have been even more convenient."

After pouring out such professional words like a frail young lady from an official's family, Xiao Qing then extended a slender finger, offering a Dark Green Jade Token for Tao Qian to imprint the information.

It must be said!

This exchange vividly communicated the professionalism of Joyful Treasure Pavilion.

And it indeed stirred in Tao Qian the impulse to bring his "concubine" along, until he realized, be it in his past life or current, he had always been single from birth, without even a consort, so where would a concubine come from?

Chapter 37: The Qingyang Daoist Scripture, the Dragon's Nature is Inherently Lustful

Tao Qian looked at the slender, fair fingers pinching the Dark Green Jade Token, subconsciously glancing at his own left and right hands, muttering to himself about what concubine, which concubine, nearly got himself a knife in the back from making up a little story.

However, he still had to maintain his composure. Tao Qian pondered for a moment without accepting the jade token and waved his hand, saying,

"No need, the Exotic Skill cultivated by my concubine is only for her and I to know, not to be discussed with others."

After finishing, Tao Qian seemed to recall something and then addressed Xiao Qing.

"I've heard that you have a 'Joyful Treasure Record' here that contains basic information on a large number of Cultivation Manuals and Exotic Treasures. Go fetch me the supplement of the Cultivation Techniques from the Treasure Record, so I may take a look for myself and choose."

"Don't worry about the silver coins, I know your house rules. Even viewing the supplement requires a hundred Joyful Money, and I can afford it."

As soon as Tao Qian's voice fell, the next second brought a pleasant sight.

It was Miss Xiao Qing pursing her lips and smiling, her affectionate eyes looking at Tao Qian as she said sweetly with a crisp voice, "Esteemed guest's request is understood by Xiao Qing, please wait a moment."

After saying this, she turned and left the room.

After she left, Tao Qian gradually came to his senses. Could this girl be thinking of something crooked? Did she mistake the so-called "peculiar Exotic Skill" practiced by my "favored concubine" as those indecent skills meant for the bedchamber?

Before Tao Qian could figure it out, Xiao Qing quickly returned.

As soon as she sat down, she handed over a beautifully elegant, thick book with a lavish cover, emblazoned with the words "Joyful Treasure Record of Cultivation Supplement."

Facing what he truly wanted, Tao Qian didn't bother to clarify any misunderstanding.

He reached out to take it and, before opening it, Tao Qian said to Xiao Qing,

"Miss Xiao Qing seems to be quite knowledgeable, just right for someone like me who is venturing out for the first time. I lack substantial knowledge about the basic information of the Human Cultivation World, especially the secrets and common knowledge related to the Lifebound Scripture."

"If it's convenient for you, why not explain some to me?"

Tao Qian did not mention any reward for a good explanation.

It seems that from the moment you chose a host in a place like the Joyful Treasure Pavilion, consumption has already begun.

It's just that they haven't asked you to pay yet, waiting to settle the bill when you leave, following clear rules.

Quality service always comes with a high price.

This is the reason why?

Tao Qian, before extracting thousands of Joyful Money through coercion, never set foot here.

Like other Cultivators and Demons lingering at those stalls, they're all penniless ghosts.

Only with a bulging wallet did Tao Qian dare to pretend to be a wealthy man, spin a few small stories, establish a persona, and extract the information he wanted.

Sure enough, after he made the request, Miss Xiao Qing showed no sign of refusing.

Just as Tao Qian was about to open the supplement, she walked over and knelt next to Tao Qian, beginning to explain in a tender voice. From afar, this scene very much fit the image of a gentle maid adding a touch of charm.

The Cultivation Technique supplement of the Treasure Record also had an index for guidance.

Although Tao Qian was also interested in other Secret Techniques, thinking of serious matters, he still turned immediately to the pages related to the "Lifebound Scripture," and upon seeing the number of lines, a smile inadvertently appeared at the corner of his mouth.

The Joyful Tower is indeed one of the top Side Door forces within Southern Yue Province. The Lifebound Scriptures available for sale reached as many as hundreds of kinds.

At a first glance, Tao Qian was also bedazzled, unsure which page to flip to?

It was at this moment that Miss Xiao Qing's voice came through:

"The esteemed guest, being a paragon from the Dragon Species Clan, it's quite normal not to understand the foundational practices of humans."

"We Human Cultivators mostly practice only one Lifebound Scripture in a lifetime, and as long as it's not too defective, the scripture usually includes offensive and defensive techniques, and if fortunate, may also contain Escape Techniques and calculation methods."

"If you've already chosen a Lifebound Scripture, you can't practice other Exotic Skills, or you might suffer a fatal backlash due to mutation."

"Of course, this is not always the case."

"If the nature of the Source Qi is similar, it's possible to successfully transition to another Lifebound Scripture."

"Besides this, there are the Nine Cultivation Realms. The Energy-Introducing Realm is easier, with many lucky individuals receiving an abundance of Source Qi infusion and easily leaping into this Realm, but there it ends."

"To break through to the Second Realm, the Qi Refining Realm, one must practice their Lifebound Scripture."

"It must be known that there are countless Source Qi in the world, but only with the Lifebound Scripture can one refine the Source Qi that enters the body, thus creating an endless cycle, giving rise to various Divine Skills and Special Abilities."

"The Human Clan Cultivators have created many Great Books through years of inheritance."

"The lowest can allow a Cultivator to step into the Qi Refining Realm. Such Lifebound Scriptures are widespread and most affordable. These are also the most recorded in the Treasure Pavilion."

"Beyond the Qi Refining Realm, there are also the Foundation Establishment Realm, Transcend Mortality Realm, Cavernous Mystery Realm, Ultimate Happiness Realm, and so on, but the Great Lifebook Scriptures that can lead a Cultivator into these realms are much rarer. Even in our Joyful Treasure Pavilion, at most, we have a copy of the 'Qingyang Scripture,' which allows one to step into the Realm of Transcend Mortality and thus become Transcendent, unfathomable."

Tao Qian originally meant for Miss Xiao Qing to mention some common knowledge for him to note casually.

Who knew that the girl, worthy of being a member of a large organization, would unveil knowledge Tao Qian didn't know with a word.

Glancing down at the index, indeed, the so-called "Qingyang Scripture" was listed.

Turning the pages casually, Tao Qian quickly saw the related commentary.

Not surprisingly, it was concise but sufficient.

"The 'Qingyang Scripture,' this scripture was composed two hundred years ago by Qingyang Daoist. Originally, the Daoist was a True Cultivation Disciple of one of the Twelve Major Daoist Sects, the Canxuan Sect. After being expelled from the Sect due to an incident, his Cultivation was mysteriously not abolished but was forbidden to spread the Canxuan Daoist Skill."

"Another hundred years after, the Canxuan Sect exploded into war with one of the Demon Sects, the Evil Sect. Qingyang Daoist, before leaving to provide assistance, specially infused his life essence into writing the scripture of his non-Canxuan Daoist Skill, passing it to five disciples."

"Months later, Qingyang Daoist died."

"This scripture was recompiled by his third disciple, who, by a twist of fate, consigned it to our Pavilion. Inside it includes fundamental Cultivation Methods that allow one to step into the Realm of Transcend Mortality and also comes with a compiled 'Qingyang Sword Technique.' Once mastered, it lets one traverse thousands of miles, with sword light cutting through, demons yielding easily. There's also an Escape Technique called the 'Five Mountains Spirit Sheep Escape Technique.' Once mastered, nothing in the Three Mountains and the vast earth can hinder you."

"Beyond that, there is also the 'Green Eyes Technique,' a Pupil Skill of alien origin. Once mastered, one can peer into mysterious and deceitful things with the naked eye, intimidate hundreds of Beasts, and even predict fortune and calamity."

Despite the lack of detailed content and associated prohibitions in this information,

But Tao Qian, after finishing reading, still felt his heart racing wildly.

Deep down, it was as if a voice was shouting, "Buy it, hurry up and buy it."

It wasn't until Tao Qian saw the price listed at the back that his enthusiasm was instantly extinguished by a bucket of ice water.

He kept his composure on the surface, pretending to be uninterested as he shook his head and said to Miss Xiao Qing, "Please continue, what about the later parts?"

It was unclear whether Tao Qian's acting was quite good, or if Xiao Qing herself also felt that this "dragon cub" in front of her certainly wouldn't take interest in the Qingyang Scripture, a traditional Daoist Scripture of the Human Clan.

Hence, after a slight pause, the girl continued,

"Esteemed guest must be aware that Xiao Qing is but a mere receptionist in the pavilion, with scant Cultivation. You, who hail from a background far from ordinary, must surely know much more about the secrets beyond the Ultimate Happiness Realm. Xiao Qing will refrain from flaunting my shallow knowledge."

"Having said that, Xiao Qing also greatly envies beings such as yourself, with a future far more grand and bright."

"Born with extraordinary Bloodline, Divine Skills naturally arise, unlike us lower-level Cultivators who, even with an unwavering heart for seeking the Dao, are ultimately defined by our inherent talent. Beyond that, one must also consider how fate will play out, for the path ahead is truly arduous."

"Fortunate to have entered the Energy-Introducing Realm, one still has to toil to break through the Qi Refining Realm, then reach the chasm-like barrier."

"Those manuals that can lead a person to 'Foundation Establishment' and 'Transcend Mortality,' which one isn't exceedingly rare and priced outrageously?"

"Even if there are those with great determination or who are lucky enough to step into it, in reality, it's still not much."

"If one aspires to become a true Great Cultivator capable of Longevity, there are hardly any other choices but to join one of the Twelve Major Daoist Sects, Buddhist Temples, noble big families, Heterodox Sects or the likes of Ten Thousand Infant Sects, which are considered heresy and heterodoxy."

"Pity the many Loose Cultivators in the world, full of ambition, only to realize after a lifetime of hardship that there is no road ahead, ending in silent resolution."

"Esteemed guest's background must be extraordinary, and if you are willing to help me in my quest for the Dao..."

At this point, Xiao Qing suddenly stopped speaking.

Her already pale face turned pallid in an instant.

Clearly, she had crossed a line.

The words preceding had no issue, but the latter ones began to carry a tone of resentment, and at the end, it seemed she was about to reveal her affection for Tao Qian, offering herself as a concubine.

Thankfully, at the last moment, she came to her senses.

This was highly irregular!

If it were a Fox from the Desire Pavilion acting in this way, it would be considered normal.

But she was professionally trained, steadfast in mind, with goals of her own, certainly not one to act in this manner upon first meeting someone.

She also knew that such displays of coquettishness were generally unwelcome, let alone the fact that the Joyful Treasure Pavilion would never allow receptionists to privately seduce guests; discovery would lead to severe punishment.

Her thoughts rapidly shifted as Xiao Qing quickly came to a realization.

She rose abruptly, her eyebrows tightly furrowed, and with a wry smile said to Tao Qian who was looking over with astonishment, "The esteemed guest truly possesses an extraordinary and transcendent physique, and the Dragon Species Bloodline within you must be plentiful. Although Xiao Qing has been on guard, I was still attracted by the charm of your Bloodline."

As she spoke, Xiao Qing bowed solemnly to Tao Qian and pleaded, with tears starting to form in her eyes, "May the esteemed guest forgive Xiao Qing for her presumptuous words. If it's known to the Pavilion, Xiao Qing might be at risk of losing her life."

As Xiao Qing did this, Tao Qian also paused for a moment because the change was so sudden and entirely unexpected for him.

But he quickly understood that Xiao Qing's uncharacteristic seductive behavior was surely influenced by the Bo Dragon Bloodline within him.

After all, the two had just been sitting extremely close, with occasional physical contact, combined with both being immersed in their own thoughts, their spirit momentarily bewildered and their energies mingling. The Dragon's nature is highly lascivious. Let alone human women, even those rare birds and Exotic Beasts that are exposed to Dragon Qi for a time would find it difficult to escape the Dragon's clutches.

If it were not so, there wouldn't be so many Dragon Species hybrids in the world.

If a real Bloodline descendant of the Dragon Species were in his place, this Miss Xiao Qing might have been in trouble.

Luckily, it was Tao Qian. His heart for seeking the Dao was unwavering at this time. For a feeble young lady, where could the Cultivation Secret Manual be more appealing?

Moreover, while the girl may appear amenable, she likely was acting under the influence of Bo Dragon's Qi.

By nature, her personality had not changed. If one were to really coerce her into doing something, isn't it likely to end in mutual destruction and a catastrophic outcome?

Thus, Tao Qian smiled and gestured with his hand, "Sit over there. This oversight was my fault."

"Don't worry, this matter will be known only between you and me, with no third party aware, and no one will punish you."

After saying this, Tao Qian watched as Xiao Qing, still visibly shaken, took her seat across from him again.

His thoughts churned for a moment. He idly browsed the complex pages and then casually asked,

"Miss Xiao Qing, do you know of any Lifebound Scriptures in this supplement that are universally applicable, inexpensive, and suitable for the majority to practice?"

Startled by the question, but comforted by the tolerant customer's inquiry, Xiao Qing unthinkingly scoured her memory and gave a direct response.

"Such Cultivation Techniques do exist, and they are not few."

"However, most of them, though seemingly affordable, actually hide great dangers. It's said some Evil Great Cultivators deliberately spread such manuals to cultivate pawns and sheep that can be reaped and slaughtered at will."

"But there are also some Basic Skills that have been disseminated from Buddhist and Daoist Sects, which can be practiced as Lifebound Scriptures, though they are extremely difficult and have average Power, with no clear path forward."

"Like the 'Pure Yang Small Introduction' that has been passed down from one of the Twelve Major Daoist Sects, the Pure Yang Sect."

"Or the 'Little Freedom Heart Scripture' from the Great Freedom Temple."

"The 'Fake Infant Secret Method' that has been circulated from the Ten Thousand Infant Sect."

"And so on, almost anyone can practice them, but they will only take you as far as the Qi Refinement Realm."

"If one wishes to progress further, they must somehow manage to enter these Major Sects."

"However, for ordinary people to practice these profound Cultivation Methods without the guidance of a mentor, almost all will err in their practice. While their errors may not be fatal, they would likely damage their foundations, not only forever barring them from joining the Sects, but also eliminating the possibility of switching to practice other Lifebound Scriptures."

Chapter 38: Finding the Basic Method, Spiritual Treasure Nine Truths Map

In the refined side chamber, the charming atmosphere had completely vanished due to the previous incident.

Fortunately, Tao Qian was never one for such pleasures; he absent-mindedly flipped through the pages, the Secret Techniques he heard about from Xiao Qing, which barely qualified as fundamental mental methods for cultivation, flickered before his eyes.

From time to time, he would ask questions, inquiring about some details not mentioned in the books.

According to the rules of the Treasure Pavilion, Miss Xiao Qing shouldn't have divulged anything.

However, feeling she had been abrupt with a distinguished guest, she couldn't help but occasionally reveal some information.

Thus, Tao Qian's grasp of common knowledge and secrets relevant to the Lifebound Scripture grew significantly.

Some of the scriptures he read were considered bizarre, while others were chilling enough to make one instinctively denounce them as works of Evil Demons and Heretics.

For instance, a Lifebound Scripture called the "Fungus Planting Technique" claimed it could cultivate a person to the Foundation Establishment Realm and came with nearly ten Divine Powers.

Yet the practice required cultivating "Blood Spores" using fresh humans; feeding them Blood Fungus Powder before slicing open their belly and planting the fungus. Due to the powder, the humans would be stiff and immobile, yet still alive, and their senses would become eerily acute. After seven days, when the blood fungus had grown, it would continually spew Blood Spores, and the cultivator refining these could be filled with Source Qi, boosting their cultivation significantly.

Another Lifebound Scripture called the "Snake Mother Scripture" also touted itself as able to advance someone to the Foundation Establishment Realm, including methods like the hundred-mile snake escape, the venomous fang sword technique, and the Yin fiery snake demon—three powers of remarkable strength.

However, the training method required first practicing the Basic Method, transforming one's body into a snake form, complete with scales and fangs, then going to the wild valleys to find thousands of venomous snakes. Using one's Essence Blood, these vipers would be coerced into deadly infighting and mutual devouring until only one—the Snake Mother with a Demon Core—remained.

At the time of the blood moon, one would copulate with the Snake Mother under the moonlight; the mingling of Yin and Yang would allow the practitioner to enter the Qi Refining Realm in just one night.

Repeating such practices would lead to the Foundation Establishment.

...

Besides these disturbing heterodox methods that made Tao Qian uneasy, he also came across many basic skills from the Buddhist and Daoist Sects.

Compared to the former, these were undoubtedly much more normal.

And at first glance, they seemed free of significant cost.

While perusing these, Tao Qian was also partially distracted.

In his mind, thoughts surged, analyzing his current situation.

"With the Bo Dragon Bloodline in me and the acquisition of the Sword Technique and Escape Skill, my progress has already surpassed most of the lower-level cultivators."

"Still, for long-term planning, I need to find a Lifebound Scripture; without it, I cannot enter the Qi Refinement Realm."

"But most of the scriptures scattered abroad are treacherous and come with a hefty price tag. Even the 'Qingyang Scripture' that only allows entry to the Transcend Mortality Realm is outrageously expensive."

"If one truly wishes to pursue the Great Dao and long life, the best option would doubtless be to join a Major Sect from the Buddhist and Daoist Sects, a noble family, or a Heterodox Sect like the Ten Thousand Infant Sect."

"The problem is that these major forces are high and mighty; their Sect sites are located in Secret Realms and Immortal Mountains—mere mortals would struggle to even hear of such places, let alone set foot in them."

"And these powerful entities have their own methods and paths for selecting disciples."

"The lower-level Loose Cultivators, those seeking the Dao and Immortality, have no idea where to start; Wu Ming, for example, is a harrowing testament to that."

As these thoughts flashed through his mind, a sense of worry started to rise within Tao Qian.

If the practices embedded within the Lifebound Scripture were something one could abandon or take up as one pleases, then there would be no need for concern.

But unfortunately, that was not the case, and the choice had to be made with great care.

After much deliberation, as Tao Qian neared the end of flipping through the Treasure Record Supplement in his hand, he finally made a decision.

He secretly thought to himself: I don't need to be too troubled; choosing a Lifebound Scripture is even more challenging for others, but not me. I can discern more hidden secrets unknown to others, so naturally, I should first take a look at these smaller Lifebound Scriptures and see if I can sense any good news.

With this resolve, Tao Qian looked up to see the delicate Lady sitting further away on purpose and asked,

"Miss Xiao Qing, if I want to directly touch these smaller scriptures to make a selection, how many can you retrieve for me with your authority?"

"Respected guest, at most three scriptures at a time, and you can only examine a page or two. If not chosen, you'll have to pay one hundred cents for the second time to fetch another three, and if you still don't choose, then you can no longer continue to pick,"

"This rule is hard to break; Xiao Qing is powerless to help."

Hearing this, ideas formed in Tao Qian's mind.

First, he excluded those bizarre and horrifying heterodox practices. Then it was the Buddhist and Daoist methods—Tao Qian had no interest in becoming a monk nor did he wish to become a Demon and make enemies of the world.

After this selection process, an answer crystallized.

"Alright, go fetch me the 'Pure Yang Small Introduction,' 'Health Care Secret,' and 'Spirit Treasure Nine Truths Diagram'—these three small scriptures."

As Tao Qian spoke these words, Xiao Qing couldn't help but take a side glance.

Clearly, she had not expected this Half-dragon Half-man Demon to choose three foundational Daoist scriptures after much deliberation.

Each of these scriptures had a notable origin: the first came from the "Pure Yang Sect," the second was even greater, being a Basic Skill transmitted from "Taishang Dao," and the third hailed from the "Spirit Treasure Sect."

These three Sects were all among the Twelve Major Daoist Sects.

Especially Taishang Dao, which was rumored to be almost the first among the Daoist sects in strength.

Seeming to understand Xiao Qing's perplexity, Tao Qian added after speaking, "My concubine was originally a Daoist female cultivator before she joined the Sect. I also wish to see what's so special about Daoist Secret Techniques."

Miss Xiao Qing held no more doubts, instead feeling a bit of envy; the cultivation world was really too hard, and if one couldn't join a Major Sect, being part of a Great Demon's family would also make their Daoist path far wider than that of lower-level cultivators.

Just as she was about to continue pondering, she startlily realized—was this the seduction of Dragon Qi?

"No, that's not right; my Dao Heart is disturbed today."

"I should avoid any further contact with this guest and see him off as soon as possible."

Tao Qian was oblivious to the thoughts running through Xiao Qing's mind—he merely saw the delicate lady, who had previously walked as if swaying like tender willows, suddenly move swiftly as the wind.

Before long, she had returned.

But this time, she was followed by three maids, each holding an exquisitely beautiful jade box.

"The three Cultivation Techniques are all here; please make your selection, respected guest."

Having said that, Xiao Qing took several steps back voluntarily.

Looking at her, she seemed to hold some apprehension toward Tao Qian.

Tao Qian at this moment was only focused on the Lifebound Scripture and Basic Method, naturally paying no attention to her, and went straight to open the first jade box.

Inside lay a book woven from golden threads, upright and natural, about three fingers thick; on the cover, four ancient seal characters of the Daoist tradition emitted a brilliance that was truly special. Ordinary Cultivators would feel a sharp pain in their eyes upon seeing it, and if a Demon or any such alien being were to see it, they might suffer some harm, with serious cases possibly resulting in death.

Pure Yang Small Introduction, a Basic Skill of the major sect known as the Pure Yang Sect, can be used as a foundation for Cultivation but stops at the Qi Refining Realm; it comes with no Divine Skills or Exotic

Skills attached... As the relevant information emerged in his mind, Tao Qian had already reached out and picked it up.

The moment he touched it, a strong throbbing sensation immediately arose; as Tao Qian turned to the first page, a mnemonic that seemed to contain profound principles entered his view:

"Cultivate Qi and forget words, keep the mind for the uncarved block... To stay true, one must respond to things, and in responding, must not become lost... When the Qi returns, the elixir forms itself, in the pot is paired with Kan and Li..."

These mnemonics from just the first page, naturally, didn't reveal much.

What Tao Qian truly cared about was the strangely formatted information he perceived in his mind.

[Record Name: Pure Yang Small Introduction.]

[Record Type: Alien.]

[Record: This method is one of the Basic Skills within the major Daoist sect 'Pure Yang Sect'; it contains no annotations or Divine Skills, and can be used as a foundation for Cultivation, refining the body to attain Pure Yang Origin Qi, but will also be limited to the Qi Refining Realm. Once practiced incorrectly, it may drain all the Pure Yang, rendering oneself unable to hold any Source Qi and completely destroying one's Dao Path.]

[Note One: If one successfully advances to the Qi Refinery Realm by practicing this method, a Pure Yang Seed will form within the body. This seed has its own intuition and can guide Cultivators to the secret mountain gate of the Pure Yang Sect.]

[Note Two: If the Cultivator themselves possess an Abnormal Trait related to "Pure Yang", they are almost guaranteed to advance to the Qi Refining Realm. However, once this skill has been learned, one must not indulge in sexual relations, nor break their celibacy, otherwise, all one's previous efforts will be wasted.]

[Note Three: After obtaining Pure Yang Origin Qi through this method, the body will be constantly cleansed, often giving rise to evil thoughts, preventing calmness in one's male root, and causing strong attraction to 'Yin Demons', 'Alien Charm', 'female ghosts', and other alien beings. If their Pure Yang Origin Qi is drained, the Cultivator will die violently.]

[Note Four: The price cannot be exempted!]

...

Tao Qian struggled to contain the change in his expression, as the information he perceived was too astonishing.

The Record itself was quite normal, but that "Note One" immediately filled Tao Qian with immense joy.

He had been puzzled before about the major sects, without a path to follow and no sect to enter, but now a way had appeared before him.

This could explain why a major sect of the Pure Yang Sect's level would allow one of its fundamental methods to spread outside; it seemed this was also a method they used to select disciples.

It also made sense; if a Loose Cultivator happened to pick up a "Pure Yang Small Introduction" and was able to cultivate it to the Qi Refining Realm, there was no doubt that they were a genius, and very likely they possessed what was known as a Pure Yang Constitution.

Such a genius seeking them out would undoubtedly be warmly welcomed by the Pure Yang Sect.

As for those subsequent "prices", in Tao Qian's view, they seemed quite appropriate.

Compared to other heretical methods from side doors and evil paths, it was far better.

Just as Tao Qian was feeling overjoyed, a setback came.

"Cannot be exempted!"

These four words sent Tao Qian's mind into a whirl.

Since learning of the anomalous nature of his soul, which allowed him to be exempt from the prices of cultivation, this was the first time he had come across an exemption.

If that format could be personified, Tao Qian felt as if he could hear a voice mocking him by his ear: "Don't get ahead of yourself. This method is not for you to cultivate."

"This doesn't make sense. Whether it's me or either of my two predecessors, we're all surely virgins. Why then can I not cultivate the Pure Yang methods? This is discrimination."

"Ah, that's also incorrect. The meaning of note four should be that I could also cultivate this Small Introduction, it's just that the anomaly in my soul will not provide any assistance."

Tao Qian mumbled in his mind, not feeling disheartened at all.

In fact, he was in quite a good mood.

Although he could not practice the "Pure Yang Small Introduction", the formatted information let Tao Qian know another way that the major sects selected disciples.

It was very likely that it wasn't just the Pure Yang Sect that did this.

With that thought, Tao Qian directly reached out and opened the subsequent two jade boxes.

The next second, he saw the "Health Care Secret" and the "Spirit Treasure Nine Truths Diagram" reflected in his view.

The former was the thinnest, only one finger thick, while the latter was a full four fingers thick, a substantial volume indeed.

Tao Qian just picked up the Health Care Secret, turned to the first page, and a mnemonic as simple as the Great Dao appeared in his view:

"Taishang nourishes the spirit, thereafter the form, when the spirit is clear and thoughts are calm, all joints will be at peace..."

Then came another heavy blow; the Record, Notes One, Two, and Three were much like the Pure Yang Small Introduction.

Similarly, Tao Qian once again saw the phrase "The price cannot be exempted".

After being hit twice, Tao Qian couldn't help but become suspicious.

The reason for being unable to exempt:

Could it be that the Pure Yang Sect and the Taishang Dao have extremely high requirements for a cultivator's innate abilities, and neither Tao Qian nor his predecessors were up to the mark?

Or is it because the level of these two Lifebound Scriptures is so high that even the anomaly deep within Tao Qian's soul is helpless?

With this doubt, Tao Qian took a deep breath and directly touched the third book.

As he felt the perception arise, he immediately looked at the final note.

To Tao Qian's relief, and in solving his doubt, he finally saw the information he wanted.

The Record and Notes One, Two, and Three were similar to the previous two volumes.

But after cultivating the Spirit Treasure Nine Truths Diagram to the Qi Refining Realm, what condenses within the body is a Spirit Treasure Nine Truths Map, which can also guide to the secret realm of the sect.

And the final note, Tao Qian saw this:

"The price can be exempted!"

Having been in this world for many days, this was the first time Tao Qian had such a strong impulse, feeling that these five characters were so endearing and charming.

Chapter 39: Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva Arrives, All on the High Platform are Pretend Immortals

In the side room, before a coquettish maid, Tao Qian was holding the "Spirit Treasure Nine Truths Diagram," the feeling of excitement in him was like the grand ringing of bells, assaulting his mind and spirit.

The format information perceived by his abnormal soul became even clearer.

[Record Name: Spirit Treasure Nine Truths Diagram.]

[Record Type: Alien.]

[Record Description: This method originates from the great Daoist sect "Spirit Treasure Sect," one of the orthodox sects of Daoism. It does not demand much in terms of disciples' natural talent but focuses on their fortune and disposition. Due to this, the sect has many disciples and a congregation of the strong. The Nine Truths Diagram is one of its basic and essential methods. Cultivating it, one can obtain the Spirit Treasure Source Qi and enter the Qi Refining Realm. However, practicing this method primarily focuses on one's disposition, and any slightest mistake will lead to a fall into the Demon Path.]

[Note One: Upon mastering this method and stepping into the phase of Qi Refining, your body will condense a Spirit Treasure Nine Truths Map, which will autonomously sense and lead you to the gates of Spirit Treasure Mountain.]

[Note Two: This method does not include prohibitions against actions, diet, or carnal desires, et cetera, but only requires maintaining vigilance over one's heart. One must always follow their heart's desires, and any deviation from this will attract demons from outer realms, leading them to tempt and devour the cultivator's spirit and will, until they are completely mutated and fall into the Infinite Demon Prison.]

[Note Three: Even during normal practice of this method, one must be wary of demons from other realms; if any demon infiltrates the body, the cultivator will no longer be able to cultivate an untainted Spirit Treasure Body, and all hopes of entering the Spirit Treasure Mountain gate will be dashed.]

[Note Four: The cost can be waived!]

As Tao Qian read this information, a strong sense of compatibility inexplicably arose and dominated his spirit.

Although it was not explicitly mentioned in the record description, Tao Qian knew.

Among the three basic methods, this one was most suitable for him.

Tao Qian felt a strong impulse to immediately buy it, but out of caution, and considering that his wallet was still quite full,

He put the book back into the jade box but did not let the maid take it away; instead, he turned to Miss Xiao Qing and said,

"Keep this book, then go fetch the 'Little Freedom Heart Scripture,' 'Fake Infant Secret Technique,' and 'Spirit Communication Record.'"

"Don't worry, I will make a decision very soon and won't send you running back and forth for nothing."

Tao Qian kept Miss Xiao Qing busy, but it was merely a precaution.

Within the rules, he looked over three more volumes, selecting a Buddhist Heart Sutra, a minor manual from a side sect, and another basic method from a great Daoist Sect, "Heavenly Talisman Sect."

About ten seconds later, Tao Qian saw his target.

The touch that seemed ordinary on the surface, and the feedback from the senses, surprised Tao Qian once again.

The Little Freedom Heart Scripture could waive some costs, and so could the Spirit Communication Record.

But the Fake Infant Secret Technique, coming from a significant heterodox sect, the "Ten Thousand Infant Sect," was completely cost-free. Did this mean Tao Qian was fit to join the Ten Thousand Infant Sect?

Tao Qian shook his head inwardly and silently refused.

Regardless of whether it was due to a suitable natural talent or the "Small Innate Nascent Soul Escape Technique" he had learned and the three strands of Nascent Soul Source Energy within him,

The Fake Infant Secret Technique, though free of cost, did not evoke in Tao Qian that strong sense of compatibility.

It seemed there was no further need for hesitation.

Tao Qian had made his decision, but still chose to maintain his persona, saying with a restrained vigor to Miss Xiao Qing,

"Just this 'Spirit Treasure Nine Truths Diagram' then!"

"By the way, I've heard that you human cultivators are superb at crafting curious and bizarre fun things and love collecting strange articles. Bring the Exotic Treasure adjunct volume as well, and I'll pick out some items to take back as small gifts."

Upon hearing these two statements, Miss Xiao Qing, who had been embarrassed several times due to "Dragon Qi Derangement," immediately brightened up.

The word "sales" was indeed crucial.

Whether in his past life or this otherworldly place, it seemed to be the case.

About half an hour later, outside the Joyful Treasure Pavilion,

Tao Qian strolled out, sporting a half-dragon visage. Although covered with scales, any passerby could see the pleased expression on his face.

Behind him, Miss Xiao Qing, blushing, walked slowly and shyly like a lady.

The guests coming in and out witnessing this scene secretly cursed, "Damned dragon cub, just living off a dragon's face and without shame."

Of course, Tao Qian did not know of the passersby's resentment, nor did he care.

At this moment, his mood was joyful.

He concluded that even as a cultivator, one could not escape worldly desires, at least not for now.

"Spending money is indeed too joyful."

Tao Qian thought to himself, with the backdrop of nearly spending all the three thousand Joyful Money he had extorted from Old Fox.

It wasn't that he had inherited the spendthrift nature of his former body, but rather, the "Spirit Treasure Nine Truths Diagram" he bought was excessively expensive.

Just that one thick volume, which could serve as his Lifebound Scripture, had alone cost a full two thousand Joyful Money.

Tao Qian considered that, including the service fee for Miss Xiao Qing and the miscellaneous expenses for fetching and reading the books, there wouldn't be many hundreds left, so he might as well spend it all.

With this thought, Tao Qian's desire to shop was unrestrained, and he soon emptied his wallet.

Of course, his gains were substantial.

Apart from finally acquiring the essential method he wanted, the other items he purchased also significantly enhanced Tao Qian's capabilities.

"Only this included Joyful Bag is terribly ugly."

"Why embroider such a thing, depicting the Plague Golden Toad, if not to save some royalties?"

Tao Qian, while walking away from the Treasure Pavilion, complained about the item resembling an incense bag stuffed into his chest.

The embroidery on this incense bag was excellent, with some gold wiring added; the front bore the large letters "Joyful Treasure Pavilion," while the reverse boldly displayed the "Plague Golden Toad."

Tao Qian, from his past life, found this style quite familiar; it's common to receive small novelties and souvenirs after shopping in big stores.

Generally speaking, one would deal with these matters.

A bit annoying, but Tao Qian couldn't possibly refuse, especially since the incense bag was actually a storage treasure bag.

It was apparent that Tao Qian himself hadn't expected that the first legitimate storage treasure he obtained since he started his cultivation would be an incense bag embroidered with a festering giant toad.

Although the inner space wasn't large, barely able to accommodate an adult human,

the "storage capability" was indeed genuine. Aside from holding the thick "Spirit Treasure Nine Truths Diagram," it also contained a sword Tao Qian had acquired from the Joyful Treasure Pavilion, several elixirs, some incense, and other various items he believed could be of use.

These items had drained Tao Qian's funds.

"Money spent brings peace, it's time to descend the mountain!"

Tao Qian muttered to himself, then promptly planned to leave Tengshe Town.

Having struggled through most of the night and with dawn approaching, he needed to return to his job as the scholar manager of the Chengyou Bookstore.

Saying this, Tao Qian was about to step onto the main street, crossing through the stream of human cultivators, demons, and monsters, to leave the bizarre Tengshe Town.

But just at this moment, the sky unexpectedly began to flash with Buddha Light, followed by a massive amount of golden mist floating from the cloudy depths.

Instantly forming a sea of mist, resonant Buddhist chants that turned all heads on Tengshe Mountain to listen started to spread.

From far to near, solemn and grave.

What was even more astonishing was the procession that emerged from within the mist, walking on air.

Numerous venerable monks and nuns lined up on both sides, carrying Buddhist altars, incense burners, treasure covers, scripture banners, flower curtains, and sounds of wooden fish and copper bells filled the air ceaselessly.

In the center, atop a lotus throne carried by eight robust, golden-torsoed monks, lazily lounged a figure bathed in Buddha Light, appearing much like a "Female Bodhisattva."

As the Buddhist chants neared, the striking Buddha Light directly illuminated the dark, beastly Tengshe Mountain like a parasitic alien.

Everyone involuntarily lifted their heads to gaze at the "Bodhisattva."

She had a dignified appearance, seeming to possess the utmost beauty of this world.

Her skin was whiter than snow, with fine brows and shaped eyes, wearing a treasure crown, her hair up in a high bun, draped with a large scarf, in a long skirt, adorned with earrings, arm bracelets, bracelets, luxurious and beautiful, with her Rainbow Robe and Jade Belt fluttering through the clouds, uplifting everyone's spirits, making people long to attend upon the Lotus Platform.

For a moment, whether human cultivators or demons and monsters, all seemed to forget to speak.

They all stared blankly at the Female Bodhisattva on the lotus throne.

Many of the weak-willed even fell to their knees, bizarrely chanting the heretical "begging the Bodhisattva for the charity of her flesh" over and over.

Tao Qian, blending into the crowd, kept his head down, daring not to make any noticeable movements.

He wasn't begging for any charity from the Bodhisattva; he just wished for the Female Bodhisattva to move on quickly.

At this moment, in his mind, it was as if dozens, if not hundreds, of war drums were being pounded with heavy mallets.

Thundering!

A strong pulsating sensation, an indescribable sense of imminent danger, made Tao Qian wish he could transform into the "Earth Element" and burrow underground to avoid this ordeal.

He felt as if the "Female Bodhisattva" above him was lazily observing the crowd below.

Soon, it would be his turn.

Just then, suddenly, from the highest point of Tengshe Mountain, a commotion also erupted.

A coarse and fierce voice cut through, but the owner undoubtedly possessed a terrifying cultivation, directly suppressing the Buddhist chants and reverberating across the entire Tengshe Mountain.

"Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva, it's heard that you've recently defected from Guanyin Temple, stealing a great number of cultivation secret manuals and Buddhist treasures, and thus you were accepted by the Demon Buddha Temple of the hidden Demon Path sect and even permitted to practice the Blood and Flesh Secret Technique from the Great Book 'Demon Buddha Scripture.'"

"But after all, you are a defector from Guanyin Temple, not far from that great temple. Aren't you afraid that your former comrades will come and reduce your beautiful body to dust?"

Following this voice, the assembly of cultivators and demons then realized.

Atop Tengshe Mountain stood a structure akin to a pavilion of the Heavenly Palace.

Above it was a high platform stretching into the sea of clouds, where, at this moment, a sort of banquet seemed to be taking place.

Surrounded by immortal tunes, with hundreds of flowers in full bloom.

The seats were nearly full.

Each guest appeared distinguished, each radiating immortal aura, wholly unlike ordinary mortals.

A single glance revealed that this was likely a banquet of the Immortal Gods.

Yet Tao Qian, with his remarkable vision, after just one look, felt a storm surge inside him.

Other guests, he did not recognize.

However, one guest, a beautifully bodied woman resembling a sacred Snow Woman, had been seen by Tao Qian once before.

Just recently, at the base of the mountain.

Tao Qian had personally witnessed this woman's body riddled with dense pores as numerous, bright, flat objects resembling "pork tapeworms"—several meters long—emerged and fluttered in the air.

The depth of revulsion, which could reach one's soul, was something no one could easily forget in a short time.

Even though, at this moment, this woman's shell was intact, holier than a Bodhisattva's.

"If there's a so-called 'Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva' here, then that supposed banquet of Immortal Gods at the mountain's peak is probably just a gathering of horrific, bizarre pretenders to immortality."

"How unfortunate, I should have left earlier. Getting lost in shopping is deadly indeed."

Realizing some of the signs, Tao Qian couldn't help but start groaning internally.

Chapter 40: Wu Gou Buddha Heart, Everyone Flees

Tao Qian mingled in the crowd, lowering his head as much as possible to reduce his presence while inwardly lamenting his predicament.

The other cultivators and demons around him were much the same.

Most of those wandering in Tengshe Square didn't have high cultivations, with the majority not even reaching the Energy-Introducing Realm – truly the bottom rung of the Cultivation World.

The arrival of the "Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva" on a golden lotus throne above, with an extremely impressive entourage, made it clear, without question, that she was a terrifyingly powerful being.

The people at the feast on the high platform had already revealed that she had defected from the eminent Buddhist Guanyin Temple and was accepted by the great Demon Sect, Demon Buddha Temple—a top-tier formidable figure indeed.

Estimated using the universally accepted Nine Cultivation Realms of heresy and heterodoxy, Lord Bodhisattva was likely at least a strong being of the Transcend Mortality Realm.

And even that might be an underestimate.

The most disconcerting thing was that despite the fact that the powers on Tengshe Mountain Peak had spoken, the Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva simply ignored them.

She continued to lie languidly in her throne, incomparably alluring, her beautiful eyes scanning the crowd below as if searching for something, her lips gradually curling into a smile capable of captivating souls.

A second later, she seemed to be speaking to herself or perhaps responding to the distant powerful beings in the clouds.

Her voice, emanating from those red lips, could be heard throughout Tengshe Mountain – a bewitching sound that could disembody souls, indescribable in its charm.

"Afraid?"

"If this Bodhisattva feared those hypocritical nuns of Guanyin Temple, she wouldn't have defected to Demon Buddha Temple."

"Tang Xianzong, this seat has heard that you are a rising star in the Devil God Army, greatly compatible with the Great Book 'Heavenly Demon Slaughter God Scripture,' and you've even hooked up with the ninety-seventh daughter of that Devil God, a future full of boundless prospects."

"However, these are not reasons enough for you to provoke me. If later you cannot extinguish my fury, even the Daughter of Devil God above your head might not be able to save your life."

"Before that, you still have time to prepare. It's rare for this seat to leave home; I must savor some delicacies."

With the sound of the Bodhisattva's voice, every cultivator and demon that had been stealing glances turned their attention to the man seated at the head of the high platform banquet.

He was a robust human man, around thirty years old, with red and blood-like complexion and hair, still dressed in dark red armor, even while feasting.

His bizarre appearance wasn't ugly; on the contrary, it had an unusual aesthetic that led people to instinctively believe him to be forthright and trustworthy, inspiring confidence.

Clearly, this man was Tang Xianzong, whom the Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva had referred to.

The conversation indicated that she had descended to this place because Tang Xianzong had lured her there in some manner.

The cultivators and demons all cursed Tang Xianzong under their breath and listened as he puzzlingly replied to the Bodhisattva,

"Savor some delicacies?"

He wasn't the only one confused.

Others thought the same. If you, Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva, are a guest of that high platform feast, then go on there promptly.

What's the point of throwing your weight around here with all these lowly cultivators?

Tao Qian criticized her as well but soon after, he heard the Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva speak again.

At first it was alright, but when Tao Qian heard the later content, his soul nearly burst out of his body.

The Bodhisattva, lying lazily without concern for exposed skin, surveyed the cultivators, demons, and alien species below with soul-luring eyes.

That enchanting voice slowly said,

"The cultivators from Joyful Tower aren't that remarkable, accustomed to displaying odd and seductive tricks."

"But this workshop is not bad, attracting quite a few lovely young men."

"In this short while, I've already caught the scent of the delicious blood and flesh of the young ones from the Zhang Family and Xiu Family, the pure aura of the little Daoist from Nanhua Sect, and the sharpness of the young men from Sword Sect... Ah, most refreshing. Oh, and there's even a dragon cub mixed in, though its bloodline doesn't smell very pure, but it's definitely full of wildness and must be very tender and juicy."

"Boom"

Tao Qian's mind felt as though it had exploded.

The beginning was bearable, but that last sentence was a clear indication for him, Tao Qian.

With such words that could be described as brutally frank, Tao Qian felt an overwhelming urge to go mad.

A powerful unease, even fear, surged within him.

If it weren't for his recent experiences, he'd likely have found it difficult to remain calm at this critical juncture.

The only thing that allowed Tao Qian to suppress any immediate reaction was that he wasn't the only target of the threat.

Tao Qian continued to stay motionless, keeping his presence as low as possible.

Thoughts in his mind churned like tumultuous waves,

"An unwarranted disaster, truly an unwarranted disaster."

"Could it be that my recent streak of good fortune has incurred some kind of backlash?"

"My current cultivation is merely at the Energy Introduction Realm; if I'm caught by this fearsome demon Bodhisattva, the outcome will certainly not be good."

"Just listen to those descriptors: most refreshing, brimming with wildness, tender and juicy... Could she actually intend to eat us young men?"

"But which kind of eating?"

"Either way, it's terrible."

"If this demon acts later and there are other targets, it might cause quite a bit of chaos, and then I could take the opportunity to use the Small Innate Nascent Soul Escape Technique. I wonder if I can successfully escape with it?"

"If the crisis is truly dire, I'll have no choice but to resort to the Secret Demon Sacrifice Body Sword Technique. However, it's uncertain whether a sword enhanced by extracting all of my Bo Dragon Source Qi will even leave a scratch on the Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva's clothing."

Pondering all possibilities, the predictions turned out dreadfully grim.

However, what surprised him a bit was that there weren't only a few young men "nominated" by the Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva; they came from Major Sects and Great Sects.

By reason, they should all be proud and haughty. Yet when challenged, not a single one made a move.

Each one, like Tao Qian, made a similar choice to shrink back into the crowd, motionless.

Upon reflection, Tao Qian had an epiphany:

It was clear these young men all tacitly shared the same strategy as he.

Even if the Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva was powerful, she could not possibly capture so many at once, and chaos would ensue, at which time everyone could use their means to escape.

Those from major sects were indeed not impulsively foolish.

Indeed, were it not for this Female Bodhisattva pointing it out, perhaps no one would have realized that so many cultivators from great forces had infiltrated this workshop.

However, given some thought, it seemed reasonable since Tengshe Square did hold some fame within Southern Yue Province.

It was quite normal for the place to be a blend of dragons and snakes.

Just as Tao Qian was calculating the moment when chaos would erupt, planning to release those three strands of "Nascent Soul Source Energy" in one breath and escape three hundred li in an instant,

At the high platform of the banquet at Tengshe Mountain, next to Tang Xianzong, a noble and elegant beauty was seated.

Hearing the words of the Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva, her brows involuntarily furrowed.

She whispered something into Tang Xianzong's ear, and the next second saw the Devil God Army General nodding with a smile.

"Clap, clap,"

Accompanied by this applause resounding across Tengshe Mountain.

The crowd, including the "Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva," cast their gazes toward the high platform.

Only to see that on one side of the banquet, led by the attendants from Joyful Tower, a total of eighteen tall and strong monks exuding an intense masculine aura and each with distinctive features, draped in monks' robes, were invited out.

The eighteen monks seemed to be under a Forbidden Technique, unable to speak, only able to look at the Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva with desperate eyes begging for help.

Before she could fly into a rage, suddenly four attendants brought forth a cage covered with a black cloth, which was immediately lifted.

"Amitabha Buddha!"

With the chanting of this Buddha's name, a tranquility-inducing aura surged forth.

Everyone then saw that in the cage, there was an extremely young and handsome monk sitting cross-legged, his body pure and unstained.

The earlier group of eighteen monks had been eye-catching enough,

But when this "young monk" appeared, everyone else was forgotten.

It was then that Tang Xianzong finally spoke again, beginning with a reassuring and hearty laugh.

"Ha ha ha... Lady Bodhisattva, there's no need for anger. Since you joined the Demon Buddha Temple and your holy presence became elusive, I invited these Eighteen Blood Arhats here, who I heard were once favored by you, likely to make you appear."

"However, this mistake is mine, Tang Xianzong's, and I have long prepared gifts to atone for it."

"This master is called 'Hui Xin,' born with an innate Buddha Heart, and has cultivated a Pure Body—his talent has caught the attention of the monks of the Great Freedom Temple, and he may have the chance to become a Free Buddha Son in the future."

"However, Master Hui Xin, not knowing what slanderous words he believed, dared to intrude our Devil God Army Camp intending to take my life."

"I managed by a narrow margin to defeat Master Hui Xin by half a technique and intended to send the Master to the Western Heavenly Bliss; but then I thought of the Bodhisattva's preferences. Why not offer the Master to the Bodhisattva instead, as a way to please?"

"As for the little cultivators and Little Demons within this square, I kindly ask the Bodhisattva to spare them. This place is, after all, Joyful Tower's territory, and I've gone to great lengths to convince Sister Meng to agree, allowing me to host this banquet here, and it would be inappropriate to ruin the reputation of Joyful Tower."

"How about it? Would the Bodhisattva be willing to forgive me and join the banquet?"

As Tang Xianzong finished speaking, all present suddenly saw,

The Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva, who had been lounging lazily atop her lotus seat, suddenly sat up, revealing her infinite charm.

She stared intently at Master Hui Xin, even extending her tongue to lick her lips,

Her beguiling appearance, in a flash, caused many more below to prostrate themselves, begging to offer their bodies in alms.

"Good, very good."

"An Innate Buddha Heart, a Pure Body, such a deliciously young monk, one I haven't tasted in hundreds of years."

"I forgive you, you indeed have ways to please others, no wonder you could captivate the Daughter of Devil God."

"But..."

Hearing the first two sentences, including Tao Qian, the young men in the square all heaved a sigh of relief within.

Thinking that they might escape this ordeal, not needing to be "eaten" by that terrifying Female Bodhisattva.

But who expected such an abrupt twist?

The Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva, already assured of the main course, had an insatiable appetite. She once again turned her gaze down, coyly saying,

"Since you've invited me to eat, why have you only prepared this little monk as the main course and not some dessert?"

"No matter, I can pick for myself."

"Boom!"

With her words unleashed, an overwhelmingly menacing intent pressed down like a torrential flood from above.

In an instant, hundreds of beams of light erupted within the square.

It was the time when all the "targets," including Tao Qian, moved at once.

To strike?

No, at this moment, everyone's sole goal was to escape, to flee as far and as fast as possible.