

Longevity 61

Chapter 61: Tao Qian Fishing for Demons, Primordial Spirit Greatly Increases

Tiger Worry Gully, within a concealed cave.

Tao Qian cast a cold glance at the collapsing Heavenly Demon from the Outer Realm and then ignored it, channeling the robust Spirit Treasure Source Qi within him to absorb the "Innate Dao Seed" into his body.

Before long, tranquility returned to the cave, and the dazzling light had completely disappeared.

Yet, if any other creature had been in this place at that moment, they would have felt an indescribable wonder.

Even though nothing could be seen, one would feel that this cave was a blessed place, a Daoist Secret Realm, where simply being there could calm one's mind and spirit, and allow for the understanding of profound mysteries.

It was very much like the peculiar idea that "a mountain is not high; if an immortal resides in it, it becomes spiritually significant."

Tao Qian himself also felt this way, and perhaps even more profoundly.

The effects of the Dao Seed subtly began to reveal themselves.

After the Dao Seed entered his body, the speed of absorbing and refining Source Qi would increase, aiding his understanding of various techniques, Divine Skills, and Exotic Skills, and even increasing the frequency of sudden insights... Essentially, it was a type of support Divine Skill that immensely increased the efficiency and speed of a cultivator's practice, overshadowing other cultivators.

"Excellent Divine Skill!"

Tao Qian rejoiced inwardly, unable to help but exclaim.

While the Dao Seed's effects might not seem earth-shattering at first, even the newly cultivating Tao Qian knew that it was indeed among the top-tier Divine Skills.

In cultivation, besides the cost, talent was of utmost importance.

What defines a genius?

A cultivation speed and innate abilities that are superior to others make one a genius.

Although Tao Qian's natural talent might not match those who were born as Cultivation Seeds, with this Dao Seed within him, he was almost on par.

His first complete recitation of the spell enabled him to enter the Destiny Defining Fetus Stage, and he had acquired such a top-tier Daoist Divine Skill, naturally bringing a gleeful expression to Tao Qian's face.

Then, Tao Qian recalled the easily defeated Outer Realm Heavenly Demon and its words before death.

Reflecting on it, he thought: "The Great Book did indeed mention that the Innate Dao Seed has its own spiritual allure, which is fatally attractive to beings like Outer Realm Heavenly Demons. If so, I cannot return to Seeking Immortal County for the next three days. I must stay here and resolve this trouble."

With this thought, Tao Qian's brow slightly furrowed.

Outer Realm Heavenly Demons were a broad category, with various levels among them.

Like the one that had just attempted to provoke Tao Qian into making arrogant statements, only possessing the ability to "Seize Body", was among the lowest level.

Above this, the stronger the Heavenly Demons, the more skills and Divine Powers they possessed.

Legend even has it that there exist "Demon Lords" and "Demon Gods," which are extremely terrifying. Even true immortals could find themselves in trouble if they were careless during cultivation and these beings invaded them, potentially leading to death and their Dao disappearing into the demon.

"With my current Cultivation at the Energy-Introducing Realm, my cultivation experience isn't deeply interwoven with the Chaos Abyss, so I don't need to worry about attracting high-level demons; at most, some slightly more decent demons from a small part of the Demon Realm might notice me."

"Using the Nine True Spirit Sound can kill inferior and low-grade Heavenly Demons, but if there are too many or slightly higher level demons appear, then I would also be inadequate."

"Three days' time, it's uncertain whether such a scene won't appear."

In contemplation, Tao Qian recalled the mockery from the low-level demon right before its death.

Saying Tao Qian was an unprotected wild cultivator who would meet with disaster.

To a certain extent, this was correct.

For wild cultivators like Tao Qian, most ended up in dire straits, just like the senior "Seeking Immortal Hermit" Wu Ming.

Either they had no resources for cultivation or they mispracticed some Technique and died tragically.

But Tao Qian was different.

Unsure of what he had thought of next, a smile of willingness emerged on Tao Qian's face, and he mentally declared:

"Regardless of what kind of techniques other cultivators practice, they worry about how to pay the price, how to negate the cost."

"Since I am possessed of an Abnormal Soul, which exempts me from a major part of the cost, hence my rapid progress from a beheaded man to this state, now I have settled the Destiny Defining Fetus, and also obtained the Dao Seed, why should I look back and hesitate to move forward?"

The previous arrogant words were induced by the inferior demon, but this sentence was inspired by Tao Qian's own Dao Heart.

Once his mind was set, Tao Qian immediately dispersed his Divine Soul.

Soon, within the remote Iron Buddha Mountain, the Puppet Body sitting in the quiet room woke up, directly took out a scroll from the incense bag, and then began to read it meticulously.

Needless to say, it was the "Secret Demon Refining God Skill".

This technique came from the Demon Path's Great Book and was a top-notch Refining Divine Technical.

And this technique was based on "Refining Outer Realm Demons to Benefit One's Own Divine Soul," which could not be more suitable for the current Tao Qian.

After reviewing the Magic Skill's gates through the eyes of the Puppet Body several times, Tao Qian sat tall on the platform.

His spirit quickly immersed within, pulling the Spirit Treasure Source Qi surging up like a reverse-flowing Tianhe, all entering the top aperture of Tao Qian's Heavenly Gate, leading to a tedious process of gradual improvement.

Under Tao Qian's patient control, when about seventy to eighty percent of the Spirit Treasure Source Qi was consumed, he finally crafted a special Secret Acupoint Platform.

From initial appearances, this Secret Acupoint Platform was unobstructed and unsealed, with only Tao Qian's Divine Soul residing within.

If, during cultivation, one became utterly absorbed and had an interaction with the Chaos Abyss, it would certainly attract the invasion of Outer Realm Evil Demons.

These intangible and incorporeal demons, if they could devour a cultivator's spirit and seize the body, would immediately have the opportunity to seek the path of cultivation, and naturally, they could not refuse.

How could they predict?

This Secret Acupoint was a lethal trap.

As soon as a demon descended, the Spirit Platform would instantly close at will, cutting off the demon's interaction with the Outer Realm. In a blink, it would strip the demon of eighty to ninety percent of its abilities.

The cultivator then used the secret technique to devour and refine, enhancing his own divine soul.

"First, set a trap, then bait it, and finally, close the door and beat the dog... If one is not careful, one might get eaten by the prey instead. No wonder they say it's the simplest and most brutal, yet also the most dangerous Refining God technique."

Tao Qian evaluated this method as he sat on his spirit platform.

Afterwards, he stopped pondering and, having silently counted the time, began to cultivate the Spirit Treasure method once again.

Three days, for someone of his cultivation, passing without food or drink was not a problem.

Having obtained the Dao Seed and then cultivating the Basic Method, Tao Qian immediately felt a difference.

The spells he previously chanted and found obscure and difficult, now seemed to clear up with just a thought. He almost completed another full recitation had he not carelessly mispronounced a word in the final stage.

Even though he failed, this cultivation session significantly replenished the severely depleted Spirit Treasure Source Qi within Tao Qian's body, gradually filling it up again.

"The Innate Dao Seed is indeed extraordinary."

Tao Qian exclaimed in admiration and then fully immersed himself in the third cultivation session.

Time began to pass quickly.

During the process, Tao Qian completed another full recitation, boosting his Spirit Treasure Source Qi greatly.

Several hours later, another boost occurred, and his divine soul also gained benefits.

If an outsider were to observe, they would surely think Tao Qian had entered a rarely attainable state of cultivation, so terrifyingly efficient was his progress.

Just as he was about to become stronger,

suddenly, behind the divine soul of Tao Qian, sitting on the spirit platform, three differently shaped shadows abruptly appeared.

One was a blood shadow, one a shadow of insects, and one a shadow resembling black mist.

Appearing in conjunction, they each deployed their techniques.

In an instant, the scenery before Tao Qian shifted, infinite wails and howls surged towards him, and looking at his body, it was rotting in the blink of an eye, teeming with maggots crawling in and out, and countless resentful souls and evil ghosts swooped towards him, as if trying to drag him into the Infinite Prison... All these illusions, however, made Tao Qian laugh uncontrollably.

"I see you've held back for so long, I thought you might have some shocking techniques."

"This is it?"

With those Heart Execution Words spoken, Tao Qian immediately shut the gates.

The connection to the Outer Realm was severed, the illusions mostly dissipated, and Tao Qian suddenly rose to his feet, forming a Dharma Seal with his hands, then his body performed Instantaneous Movement and appeared in front of the three Outer Realm Heaven Demons, striking each with the Dharma Seal.

"Pop, pop, pop" went the three sounds, and these demons, slightly stronger than the previous one, were all done for.

Their strange bodies transformed into fist-sized black and red light orbs, continuous shrieks inside, demonic thoughts churning, yet also emitting a strange fragrance.

Tao Qian picked up one orb, without hesitation, and threw it straight into his mouth.

It dissolved upon entering!

The moment Tao Qian's divine soul swallowed it, it fused instantly with it. Besides feeling his divine soul strengthen explosively, he also sensed the crazed, twisted demonic thoughts within.

As he was about to be contaminated, that familiar shiver came.

Almost like a physiological release, Tao Qian watched the demonic thoughts transform into wisps of breath that were expelled with a sizzling sound.

Seeing his own Abnormal Soul indeed take effect, exempting him from the cost.

Tao Qian could no longer hold back, laughing heartily. He swallowed the other two light orbs and, accompanied by two shivers, his Primordial Spirit grew much stronger again.

Such was the pleasure of the feeling, Tao Qian didn't even rest but immediately re-opened the gates and sat back on the spirit platform to continue cultivating the Spirit Treasure Root Skill.

Sure enough, not long after.

Two more demons were hooked, and this time Tao Qian even omitted the initial enticing efforts.

As soon as the prey fell into the trap, his "Secret Demon Seal" hammered down, the Primordial Spirit devouring and refining, shivering off the impurities and demonic thoughts.

And so it went, round and round.

Time truly began to pass quickly.

Two days after achieving nothing for a continuous hour, Tao Qian finally realized: the prey had become wary.

It's no wonder, though the Outer Realm is vast and demons are endless.

But with one area repeatedly compromised, the inferior demons of the Outer Realm would inevitably recognize the danger.

After all, in this world, countless cultivators possess the technique of "Refining Demons."

Especially those from the Demon Path who sometimes purposely cast spells to lure Outer Realm Heaven Demons to descend, capturing and killing them to create magical treasures and divine skills.

Those not-so-smart but gradually wary demons, perhaps just recognized it as such.

Tao Qian counted the days and pondered for a moment, then suddenly had an idea.

The Primordial Spirit still seated on the spirit platform, then acted upon a thought.

Suddenly, from nowhere, a grain of Spiritual Light Seed burst forth, falling straight into Tao Qian's arms.

The cultivator's Primordial Spirit, cradling the Innate Dao Seed.

Inside this Secret Acupoint Platform, the scent was now utterly enticing.

"Now that I've already used my own Primordial Spirit as bait, why not go a little further."

"This is the last day, all demons do not miss out."

Muttering this, Tao Qian, now extremely proficient in the Secret Demon Seal, habitually feigned a shiver, then like an old hunter or skilled fisherman, patiently began to wait.

Chapter 62 Devouring a group of demons, an unexpected transaction

Tao Qian's fragrant Primordial Spirit sat upright on the spirit platform, embracing the "Dao Seed," engaged in the Basic Method of cultivation.

To prevent detection, Tao Qian was truly cultivating the Spirit Treasure Skill.

This is the mystery of the Secret Demon Refining God Skill, allowing a cultivator to multitask with ease. The closing of this secret acupoint doesn't require any complicated procedures; it responds to one's intent.

It can be described as extremely fast, leaving no opportunity for any Outer Realm Heaven Demons to escape in that instant.

Time passed swiftly and unnoticed, and the day was about to end.

Curiously, inside the secret acupoint of the spirit platform, only Tao Qian's Primordial Spirit was seen sitting in meditation.

It seemed there really were no more prey taking the bait?

Seeing this, Tao Qian showed no signs of disappointment and continued to recite the "Spirit Treasure Nine Truths Diagram."

The Dao Seed in his arms indeed had miraculous effects.

Under Tao Qian's concentrated practice, he almost completed another full recitation.

As the final segment neared completion, the Spirit Treasure Source Qi within Tao Qian roared like a great river entering the sea, displaying a grand spectacle.

To the point where his Primordial Spirit seated on the spirit platform could faintly hear the surging great sound, bringing total comfort to the body and evoking a sense of accomplishment peculiar to the success of cultivation.

However, it was at that moment that Tao Qian was most relaxed.

Completely unaware?

The atmosphere inside the secret acupoint quietly changed.

Various shapes and sizes of "rotten spots" proliferated wildly, instantly filling the entire secret acupoint as if it was a room that had not been cleaned for years. Following that, endless ghosts and Yin Demons emerged silently from the rotten spots. They were all naked, mostly without human form, and the few humanoid ones were nothing more than pale, decaying skin, disheveled hair, exhaling black fog.

None of these Heavenly Demons had the same form.

There were slug-like soft-bodied Demons, Illusion Demons made purely from constantly tumbling rotten black palms, a monster with a head sprouting hundreds of yellow-black tusks, and a bizarre Demon whose seeming jellyfish-like movement was actually due to a rotten heart dragged by several black intestines. Another Demon, whose skin was peeled off and flesh vague...

Because of their appearance, what was once a tranquil spirit platform secret acupoint had instantly become a Demon Realm.

And yet, Tao Qian remained unmoved.

Why?

Perhaps it was due to the strange Heavenly Demon that, at some unknown time, had entwined itself around Tao Qian's Primordial Spirit.

It was a woman, or rather, many women.

Her torso was made of snow-white, soft flesh strips covered in pink mucus, and every several inches, a neck would sprout from these strips, supporting a beautiful head. Each of these beauty heads was different and charming in its own right, the only similarity being their vacant expressions.

And at the forehead, there was a black vortex, as if it could suck everything into it.

She wrapped around Tao Qian and slowly moved. Every few breaths, she would change heads to meet Tao Qian's gaze, the vortex wriggling, emitting black light.

It seemed to be because of this that Tao Qian fell into a relaxed state, completely unaware of the abnormality.

Until the last Heavenly Demon, oozing black muck, crawled out from the rotten spots, and as all the black spots were about to merge together, severing the connection between Tao Qian's spirit platform and his body.

Tao Qian, who had remained engrossed in the illusion, finally showed signs of activity.

The closest Female Demon head saw it clearly. The human cultivator who was about to be dismembered and devoured by them suddenly showed a slight change in expression.

The corners of Tao Qian's mouth rose, and joy gleamed in his eyes.

Then, a sudden change occurred.

Boom!

A dazzling white light, imbued with the rhyme of the Dao, violently unfolded.

In an instant, all connections between this secret acupoint and the Outer Realm were severed.

The rotten spots and filth were wiped away by the white light, disappearing without a trace.

These invading Demons felt as if they had been thrown into a star vortex in that instant; without the supply of Demon Thought, facing shifting stars, all their bizarre and horrifying methods became useless at this moment.

The Demons quickly realized and roared, "It's a trap."

As the saying goes, cornered beasts will still fight, let alone a group of cunning and cruel Outer Realm Heaven Demons. All roaring in unison, they lunged at Tao Qian. Their methods of attraction,

demonization, and illusion were in vain; they still had their physical claws and tusks. Even if they had to bite and gnaw, they would tear this human cultivator's Primordial Spirit into dozens of pieces and devour it completely.

Only to find out the next moment, they were not faced with the panicked expression of the Human Cultivator.

Instead, they saw Tao Qian, radiating a brilliant smile while looking at All Demons, eyes filled with undeniable satisfaction.

With the Secret Demon Seal in hand, he easily dragged the "Enchanting Soul Demon" off his body, crushed it into a sugar pill, and swallowed it.

Then, he explained to the Demons:

"A seasoned angler knows when to wait and when to reel in."

"I didn't have much experience myself, just fished a lot, so I came to know some patterns."

"There's nothing to it, only practice makes perfect."

"It's just that I didn't expect such a great catch in this last net."

"My Primordial Spirit is at its weakest and most famished. Therefore, I will not stand on ceremony with you."

As he spoke, Tao Qian stood up with the terrifying Dharma Seal and confronted the oncoming group of Demons.

His words and actions stopped All Demons in their tracks.

How ferocious; are you the demon or are we?

But the Demons weren't foolish; seeing Tao Qian's posture and the closing spirit platform, their connection with the Outer Realm severed, they all knew they had encountered a dangerous foe and had stepped into a trap.

For a moment, every Demon turned to flee from Tao Qian, each employing their methods in an attempt to leave the secret acupoint.

Some Demons exploded into numerous bugs, seeking cracks to escape.

Others turned into wisps of black smoke, attempting to drift away.

Some Demons, out of desperation, started to devour each other voraciously, as if trying to create a stronger Heavenly Demon on the spot.

However, their efforts were futile.

Tao Qian laughed heartily, with Flashing Instantaneous Movement he punched each one, continuously swallowing "sugar pills," and his shivers were unremitting. His Divine Soul rapidly grew stronger, in turn, enhancing his control over the Secret Acupoint Platform.

Easily separating the Demons devouring each other, he shook his head and said:

"You covet my body, my Dao Seed."

"But little do you know, I covet your divine souls to strengthen my Primordial Spirit."

"This secret acupoint was created by the Secret Demon Refining God Skill; it seals in all the demons, you can't escape, so just be good and become my cultivation resources."

As Tao Qian uttered these words, he advanced, his Dharma Seal exploding, and then he refined one demon after another.

However, this time he hadn't devoured many before he felt his Primordial Spirit stagnate and a strong sense of fullness emerge.

In fact, Tao Qian involuntarily let out a "burp."

With a swoosh, he stopped his cruel demon refining methods, and an expression of helplessness immediately appeared on his face.

"Am I full already?"

"Have I reached my limit?"

Although these questions were asked, Tao Qian knew this was the reality.

Upon reflection, he had been luring and feasting on demons for three days straight, and unconsciously, indeed he had eaten quite a bit.

Moreover, looking at his Primordial Spirit, it was plump and full of Spirit Light; wasn't this overindulgence?

Tao Qian's pause was a great joy for the group of demons.

Although they were all inferior demons, they were attuned to the consciousness and thoughts of living beings and could tell, even without Tao Qian explicitly saying so, that this human cultivator, who seemed even more of a demon than them, appeared to have devoured too many Heavenly Demons, causing his Primordial Spirit to reach satisfaction and incapable of eating anymore.

Of course, if he really wanted to consume more, he could, but there would be a risk to his life.

Such a fierce person wouldn't lack even that small amount of willpower.

Therefore, one demon summoned the courage to say:

"True... True Master, I see you have already consumed enough resources this time and lack the strength to eat more. Why not let us leave?"

"Mortals have a saying: 'Do not drain the pond to get all the fish.'"

Upon hearing this, Tao Qian, who was frustrated with his own lack of stamina, couldn't help but laugh.

Looking up, he saw a group of demons huddled in a corner, shivering, looking quite pitiable.

But, this act had no effect on Tao Qian. Outer Realm Heaven Demons have never had the concept of 'kindness' or 'pity'; they are essentially special beings born from the evil thoughts and sinister intentions of all life in the Outer Realm, each unique but sharing common traits: cunning and ruthless, always thinking of devouring and seizing bodies.

Their current posture was also an illusion.

However, this demon did make some sense; he couldn't eat anymore, and these demons couldn't be stored, and he was unaware of other uses for them, such as Refining Treasure or transforming them into Divine Skills.

"Hmm?"

His thoughts surged, and suddenly an inspiration struck him.

Tao Qian let out a sly chuckle, eyeing the crowd of devils while recalling the many Books of Skills he possessed, to see if there were any that used demon heads as materials.

Tao Qian might have been doing it on purpose because, as he thought, he mumbled aloud.

"It wasn't easy to lure you into my net using the Dao Seed's fragrance as bait, and to let you escape now, I would indeed suffer a great loss."

"Since I can't eat you, let's see if I can refine you."

"Let me see, hmm, the Power Demon Mountain Opening Technical? Are there any from the power demon kind among you?"

Tao Qian asked, and the demons showed signs of happiness.

Some of the less intelligent ones patted their chests, proudly saying, "True Master is too kind to us, we are the most inferior demons, and that power demon is of not low rank among Heavenly Demons. if one truly came, it could devour us all in one gulp."

As soon as it finished speaking, it faced the wrath of other demons.

Tao Qian wasn't too pleased either; this demon was essentially belittling Master Tao.

Narrowing his eyes in thought, Tao Qian then said, "The Demon Eye Shadowing Technique? Do any of you possess demon eyes?"

As soon as he finished speaking, the demons looked at each other and then heaved a collective sigh of relief.

"Replying to True Master, we do not."

"To have demon eyes that can be plucked out to assist the True Master in cultivation, one must at least be of a 'Demon Eye' level Heavenly Demon, no worse than power demons. We are too inferior to produce demon eyes."

As they said this, the group of Heavenly Demons actually strangely began to celebrate their own weakness.

If it was otherwise, they might not be able to preserve their lives.

Just as they were thinking this, suddenly they heard a new voice coming from Tao Qian.

At some unknown point, Tao Qian's avatar in the Iron Buddha Temple had taken out the Exotic Fire Elixir Scroll obtained from Shan Jiu and turned to the fifth page to look at an elixir recipe.

And inside the Spirit Platform Secret Acupoint, Tao Qian was looking at the demons with a gleeful expression, saying with ill-intent:

"I have this Exotic Fire Elixir Scroll which can summon the Outer Heaven Flame Essence Strange Fire to refine disobedient, terrifying, and strange things into elixirs."

"There is an elixir recipe called 'Heavenly Demon Blood Transformation Pill' within it, and you all are just the perfect main ingredients."

"Boom"

To the demons, Tao Qian's words were like a bolt from the blue.

Immediately, the previously elated demons plunged into horror.

Their expressions were even more fearful than when they faced the danger of being exploded by Tao Qian's Secret Demon Seal.

Just as Tao Qian was puzzled by this, all of a sudden, a bloodied Human Demon walked out from among the group.

It seemed to muster up its courage to propose to Tao Qian:

"True... True Master, we wish to make a deal with you."

"Oh, what kind of deal?"

Tao Qian, muttering about alchemy, suddenly became interested upon hearing this.

This Human Demon and the rest of the demons seemed extremely sensitive and fearful of the words "Outer Heaven Flame Essence," and they were shaking in terror at the mention of the Heavenly Demon Blood Transformation Pill.

Avoiding Tao Qian's scrutinizing gaze, they revealed the deal.

"We know that human cultivators like you are usually interested in techniques, Divine Power Skills, and such."

"We can offer you some in exchange for our lives."

Upon hearing this,

Tao Qian developed a genuine interest, staring excitedly at the Human Demon and group of demons.

Chapter 63: Transform Everything, Suddenly Discover a Secret

The Human Demon was right, Human Clan Cultivators were most interested in Cultivation Techniques and Divine Powers.

And Tao Qian was no exception.

Staring at the group of demons, Tao Qian asked, "Tell me, what do you have to exchange for your lives?"

The demons, upon hearing this, all shook their heads in unison.

It was still the blurry and blood-fleshed Human Demon who stepped forward, hesitatingly said, "What we can offer, even we ourselves do not know."

As these words were spoken, it seemed to have anticipated the fierce light that would appear in the eyes of the fearsome Human Cultivator in front of it.

Forming a Dharma Seal, gluttoning all demons, even if it could not devour them, it still thought of refining them.

If it had been a Demon Cultivator, it might have been fine, but this one clearly bore the Spirit Treasure Dao Rhythm and nurtured an Innate Dao Seed, which was indeed strange and peculiar.

The Human Demon sighed internally, yet dared not delay on the surface.

After speaking, it immediately followed with an explanation:

"We Outer Realm Demons are born because of all living beings and often deal with Cultivators, hence within our Demon Thoughts, there resides a vast amount of fragmented information, containing various Cultivation Techniques, Divine Powers and Spells from the Cultivation World. Unfortunately, as Heavenly

Demons, we are unable to cultivate them; we merely instinctively preserve them. Moreover, our Demon Thoughts are chaotic and scattered, and none of us can extract a complete Magic Gate Mantra."

"However, there is a way, later we can devour and merge with one another, during which fleeting glimmers will appear, and within them might emerge as complete and ordered Spells as possible. Of course, it may still be incomplete, and it won't be some thick tome or the Basic Method that Human World Cultivators yearn for."

"Most likely, there will emerge some mnemonics of only two or three verses, or a form of incomplete, complete Sword Technique, or an incomplete, complete Spell... If we are extremely lucky, we might also encounter a more complete Divine Power, but the level certainly wouldn't be high."

"Many Cultivators are also aware of this method, often enticing us here and then forcing us to do this, aiming to refine great Methods and great Divine Powers, but none has achieved their wishes."

"One reason is that the information stored within our Demon Thoughts will gradually erode, and the second is that our Demon Thoughts cannot truly merge if we are unwilling."

"Does the True Master wish to try his luck?"

"After the trial, regardless of what is obtained, all of us should be let go."

The Human Demon was afraid Tao Qian might not understand and explained thoroughly.

It was even somewhat nagging.

After listening, Tao Qian indeed showed a look of disappointment, thinking that this was just a lottery, made to be so mystifying.

But with that thought, Tao Qian became excited again.

Who could resist the allure of a lottery?

If he really could refine these group of demons into Elixirs, such tangible benefits at hand, then Tao Qian naturally had nothing to hesitate about.

Unfortunately, that was not possible at the moment.

He was just bluffing these group of demons, after all, he hadn't had time to cultivate the "Exotic Fire Elixir Scroll."

Unexpectedly, this group of Heavenly Demons seemed extremely fearful of the "Outer Heaven Flame Essence."

Just mentioning it, they involuntarily gave away their biggest secret.

After quietly noting this down, Tao Qian nodded towards the Human Demon and the Heavenly Demons, saying, "Agreed!"

Following his agreement, the group of demons all showed joy.

But thinking about what was to happen next, those crafty eyes filled with turmoil.

To avoid the treacherous Spirit Treasure Cultivator going back on his word, the demons invited him to swear an oath together.

After preparations were complete, under the watchful eyes of their creditor, the demons reluctantly began to devour and merge.

It was a sight that made Tao Qian gasp in amazement, simply put:

There was me inside you!

And you in me!

Accompanied by the wails of demons, filth splattered all around.

Very quickly, a large, writhing mass of strange flesh appeared in front of Tao Qian; the group of demons was within it, constantly writhing, changing, and painfully wailing.

It was as if a pair of huge hands had picked them up and kept kneading them.

As the merging deepened, a marvelous scene emerged.

Above the flesh, layers of mist spread, and light and shadows flickered within it; various incomplete texts, symbols, and mnemonics floated unstably, sometimes coming together, sometimes dispersing, sometimes orderly, and sometimes chaotic, with the agonized faces of demons occasionally flashing by.

Tao Qian knew this was the beginning.

He immediately began to watch intently, but the more he watched, the more disappointed he became.

The texts and symbols that emerged from the Light and Shadow Demon Thought were indeed extremely incomplete, and their order was utterly disarrayed, virtually worthless.

Gradually, the mass of flesh began to move faster, clearly entering the latter half, and it wouldn't be long before it ended.

Just as Tao Qian was feeling very disappointed, suddenly, a familiar "throbbing sensation" emerged.

Almost instinctively, Tao Qian reached his hands into the flesh and immediately touched the source. Then without any courtesy, he yanked it out.

With a "sizzle," he now held a piece of Ink Jade Bone in his hand.

On it, hundreds of tadpole-like characters were engraved, which Tao Qian also recognized as an ancient script.

However, now was not the time for studying. Tao Qian merely glanced at the Extraordinary Perception triggered in his mind and then refocused on that mass of flesh.

It was writhing faster and faster, even beginning to swell as if it could explode at any moment.

The demons' wails grew even more tragic.

Several breaths later, and suddenly the next instant, that throbbing sensation emerged again.

Tao Qian reached out again, and with a sizzling noise, he had in his hand a pale and approximately one foot long tusk.

From within the tusk, an alarming "Sword Intent" was overflowing.

When Tao Qian glanced at the information he perceived through touch in his mind, an uncontrollable look of joy almost instantly appeared on his face.

Just as he was basking in joy, the continuously expanding and squirming flesh's surface showed the faces of numerous demons, each face twisted in agony and ferocity, a terrifying pressure accumulating inside, and as they gazed at Tao Qian, who was only steps away, all the demons suddenly burst into laughter.

"Come... come... merge with us."

"One demon's Body Seizing is still Body Seizing, a group of demons' Body Seizing, is still Body Seizing."

"Greed, a mistake humans will always make, hahaha..."

While the demons were immersed in the pleasure of their apparent success, unaware that this Spirit Platform Secret Acupoint was rejecting them.

Their triumphant laughter had just burst forth when the flesh was about to explode.

Suddenly, a massive vortex appeared, swallowing the flesh whole and sending it to the Outer Realm.

Before being sent away, their faces met Tao Qian's gaze, noticing him pinching the bone fragment, the tusk, and looking at them with a meaningful gaze.

Then, he insulted them unapologetically:

"Through several verifications of my own, I've indeed found that inferior Heavenly Demons are not very intelligent."

"But you all, on the other hand, make quite excellent nourishment."

"Tasty and extremely useful."

"Boom."

After hearing Tao Qian's last insult, they exploded, their bodies mixed with those of other demons, bursting apart.

Just not within Tao Qian's spirit platform, but in some unknown Outer Realm.

With the departure of the demonic filth, tranquility and clarity returned.

Tao Qian smiled contentedly and, with joy and anticipation, looked at the two fully organized chunks of format information in his mind.

The information on the Ink Jade Bone was about a Divine Power Technique.

The tusk held a Sword Technique.

Previously, Tao Qian had only briefly scanned and had felt excited at seeing some keywords.

Now, reading carefully, as all the Records and annotations surfaced, touching upon a certain unbelievable annotation, Tao Qian's pupils suddenly narrowed, and he was stunned for a moment.

[Record Name: Secret Demon Transformation Technique.]

[Record Type: alien object.]

[Record: This technique originates from the Demon Sect's Great Book, "All Heavens Secret Demon Scripture," illusion subvolume, one among dozens of transformation techniques, a profoundly deep transformation Magic Skill which, once mastered, allows for countless transformations, enough to create chaos under the guise of reality, even those of higher Cultivation Realm than the cultivator cannot see through your disguised foundation, only some Major Sects of Daoist and Buddhist contain methods to discern it, yet they are rare and difficult, not something ordinary cultivators can practice... During the great wars, many Secret Demon Cultivators who mastered this technique used their

transformation abilities to disrupt the Daoist and Buddhist from within, nearly turning defeat into victory for the Secret Demon Sect.]

[Remark One: Although this technique's mnemonic is only a few hundred characters, it is extremely profound and obscure, even those born with cultivation seeds may not be able to master it, and during the training process, the body and Divine Soul might collapse at any time, or solidify into the transformed object, never able to revert.]

[Remark Two: This technique does not include annotations to eliminate or reduce the price, one must counter it with personal comprehension, succeed and you may master the technique.]

[Remark Three: This technique was secreted among Outer Realm group of demons through special means by the Secret Demon Sect.]

[Remark Four: Exemptions from collapse costs, exemptions from solidification costs.]

...

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

[Record Type: alien object.]

[Record: This technique originates from the Demon Sect's Great Book, "All Heavens Secret Demon Scripture," sword subvolume, one among hundreds of Sword Techniques, a profound and terrifying technique; once mastered, Demons and Ghosts, Immortal Gods, and Alien Charms, none could withstand a slash, this is a fragmented version, only one technique remains, greatly reducing its power.]

[Remark One: This technique, named "Immortal Slaying," requires the Cultivator to first brew the Sword Intent over days and months; the longer the Sword Intent remains within the body, the greater the power upon release. Once, a Secret Demon Sword Cultivator who had mastered this technique carried a broken iron sword and burst into the Daoist Great Sect Pure Yang Sect's Mountain Gate laughing wildly, suddenly releasing the Immortal Slaying Sword, that day the Sword Intent shot through the skies, killing numerous Pure Yang Cultivators and when it ceased, the top of Pure Yang Mountain had been sheared off, and the heavily guarded Pure Yang Ancestor Palace partially collapsed.]

[Remark Two: Each release of this Sword Technique requires a new brewing of Sword Intent, and the difficulty surpasses the previous one, after several times, it will forever be impossible to reach the 'Ultimate Sword Realm' that destroyed the Pure Yang Mountain Gate's Secret Demon Sword Cultivator.]

[Remark Three: This technique was secreted among Outer Realm group of demons through special means by the Secret Demon Sect.]

[Remark Four: Exemption from difficulty costs!]

...

In the Spirit Platform Secret Acupoint, Tao Qian held the bone fragment, the tusk, lost in thought.

Unquestionably, this one technique and one sword would greatly aid Tao Qian's current combat capabilities.

Yet simultaneously, he couldn't completely ignore that third annotation.

After a moment of thought, Tao Qian narrowed his eyes, stroking his chin, and muttered, "It seems I have inadvertently glimpsed the secretive schemes of the Great Demon Sect, haven't I?"

Chapter 64 Human World Purgatory, Parasite Meat Worm

"As recorded in the history, the Secret Demon Sect was too ferocious in its time, facing several Daoist and Buddhist Major Sects alone, and in the end, it was wiped out completely. I had thought it was a total loss,"

"Now it seems that the Secret Demon Sect was not foolish, for they had hidden many Cultivation Techniques, Divine Skills, and Exotic Skill Techniques among the group of demons in the Outer Realm. With demons being inexhaustible in number, even if the Daoist and Buddhist united, they would not be able to kill them all. Indeed, it's a seamless and clever strategy."

"The only thing to consider is, what was the Secret Demon Sect's purpose in doing this?"

"Was it to allow future generations to smoothly retrieve their inheritance and gain a large number of followers, ready for a comeback?"

"Or was it simply for revenge, to spread the Secret Demon Method through the hands of Outer Realm Heaven Demons, and ultimately create countless new Secret Demon Sects large and small around the world?"

"Or perhaps, it was both."

At this thought, Tao Qian shook his head and gave up pondering.

There was too little information to guess the Secret Demon Sect's plans.

However, Tao Qian quietly resolved to have his Puppet Body gather some information related to the Secret Demon Sect from "Pan Hongniang" in the Cultivation World for further analysis.

As for his real body, he was still a greenhorn at the bottom rung, knowing nothing as of yet.

That was unavoidable; it hadn't been long since he was reincarnated. The fact that he had come this far was already quite an accomplishment.

"The path of cultivation is quite arduous. I really am trying my hardest."

Tao Qian's Primordial Spirit squatted on the spirit platform, holding the Dao Seed in his arms and muttering self-praise.

Then he contemplated the Ten Thousand Transformation Technique and the Immortal Slaying Sword Technique, both of which were top-notch items.

After thinking for a moment, Tao Qian first put away the Bone Fragment engraved with "Secret Demon Transformation Technique," and then pinched the tusk that bore the Immortal Slaying Sword Technique.

Snap!

He clapped his hands sharply and the tusk transformed into a sharp white light that quickly entered Tao Qian's mouth.

The Magic Skills obtained from the Outer Realm Heaven Demons were, after all, embodiments of Demon Thought, somewhere between tangible and intangible, which could be swallowed and refined with ease—such was the convenience of learning them.

After refining the Demon Thought, Tao Qian's Primordial Spirit immediately felt that inside his body there arose a strand of extremely weak Sword Intent of "Immortal Slaying," which currently was probably not even capable of killing predators such as tigers and leopards.

It was very immature, but it also made Tao Qian very pleased.

After all, it was an additional method of defense besides the Nine True Spirit Sound and the Sacrifice Sword Skill.

In the future, if he faced strong people, Tao Qian could first deter them with the Spirit Sound; if the opponent was unharmed, he could then deliver a strike of Immortal Slaying, followed by another strike of Sacrifice Sword. If even that didn't work, he could only resort to using the Nascent Soul Escaping Skill to flee for his life.

However, Tao Qian himself was aware that crushing Loose Cultivators, or young cultivators without any significant backing, was plausible.

But if he faced a disciple of a Major Sect of equivalent rank, he feared he would still be at a disadvantage.

Fortunately, he still had many unlearned Magic Skills, such as the Ten Thousand Transformation Technique and the Exotic Fire Elixir Scroll, among others.

It's not that he didn't want to learn; he was simply biting off more than he could chew.

He was able to exempt himself from the cost, but he didn't have unlimited avatars or unlimited energy.

He had just stabilized his Life Seed, his Spirit Treasure Source Qi was abundant, and his Divine Soul had been nourished to the point of satiation. To refine another Sword technique now was already pushing his limits.

"Three days have passed; perhaps it's time to go back... Hm?"

Thinking this, Tao Qian suddenly felt a premonition—a vague and unsettling sense of unease that something might have happened.

Tao Qian immediately stood up, his brow furrowed, and moved the giant stone from the entrance of the cave, leaping onto the brook.

No thoughts of admiring the scenic beauty of the mountains crossed his mind as Tao Qian identified his direction and quickly made his way towards the area of Seeking Immortal County.

The closer Tao Qian got to Seeking Immortal County, the more solemn his expression became.

Despite it being a blazing sunny day, Tao Qian's vistas were shrouded in a gloom that felt like a mournful purgatory of wailing ghosts and howling gods.

The surrounding villages and hamlets outside of Seeking Immortal County always bore serene and peaceful scenery, but now they were as quiet as ghost towns. No one toiled in the fields, no one rested by the roadside. Chilling winds howled intermittently, mixed with the croaking of crows and the howling of stray dogs. Encountering people, whether old, young, or in their prime, all wore ashen faces, looking like disaster-stricken ghosts.

Occasionally, one could see white lanterns hanging and coffins laid out inside village houses, while faint, lethargic cries of mourning drifted out.

More horrifyingly, at the roadside and beneath trees, there were gradually decaying corpses and skeletons.

Tao Qian stopped suddenly as he passed a mass burial mound.

His eyes swept over the area, and he saw that the stone mortars and dirt pits were stuffed with numerous new corpses, at different stages of decomposition: fresh deaths, bodies bloating with gas, bodies smeared with blood, bodies disfigured—there were all sorts.

But most prevalent were the devoured remains.

Wild black crows, red-eyed stray dogs, and wolves from the hills all gathered there, voraciously tearing at each corpse. Some impatient wolves and dogs even burrowed into the bodies to eat the rotten, bloated intestines ready to burst from the bellies.

Startled by Tao Qian's sudden appearance, these savage beasts all turned their heads to look his way and, smelling the scent of fresh human flesh, madly lunged at him.

"Hmph."

Tao Qian didn't use his Spirit Sound; with just one low grunt infused with Source Qi, he shattered the viscera of these ferocious creatures.

Without paying further attention, Tao Qian, with a somber expression, continued towards Seeking Immortal County.

On this half journey, it was as if he had traversed a stretch of hellish road.

Only when he approached Seeking Immortal County did the human atmosphere once again become vibrant.

Yet his expression remained darkened, for the county bore no trace of its usual hustle and bustle.

What remained were ruin and an unsettling aura of twilight.

The city gates were inexplicably subject to strict checkpoints, and oddly enough, entry was permitted, but no one was allowed to leave.

After entering the city, Tao Qian soon learned the reason:

There seemed to be some kind of plague or other disaster within the city, afflicting numerous inhabitants.

Whether it was the common folk or the officials and constables, a large half of them exhibited physical anomalies.

They were hunchbacked and emaciated, their skin pale and bloodless, with hair sparse enough to reveal their scalps.

If only this much were the case, it would have been bearable, but Tao Qian also caught a glimpse of their necks bulging with a fist-sized tumor, with blue veins standing out and, bizarrely, a vague human face was connected to it, even showing expressions of pain or sinister smiles.

Outsiders who chanced upon this scene would have likely been paralyzed with fear on the spot.

Yet, the people of the city seemed to have grown accustomed to it.

Or rather, they had become numb to it.

What Tao Qian found even more incredible was not the once bustling Seeking Immortal County turning desolate and forlorn, but amidst the air of decay, an unexpected lively new area had emerged.

This area, located to the west of Vegetable Market Street, appeared to be a newly established marketplace.

However, the marketplace did not sell groceries or oil but... people, living, breathing human beings.

At this moment, Tao Qian didn't need to guess; during the three days of his cultivation retreat, something terribly frightening must have happened in Seeking Immortal County and its surroundings.

Just as he wished to find someone to ask about the situation, a sudden clap of thunder resonated from the heavens above.

Immediately afterward, Tao Qian sensed a strong, nauseating vibration.

He looked up sharply, only to see a vast expanse of dark clouds drifting over from the direction of Iron Buddha Mountain.

Boom!

Everyone in Seeking Immortal County fell into panic.

Regardless of who they were, all began to desperately flee, seeking places to hide.

The extreme fear on their faces was evidently not just about "avoiding rain," was it?

While Tao Qian pondered, he suddenly heard two familiar shouts nearby, and then he saw his neighbors, Li Sanyu and Jia Qiang, hastily making their way toward him, dragging him to the back of the drugstore that opened up to Jia Qiang's home, with the front as the shop and the back as the courtyard.

Tao Qian did not resist and allowed the two men to pull him into the courtyard.

Soon after, he saw the families of the two shop owners gathered there, each one displaying looks of unease and fear, utterly worn out.

As soon as they entered the door, both men began to rant.

"Tao Scholar, do you no longer cherish your life?"

"The rain of insects is upon us, and the scholar doesn't think to hide. Do you wish to end it all yourself?"

"Rain of insects?"

Tao Qian had just let out his confusion when he saw the two men usher the women and children into the inner rooms.

Then, they cooperated and divided tasks; Li Sanyu spread lime all over the courtyard, laying a thick defensive line in front of the main door, while Jia Qiang brought over three sticks, handing one to Tao Qian after dividing them up.

Then, with a face filled with tension, he instructed, "If you see those disgusting insects later, just smash them with force, but never let them get close."

As Jia Qiang spoke, Tao Qian silently pricked up his ears to sense the surroundings and discovered that other courtyards and shops were taking the same measures.

His mind full of questions found answers in the next moment.

As the thunderclap sounded, the day turned suddenly dark.

The dark clouds hung overhead, and then the downpour began.

But what everyone heard was not the pitter-patter of rain but the sudden "thump, thump, thump" of dull thuds.

What fell to the ground was not rainwater.

But egg balls about the size of an infant's head, covered in mucus, that burst upon hitting the ground.

As the egg membranes split, large numbers of thumb-sized, sticky, limply squirming insects with fierce suction cups sprung in all directions.

Then the entire Seeking Immortal County was filled with the hissing of meat worms, and everyone wore pained expressions.

Including Li Sanyu and Jia Qiang by Tao Qian's side, but both of them, enduring their pain, saw lime-covered meat worms that hadn't died fly towards the main house and immediately swung their sticks down on them.

With a squish, fluids splattered everywhere.

Tao Qian's expression turned serious as he watched the meat worms, sensing the demonic Qi emanating from them, and he thought back to the lumps on the necks of those he had seen affected by disasters upon entering the town.

A chill ran through his heart, and he immediately formed a guess.

But more questions lingered, knowing this was not the time to inquire, Tao Qian also swung his stick, inadvertently smashing all of the approaching meat worms to pieces.

After about thirty minutes, a bout of wild laughter emanated from the clouds before they dispersed, bringing the insect rain to an end.

The scorching sun reappeared, but no one in Seeking Immortal County could feel its warmth; they were all chilled to the bone, shaking.

In the courtyard before Tao Qian, the ground was covered with juice and insect carcasses, a stench akin to years-old swill rose with the sunlight.

"What exactly happened? I had been visiting a friend elsewhere these past few days and encountered this as soon as I returned."

"What kind of devilry are these insects? In the face of such a severe disaster, why don't those Immortals come out to stop it, and what about the Demon Suppression Army?"

Tao Qian fired off question after question.

Then, with two clangs, the two weary shop owners, drenched in sweat, dropped their sticks, with Li Sanyu, who looked most haggard, suddenly breaking down in tears.

As he wept, he complained:

"What Immortals, what Demon Suppression Army, none of them are of any use."

"Several days ago, when demons rampaged through the city at night, those Immortals couldn't stop them. Had it not been for a passing hero, Jia Boss, I, and the daughters of our other neighbors, would have been doomed."

"That would have been the end of it, we could just move houses because of the danger."

"But who would have thought, the next day, a dignified female fairy proclaimed that her son, the very fairy child who made a name for himself that day, had been captured by the demons, and she forcibly commanded the Demon Suppression Army to join her in an assault on Iron Buddha Mountain, now a demon cave. Yet before they could truly approach, they were defeated by the demons on the mountain using some kind of Array."

"The demons on the mountain also said they would make our Seeking Immortal County their battlefield, challenging the Immortals to a magical duel."

"Just as they finished speaking, a horde of demons burst forth from Iron Buddha Mountain, slaughtering many in the towns surrounding our county."

"Before the Demon Suppression Army could confront them, the same dark clouds you saw earlier floated over us, then countless strange insects fell from the sky. At first, we had no defenses; many were approached by the strange insects, which then burrowed into their bodies and took up residence, consuming their Essence Blood day by day. Within a few days, those who were parasitized all turned into those ghastly creatures."

"At first, the Immortals would still act to scatter the clouds, but after repeated failures and realizing these insects only parasitize without spreading, they became indifferent, only telling us mortals that we could burn them with lime or smash them with sticks to kill them, that as long as we didn't get parasitized, our lives were not at risk."

"As for those who were parasitized, they could only wait for the production of an antidote."

Chapter 65: The Terrifying Human Face, Spirit Sound Dispels Evil

As Li Sanyu narrated, Tao Qian realized what had happened in Seeking Immortal County during the three days he spent in seclusion.

The demons officially started a magical struggle against the Forbidden Immortal Hall and the Demon Suppression Army.

Yet it was the people of Seeking Immortal County who suffered.

Tao Qian frowned and, without thinking, toed a meat worm that had been scorched to death by lime next to him, wondering how this thing was somewhat similar to the methods used by the Naked Saintess, but far weaker, and the growth of flesh tumors and human faces after parasitism were very different, and he didn't know where it really came from.

While Tao Qian speculated, he asked again, "What about that very powerful female immortal? She dared to invade the demon nest, she must be very powerful, right?"

"That female immortal was desperate to save her child, and after being defeated she went to the provincial capital, calling out the Governor of Southern Yue's name as if he was of a very high status, apparently trying to force the governor to send a real Demon Suppression Army to raze Iron Buddha Mountain, but it has been three days, and the result is still unknown."

Li Sanyu's answer didn't have a harsh tone, obviously, he too hoped that the Governor of Southern Yue would send an army to obliterate that demon nest.

"Has the situation in Seeking Immortal County deteriorated so much in these three days?"

While speaking, Tao Qian couldn't help but recall the tragic scenes he had seen outside the city.

It seemed that those places had been plundered again by the demons from the Iron Buddha Temple, leaving homes deserted and bodies strewn everywhere.

At that moment, the owner of the neighboring pharmacy, Jia Qiang, dropped his stick and sighed,

"Before she left, the female immortal issued a Summoning Immortal Order, calling on the Loose Cultivators and True Masters within Southern Yue to come and help."

"These three days, indeed, cultivators have been coming from all over, but it seems none of them are experts, and most of them look down upon us mortals, either going to that Star-picking Pavilion, or joining the Changchun Society, and then trampling and bullying us commoners."

"What has the world come to, suddenly turning out this way, human life treated like grass."

"Vegetable Market Street is almost turning into People Market."

"Tao Scholar, you shouldn't have come back. The county is under lockdown, allowed in but not out, and now it's hard for you to escape again."

Boss Jia's words made Boss Li cry even louder.

But it was Tao Qian who discerned a lot of key information.

"That powerful female immortal is most likely from the Ten Thousand Infant Sect, could she be Tong Dudu's mother?"

"She was willing to issue a Summoning Immortal Order before leaving, she must be a cultivator who still cares about the lives of the common people."

"As for that Changchun Society, that name sounds very familiar, doesn't it..."

Tao Qian pondered for a moment and quickly found the answer in the life story written by Seeking Immortal Hermit Wu Ming from his own memory.

It was an organization akin to a secret society among the common people, not as vast as the Cao Gang, but far more complex than Cao Gang.

This organization specifically gathered those who told fortunes, sold plasters, performed tricks, exclaimed storybooks, repaired feet, cured sexual diseases, played with monkeys... and so on, consisting of a wide array of low-class individuals making their way through the worldly society.

However, that was just one side they presented to the mundane world. In the Cultivation World, the Changchun Society was also considered a power.

Very weak, but very complex.

Every province and city had its own Changchun Society, none subordinate to each other, existing independently, occasionally helping one another out.

The "cultivators" in the Changchun Society were almost all insignificant, at most at the Energy Introduction or Qi Refining Realm.

These people were, after all, complex, some Changchun Societies did good deeds, while others swindled, bullied the kind, and committed all sorts of evil.

Listening to Jia Qiang's complaints, it seemed that the Changchun Society that suddenly appeared in Seeking Immortal County belonged to the latter category.

Just as Tao Qian thought of this, the three men, separated by the courtyard door, suddenly heard a series of hawking cries coming from the street:

"Fellow villagers, wealthy shopkeepers, today we have a great surprise, our society's expert has unexpectedly refined top-grade Changchun Elixirs and superior Evil Exorcism Talismans."

"The Changchun Elixir, upon ingestion, can suppress evil insects, and there's no need to worry about being drained of essence blood and dying overnight."

"The Evil Exorcism Talisman, once affixed above doors and windows, can prevent evil spirits from intruding."

"There are only a hundred of each elixir and talisman, first come first served, if you miss it you may be missing out on your or your family members' lives."

"Come quickly and grab them!"

...

As these hawking cries rose, Li Sanyu, who was crying on the ground, suddenly stopped, his face twisting with rage as he was about to rush out.

Jia Qiang quickly held him back, persuading him hurriedly,

"Boss Li, please stay calm, please stay very calm."

"Although your sister-in-law has been infested with the evil insect, at least her life is still there, and there's still a bit of hope."

"But if you rush out to settle scores with those wicked Taoists and end up being killed by them, then your family will truly have no hope left."

"Wah..."

Jia Qiang's advice worked, calming the rage-filled Li Sanyu, who just slumped on the ground and began to cry loudly.

His crying also stirred the sad emotions of the two families inside the house, each of them began to weep softly.

For a moment, the atmosphere in the courtyard was unbearably tragic.

Tao Qian listened silently for a few breaths and understood the situation:

These three days, every time the insect rain ended, the people of the Changchun Society would come out to sell those so-called "Changchun Elixirs" and "Evil Exorcism Talismans," claiming they could suppress and cure evil insect parasitism, but the prices were exorbitantly expensive, so expensive that ordinary people couldn't even afford to look at them.

Boss Li's wife was infested that day, so Boss Li sold his family property and store and bought both the elixirs and talismans.

But it turned out that both the elixir and the talisman only had a superficial effect, and after a day, things were as they were.

With so many victims, the Changchun Society didn't know how much wealth it had amassed through this means.

Although many victims wanted to fight back and reclaim their hard-earned money, it was a pity that the Changchun Society could do such a thing, because they must have bought off all relations, making all resistance futile.

Boss Li was actually quite fortunate; he had a good friend Jia Qiang who took him in.

Others were less lucky and, in order to survive and feed themselves, even had to make their way to the People Market.

Tao Qian had never anticipated that merely three days of secluded cultivation

would lead to such a scenery upon his return.

"It's as if I've traversed to another world!"

With a sigh, Tao Qian observed Boss Li, who looked haggard beyond measure and seemed to have aged decades.

After pondering for a moment, he made a decision.

Spirit Treasure Source Qi gently began to operate as he said to Li Sanyu:

"Brother Li, if you trust me, why not let me take a look at your sister-in-law?"

"Although I am merely a scholar who runs a bookstore, I have learned a few Daoist Skills for exorcising demons."

As Tao Qian spoke, the Spirit Treasure Source Qi within him surged, naturally emitting the Pure Spirit Qi unique to True Practitioners from the Daoist sect.

Instantaneously, all crying within the courtyard ceased, and both bosses, with wide eyes staring at small ones, observed the sudden and dramatic transformation in the demeanor of Tao Scholar.

If it were any other time, the two may have made a jest or two.

But for Li Sanyu, at this moment, any straw was worth grasping.

Especially, since the current Tao Qian indeed differed greatly from ordinary people.

The special aura of a True Practitioner of Spiritual Treasure cultivation was not something common cultivators could compare with, and this was the transformation brought about by the accomplishment in the Spirit Treasure Root Skill.

Both bosses were first stunned, then overjoyed, especially Li Sanyu, who hurriedly nodded his head, scrambling to his feet and dragging Tao Qian towards the inner room.

Inside the house, there were seven or eight family members, mostly women and children, all of them terrified and haggard.

On a bed in the farthest corner lay a middle-aged woman, with a withered appearance and a body shrunk so much that she was nearly nothing but skin and bones, her internal organs barely covered. Anyone seeing her would declare her not far from death.

In stark contrast was the flesh lump on her neck, almost as big as her head.

The "face" on its surface was incredibly vivid, even with fully developed facial features, mocking everyone present with a sinister grin.

This sight terrified the other women, girls, and children in the house, none of them daring to approach, leaving only Li Sanyu to throw himself on her, wailing incessantly, his voice full of sorrow.

While Tao Qian internally sighed at how Boss Li usually acted like a lustful rogue, he was deeply infatuated with his wife. He then reached out a finger and touched the human-faced flesh lump.

For those who were parasitized, Tao Qian had a throbbing sensation, though very faint, it should be able to trigger his awareness.

As he moved, Boss Jia, seeing Li Sanyu had lost the ability to speak, began to explain:

"Li's sister-in-law was parasitized by an evil insect three days ago, and since then she has continuously weakened. Boss Li sold his possessions for an elixir charm that worked for a day and then failed. In just three days, Li's sister-in-law became like this."

"There are far worse cases in the city of those who were parasitized, many not even lasting three days. It is said that at least a thousand people have already died. To prevent the evil insects from escaping, the county government has taken harsh measures. Some poor people were even dragged off to be cremated before they could take their last breath. Every evening, the south side of Seeking Immortal County lights up with blazing fires—that's the burning of bodies."

As he spoke, Jia Qiang also sighed repeatedly, his eyes red with sorrow.

At this time, Tao Qian's mind had already successfully activated Extraordinary Perception, and the chaotic information sorted itself into records.

[Record: human-faced insect puppet.]

[Record Type: Abnormality.]

[Record: Puppets parasitized by "human-faced insects", which need to be cultivated artificially, require gathering life resentment, the fresh blood of harsh and cruel people in the world, and a hundred poisonous insects. The poisonous insects are placed in a filthy copper basin, doused with human blood, sealed with resentment, and refined with secret techniques for a full forty-nine days. Then, a pair of human-faced insects will appear in the basin, which when fed fresh human flesh, will mate frenziedly, laying hundreds of thousands of egg balls in just a few days.]

[Note one: Once parasitized by this insect, one's essence blood will be devoured until death from bursting in a few days. During this period, the insect will emit a terrifying aura, causing people to live in constant fear, and their spirit unable to be at peace.]

[Note two: Ordinary methods cannot solve this insect, but it is restrained by the Evil Exorcism Demon-destroying Daoist and Buddhist Methods. However, it must be caught off guard to be effective, and once the lump forms an insect, it will directly burrow into the puppet's skull. At that point, even if the evil insect is exterminated, the puppet will undoubtedly die.]

[Note three: The insect craves naturally auspicious and spiritual things. If rarities like Ganoderma People or ginseng babies were to bleed and lure it, all human-faced insects within the area will become frenzied, ignoring their master's will, and surge over.]

[Note four: The insect was cultivated by the Heterodox Demon Insect Master Gongsun Yan, whose Lifebound Technique is the Thousand Insects Soul-binding Scripture. He has reached the Foundation Establishment Realm, and is known for his perverse, cunning, and cruel nature.]

...

Tao Qian understood the secrets clearly.

He also understood why, despite there being many Great Demons and Monsters on Iron Buddha Mountain, the first method employed was so seemingly innocuous.

It seemed the likes of the Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva and others did not intend to slaughter Seeking Immortal County.

They wanted to plunge Seeking Immortal County into panic; it seemed they intended to keep the Forbidden Immortal Hall and the Demon Suppression Army busy to death?

As Tao Qian pondered, he appeared downcast on the surface.

At the same time, he shook his head and looked around with eyes full of apologies, saying, "I'm sorry, I am powerless to help..."

No sooner had he spoken, the glimmer of hope in the eyes of Li Sanyu and the others dimmed, and an atmosphere of panic and fear spread once again.

The facial expression on the flesh lump on Li's sister-in-law's neck immediately changed to an even more defiant and pugnacious grin.

It was at this very moment that Tao Qian abruptly spoke.

Nine True Spirit Sound!

This Daoist True Sound, designed to subdue Evil Demons, echoed throughout the room, killing the Divine Soul of the "human-faced insect" that was comfortably coiled inside the flesh lump before it could even wail.

Then Tao Qian extended his hand and pressed it on the flesh lump, expelling Spirit Treasure Source Qi, which immediately forced out the filthy Evil Qi from within while pushing the pure life essence back into Li's sister-in-law's body.

After a few breaths, a miracle occurred.

The flesh lump dissipated, and Li's sister-in-law's mummified body gradually regained its rosiness and plumpness.

Li Sanyu, along with everyone in the room, had their expressions change as rapidly as in the face-changing act, instantly transforming from despair and fear to ecstatic joy.

Chapter 66: Nascent Soul God Mirror, Meeting Lin Xiaohua Again

In the courtyard of the herbal medicine shop owner Jia Qiang, a crowd of people witnessed a miracle unfold. After confirming that the evil insect was dead and Li's sister-in-law had survived, everyone wept with joy.

Especially Boss Li, who was so excited he wanted to kowtow to Tao Qian.

Tao Qian quickly helped him up. Both Boss Li and Jia Qiang had been quite helpful to him since his rebirth, so saving someone was the right thing to do.

However, upon recalling the information related to the "human-faced insect," Tao Qian couldn't help but advise both families.

The evil insect was tricky; it could only be killed by catching it off guard. Should word spread and put all the county's human-faced insects into a "stress-induced" state, at least ten thousand people would die, resulting in a true disaster.

The disciples from the Major Sects of the Forbidden Immortal Hall must also have learned this after several treatments, reluctantly letting things be.

A county-wide panic was indeed preferable to more than ten thousand deaths and injuries.

As for rescuing one by one?

Not to mention Tao Qian, an Energy-Introducing Realm Cultivator, even a Foundation Establishment Realm expert would be worn out by the effort.

Having given his warning, both families hurriedly assured they understood and would not leak any secrets.

Tao Qian didn't linger in the pharmacy, and after leaving, he headed straight towards the Star-picking Pavilion.

On the way, especially when passing through the area known as "People Market," Tao Qian's expression looked very troubled.

Has the world suddenly slipped into a dark and chaotic era?

In his mind, an exceedingly critical note arose involuntarily.

"Due to the stress state of the human-faced insect, one cannot conduct a mass extermination or gather forces to kill them. It seems that one could only lure the insects out to eliminate them."

"However, such naturally auspicious spiritual creatures are exceedingly rare, like the ginseng baby, Ganoderma People, and others—where could one possibly find them?"

"Hmm?"

Suddenly, a burst of inspiration struck Tao Qian, and he paused.

A newly made "friend" surfaced in his mind.

Tao Qian squinted his eyes, pondering:

"It's uncertain whether that Wild Leek Demon 'Shan Jiu' from Wild Man Mountain counts as such auspicious spiritual creatures. If so, that would be wonderful. It is stated in the Record that he possesses an almost undying vigor. As a friend, he surely wouldn't mind if I cut off a small part of him."

"If it really comes to repaying the cost, my puppet body could pay."

"Look for an opportunity to test it out."

Having made up his mind, Tao Qian moved on, soon reaching the exquisitely beautiful Star-picking Pavilion, the premier building in Seeking Immortal County.

Tao Qian had come to gauge the strength of the righteous side.

Moreover, Boss Jia had mentioned that a female fairy, daring to confront the Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva before heading to the provincial city, had issued a Summoning Immortal Decree. This decree had successfully drawn numerous cultivators within three days and was still effective, continuing to attract Cultivators from throughout Southern Yue.

Such bustling activity in the cultivation world was something Tao Qian loved to join.

Sure enough, as he approached the Star-picking Pavilion, he had to momentarily suppress his excitement.

Otherwise, his mind wouldn't be at ease, sensing too many transcendent beings, making it feel as though there was a noisy drum beating inside his head.

He had encountered this reaction before in Tenshe Town and had experience dealing with it.

When he closed off this special sense and looked around, the road leading to the Star-picking Pavilion was particularly wide. While other streets in Seeking Immortal County were deserted due to the disaster of the evil insects, with hardly a ghost in sight, this road was filled with figures, almost forming a crowd rushing towards the splendid pavilion.

These people, appearing in various forms, most dressed as normal monks or Taoists, but there were also bizarre and malformed oddities.

Many Cultivators indeed regarded commoners as nothing, looking down on them with disdain. Although there was no cruelty in their eyes, there was also no sympathy or pity, treating the disaster victims as if they were ants frozen by the roadside.

Yet, their eyes, when fixed on the Star-picking Pavilion and the large stone arch with the decrees and rewards before the wide square, revealed greedy desires.

In an instant, they fell from being experts on the Great Dao, who had seemingly forgotten their emotions, back to vulgar mortals rolling in their desires.

Tao Qian mingled among them, also looking up at the grand archway.

After a few glances, he understood the reason. Not everyone was qualified to accept the "Summoning Immortal Decree" and enter the bustling Star-picking Pavilion.

On the archway, a bronze statue of an innocently smiling baby was hanging. The baby was holding a downward-tilting mirror in its embrace.

Whenever someone approached, the bronze baby would speak in a childlike voice:

"I am the Nascent Soul God Mirror. Cultivators who have reached the Energy-Introducing Realm Destiny Defining Fetus Stage or those with Special Abilities who have cultivated special Magic Skills, all may pass through here, go up to the Star-picking Pavilion, and discuss the Great Dao with other Cultivators."

"If you are simply a common Energy-Introducing Realm Cultivator or a cultivator who has not even passed the stage of manipulating Source Qi, please step back."

Despite this bronze baby's voice being uniquely pleasant, the blatant discrimination against lower-level Cultivators still sparked significant discontent.

Fortunately, the next moment, the baby spoke again: "This action is not out of disdain for you all, but because this summoning is to combat a group of extremely fierce demons. If those with lower cultivation join in, they might very well lose their lives for nothing. The Ten Thousand Infant Sect is not willing to bear this cause and effect; hence, please forgive us."

Once these words were explained, the unrest was quickly suppressed.

Many Cultivators who met the requirements openly mocked those who did not, with crude words like 'ants' and 'useless chickens, go back.'

In the crowd, many Cultivators laughed and walked out, directly facing the Nascent Soul God Mirror, as if considering this a chance to show off.

Meanwhile, Tao Qian suddenly noticed some secretive individuals appearing around, all wearing uniforms embroidered with trigrams, Elixirs, talismans, and scissors.

Each of them approached the Cultivators who did not meet the standards, extending profoundly sincere invitations.

As they spoke, they made various grand promises, offering many benefits.

Tao Qian silently listened for a few moments and immediately deduced in his heart, "These fellows must be the people from the Changchun Society."

While eavesdropping, suddenly the childish voice of the bronze baby was heard again.

This time, it even made the mirror emit a beam of Spirit Light, clearly projecting two reward quests onto the archway.

"Everyone, please look at these two reward quests first," the voice announced. "One is about the evil insect disaster currently plaguing Seeking Immortal County. If any Daoist here has a solution, you may take the copper token hanging in front of the list. Forbidden Immortal Hall has prepared Books of Skills, alien treasures, and only seeks the method to eliminate the disaster. However, please first understand what the evil insect is and any difficulties involved. Do not act rashly; if you take the copper token and have no solution, there will inevitably be punishment."

"The second quest involves the Great Demon 'Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva,' who has captured our disciple from the Ten Thousand Infant Sect, Du Du. His fate is unknown. If any Daoist here can gather some information about his situation, or find out Du Du's current condition, you may also take the copper token from the list. At that time, our sect will generously reward you, and a Great Cultivator from our sect will personally receive you."

...

As these words were spoken, Tao Qian could clearly hear many cultivators in the crowd breathing rapidly.

Greed glinted in their eyes.

However, soon after, when they saw the dangers involved, they all sighed with pity.

The first quest needs no further explanation; the "human-faced insect disaster" in Seeking Immortal County is something even the disciples from major sects in Forbidden Immortal Hall cannot handle. How could these summoned Loose Cultivators from the wilderness have a method to deal with it?

The second one was even more horrific and twisted. Who was this Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva? Perhaps many cultivators did not know before, but after the recent shocking "Secret News" spread across the world, who didn't know his origins and terrifying Cultivation Realm? This was truly a Great Demon.

As the emotions of the Loose Cultivators shifted, nobody noticed:

A glint of light flashed through Tao Qian's eyes in the crowd.

"The first quest still has some doubts, so it's hard to say."

"But the second quest, there is indeed significant room for effort, especially since I have an undercover person at the Iron Buddha Mountain..."

"Moreover, this person can closely contact and somewhat blend into the higher ranks of the main hall. That Nongyu Immortal, Pan Hongniang, if deliberately investigated, might indeed know some secrets that even the strong cultivators from the Infant Sect cannot find."

A few thoughts flashed by, but Tao Qian did not step forward to accept the quests.

Instead, he planned to first return to his bookstore to ponder carefully before making any plans.

Just then, a member of the Changchun Society approached.

Tao Qian pretended not to see and turned to leave.

Join the Star-picking Pavilion?

There was no need to rush this matter. He was still assessing the situation. If he felt that Seeking Immortal County was in danger of collapsing, Tao Qian planned to leave first.

Life was tough, and having lived anew, Tao Qian was curious to see if he could succeed in cultivation and achieve Great Freedom and great liberty.

Besides, the world was so vast and immense, he truly wanted to go out and explore.

While thinking about these broad and indiscriminate thoughts, Tao Qian turned and headed towards Vegetable Market Street.

However, his movements were still noticed by the people from Changchun Society.

One of them, a young cultivator wearing Changchun Cloth with a cunning rat-like face and an unusual aura, was exactly like the street vendor Tao Qian had feared most in his previous life.

With a professional fake smile, the man reached out to stop Tao Qian and said,

"Fellow Daoist, may I take a moment of your time to introduce you to our Changchun Society?"

"This place is like a big family filled with harmony, love, and mutual help and support..."

Before he could finish his practiced spiel,

suddenly, a loud shout came from the other end of the street: "Damn Changchun Society, a bunch of bloody scammers!"

Although the voice was thick with illness, it unexpectedly carried very far.

Immediately, the summoned cultivators "hurrahed" and turned to look toward the source of the conflict.

Clearly, not only mortals liked to gather around during exciting events—cultivators also enjoyed it.

Tao Qian smiled at the Changchun Society cultivator, who was left with a surprised and embarrassed expression, then turned to look in the direction of the commotion.

Besides enjoying a spectacle, Tao Qian felt a strange familiarity when he heard that voice.

Lifting an eyebrow, he thought inwardly, "Could it really be such a coincidence?"

To confirm, Tao Qian once again activated his exceptional inspiration.

The next moment, enduring the drumming noise in his mind, his gaze sharply locked onto a middle-aged cultivator in the distance who was fighting with several Changchun Society cultivators.

This individual must have a sensational personality, for he wore a dazzling and surprisingly captivating red Daoist robe.

Even while cursing, it did not affect his dashing figure.

His appearance was unexpectedly not handsome, merely heroic and upright, with deep and spirited eyes, instantly giving people a genuine impression of trust and goodwill.

Immediate recognition!

Tao Qian confirmed his guess, that familiar palpitation and the style of cursing.

Without surprise, his identity was almost apparent.

"It's him, the big leg I hadn't managed to cling to."

"The enthusiastic expert I met in the terrifying Immortal Pond, skilled in handling ghosts and someone who likes ghosts... Senior Lin Xiaohua."

Chapter 67: Alien Life, Fleshy Little Person

"The last time we parted at the fish pond," Lin Xiaohua said politely that if fate allowed, we would meet again and that he would teach me an exceptional technique the next time we saw each other.

I thought Tao Qian was just being nice, but who would have thought that we would actually be so fated to meet again here, in Seeking Immortal County.

Hearing his curses, it was clear that somehow, he had gotten into a conflict with those from the Changchun Society. Both parties had started a fight on the main road leading to the Star-picking Pavilion—more precisely, it was Lin Xiaohua being ambushed by a large group of Changchun Society cultivators.

This clearly didn't make sense!

You must understand that Lin Xiaohua's cultivation had reached the peak of the Qi Refining Realm, and when he left the fish pond, he mentioned that the next time he would return after breaking through to Foundation Establishment Realm, meaning he was only one step away from it.

The cultivators of the Changchun Society were all nobodies, or loose cultivators who hadn't even defined their Life Seed.

Even if they were numerous, facing Lin Xiaohua who once was a disciple of the Heavenly Talisman Sect, they should not have had any advantage, and in fact, they should have been the ones beaten badly.

But what I saw in an instant was Lin Xiaohua forming a talisman array, struggling to defend himself against the various attacks unleashed by around a dozen Changchun Society members.

Although they wore identical robes, their backgrounds were complex, each one cultivating different magic skills, naturally resulting in vastly different assault methods.

But after all, there were dozens of them, half of whom were nobodies with but a few special abilities.

Another dozen or so were Energy-Introducing Realm cultivators, whose methods were more vicious and fierce.

And the leader, although young, had a somber look and bloodthirsty eyes. He wielded a Short Dagger that could transform into a blood-red light, incessantly striking the talisman array, emitting a clinking sound.

From Tao Qian's perception, this was definitely a cultivator who had surpassed the "Destiny Defining" stage.

While they couldn't get through the gleaming "talisman array" for the moment, Lin Xiaohua's condition was clearly not right; his voice was burdened with a heavy sickness, and although his posture remained suave and unrestrained, with every move, a painful expression would appear on his face, eventually vomiting a large mouthful of blood, accentuating the vividness of his red Daoist robe.

This condition was nowhere near Foundation Establishment Realm.

In Tao Qian's perception, Lin Xiaohua's current state was barely maintaining Qi Refining Realm, he seemed to be extremely weakened.

Seeing this, Tao Qian was almost ready to intervene immediately.

Other people he might not help, but Lin Xiaohua was a good person recognized by Tao Qian. Although they had only met once, Tao Qian believed they shared a good rapport. It seemed that there weren't many such kind-hearted cultivators in the righteous cultivation world, despite his very particular tastes.

However, Tao Qian still tried his best to suppress the impulse; the weaker one was, the more one needed to plan before acting.

Rushing in impulsively could complicate matters instead.

"Despite appearing lowly and insignificant, the Changchun Society can still openly sell elixir charms in Seeking Immortal County and brazenly extort local wealthy households and common people."

"Besides, they can also send people here to pick up any loose cultivators who can't enter the Star-picking Pavilion, gathering those who can't get in."

"Such an organization must have a hidden foundation or be involved in some shady schemes. Perhaps, there is some sort of backing or protection within the Star-picking Pavilion, or within the county government, or maybe even the Demon Suppression Army."

"And as for Lin Xiaohua's current condition..."

A spark of insight flashed through Tao Qian's mind as he observed a dozen or so Changchun Society cultivators collecting loose cultivators from the crowd, also with savage appearances, as they made their assault.

He slightly lowered his head, pretending to be inadvertent, as he channeled Spirit Treasure Source Qi in a subtle way, mingling his voice with the crowd's mutterings.

"Eh, this Daoist in the red robe, by the looks of his divine power skill, must be a disciple from the Heavenly Talisman Sect."

"Hiss, hiss!"

As Tao Qian spoke, there indeed came a succession of inhales of shock from the crowd.

This was quite normal; though Seeking Immortal County now was a place where many forces were converging, the situation seemed on the brink of escalating, but most onlookers were insignificant loose cultivators, the bottom dwellers of the cultivation world.

Hearing about a "disciple from one of the Twelve Major Daoist Sects—the Heavenly Talisman Sect," making such a commotion was simply their duty as spectating masses.

And that key phrase put the group of ferocious Changchun Society cultivators in a panic.

To surround and kill an unaffiliated loose cultivator was one thing, but to attack a disciple of the Heavenly Talisman Sect was entirely different.

The latter could lead to major trouble.

Just when their assault was about to falter, the leader of the Changchun Society suddenly stopped it with a shout:

"Don't listen to the nonsense of others; a member of the Heavenly Talisman Sect would definitely carry the Heavenly Talisman Seed."

"If he really had such a thing, could we still trap him, would we dare trap him?"

"This person must have learned a bit of the Heavenly Talisman Sect's magic skills from somewhere. If we kill him, wouldn't we be able to take those skills for ourselves?"

He stopped there, directing his subordinates to continue the encirclement and assault.

Then he turned his cold, ruthless face towards the loose cultivators, releasing his terrifying presence unique to the Qi Refinement Realm without any reservations.

This person, with a feigned smile that was more like a threat, said to the people:

"Don't panic, my dear Daoist friends. Our Changchun Society is currently eliminating a demon that has infiltrated our city."

"This creature is envious of our Changchun Society's efforts in refining elixir charms to aid the afflicted populace; using some sort of sorcery, he ruined the Changchun Elixirs and Exorcism Talismans that our experts had painstakingly crafted, and still claims not to be a demon?"

"I think this is a demon spy with evil intentions, secretly infiltrating our city."

"If you, my fellow Daoists, do not wish to antagonize our Changchun Society, or oppose the Forbidden Immortal Hall and the Demon Suppression Army, then please stand aside as a mere spectator."

...

With these few words spoken, truly no one dared to intervene, even the mutterings and discussions among the crowd diminished considerably.

This was a formidable individual indeed!

In just a few words, he had defused and diverted the crowd, nipping the budding atmosphere in the bud.

The truth wasn't as he had said, but Lin Xiaohua indeed didn't have that Heavenly Talisman Seed; it had been taken back when he was expelled from the mountain.

Due to this, his cultivation hadn't changed, but his combat power had greatly decreased.

As if afraid that a prolonged fight would lead to complications, the cunning leader of the Changchun Society finished speaking and turned around to cast a secret technique. He transferred some kind of cost onto his subordinates behind him, and the power of the Blood Dagger he wielded explosively increased, instantly breaking through Lin Xiaohua's talisman array.

Taking advantage of his spitting blood and collapsing to the ground, the man burst in.

But oddly enough, the first thing he reached out to grab wasn't the severely injured Lin Xiaohua but a small figure behind him.

It was only then that everyone noticed that behind this red-robed cultivator, two very short figures were being protected, obviously not human in appearance.

The first looked like a very special "alien life." Its body was composed of bronze, cast iron, ancient wood, and some unknown wild beast bones, while its eyes were two rubies, exuding a sense of warmth and strength.

The second was a plump little thing, his skin and flesh texture like jelly, tempting to the eye, sporting two pigtailed pointing skyward, with a nose, mouth, and ears like a child. Only its disproportionately large eyeballs were inhuman, resembling two translucent green gemstones, but they revealed not a trace of strange evil, but rather an innocence that anyone could see.

Nevertheless, at this moment, it was overwhelmed by fear and panic.

For the target of the Changchun Society's leader was it.

Seeing this unfold, no one dared to intervene.

Except for the severely wounded Lin Xiaohua, this warm-hearted senior struggled to get up, shouting furiously, "Despicable scoundrel, so your target is Little Age..."

With that, Lin Xiaohua's face hardened, and he suddenly formed a dharma seal, as if he was preparing to fight with his life on the line.

But at that moment, a powerful Daoist chant suddenly rang out.

"Nine Heavens Truth, the Mystery of the Great."

Like a great bell tolling, not only did it not harm the severely injured Lin Xiaohua but it actually invigorated his divine soul.

On the contrary, the originally grinning leader of the Changchun Society's complexion changed drastically in an instant, and he froze in place.

He suddenly realized that he had lost control of his divine soul and body.

What frightened him even more was the terrifying Sword Intent he felt at that moment.

Boom!

It wasn't just him; everyone else on the scene also felt the astonishing Sword Intent.

"I will die if I don't escape in time. I will die here."

This thought flashed through the leader of the Changchun Society's mind; soon after, he hesitated no more and cast a certain secret technique.

However, this time, the cost was borne by him alone.

He felt as if he could hear the sound of all his bones shattering. His blood seemed to boil and burst in reverse flow, and the explosive power that ensued finally allowed him to break free from the "Nine True Spirit Sound" shackles. His entire person merged with the Blood Dagger and vanished from the spot almost instantaneously.

A hundred meters away, his figure reappeared, but his face showed the remnants of fear, and his venomous, deadly gaze fixedly looked toward Lin Xiaohua.

There, an additional person stood, appearing like a young cultivator who could be mistaken for a scholar, holding an insignia-less black lacquered longsword.

Ordinary though it appeared, no one dared underestimate it at the moment.

The terrifying Sword Intent, though fleeting, had indeed sent shivers down everyone's spine.

And now, the scholar who had appeared out of nowhere to save them was looking with regret at the leader, clearly disappointed that he had escaped too quickly for him to cut him down with a single stroke.

"Who are you? Why interfere in the affairs of the Changchun Society? Why help a demon spy? Could it be that you are also...?"

The leader spat out these words. Tao Qian couldn't help but want to give this guy a thumbs up.

This fellow, not bothering to establish a rapport, started straight off by throwing several big accusations.

Tao Qian maintained his composure, with the "Sacrificial Sword Intent" ready but unreleased within him, also staring at the Changchun Society leader but disdaining to answer those accusations.

Instead, he pointed to Lin Xiaohua and the two little things, resolutely saying,

"I am their creditor, especially this Daoist Lin Xiaohua who owes me a superior-grade cultivation technique."

"The last time we met, you said, 'If fate allows us to meet again in Southern Yue, I will give it to you,' and then you ran off."

"I didn't expect to catch you here. I don't care what disputes you two have, I'll take them with me first. Once I retrieve the cultivation technique that Daoist owes me, I'll return them to you."

Tao Qian gave out not a few keywords with these sentences.

Even the socially somewhat obtuse senior Lin Xiaohua, after hearing those hints, immediately guessed Tao Qian's identity.

Then, with an astonished face, he realized and said, "It's you!"

His cooperation was near perfect.

But unfortunately, the leader of the Changchun Society wasn't buying it.

It was as if he hadn't heard Tao Qian's "excuse" at all, only staring at Tao Qian with murderous blood-shot eyes. Then, the Blood Dagger in front of him writhed like a venomous snake.

Before long, he seemed to have evaluated Tao Qian's strength.

Finally, he made a slight compromise.

Pointing at Lin Xiaohua and the alien life, he said to Tao Qian,

"Him, and this little thing, you can take with you."

"But the other one, you may not."

Upon hearing these two sentences, Tao Qian's brow wrinkled instantly, as he too looked at the plump little figure.

Clearly, it was the true target of the Changchun Society.

Chapter 68: The Majesty of the Sacrifice Sword, Ten Thousand Infant Master Xiao

Anyone who wasn't blind could see at this moment that the leader of the Changchun Society was targeting that plump little creature.

From a distance, the perception was not clear.

Now, at close range, Tao Qian's nostrils twitched slightly; he immediately smelled an unusual fragrance and couldn't help but feel a possessive desire towards that jelly-like little being.

More accurately, it was a desire to devour, just like a gourmet seeing his most coveted delicacy and wanting to swallow it immediately.

Suddenly, Tao Qian seemed to think of something, his eyes widened slightly, and corresponding guesses emerged in his mind.

Just then, Lin Xiaohua's voice transmission entered Tao Qian's ears.

"Brother Tao, Little Age is a supernatural elf transformed from the 'Taisui,' though it has suffered many hardships and faced a miserable fate, its nature has never changed; it's innocent and extremely kind."

"This time I brought it here because I heard that Seeking Immortal County was suffering from the Human-faced Worm Disaster, and Little Age's flesh can resolve this calamity; it's also willing to give some of its Essence Blood."

"But we must not let it fall into the hands of these deceivers; their elixir charms not only fail to resolve the Human-faced Worm but instead deplete the user's life Essence Qi, a group of bastards who should not be allowed to capture Little Age or it will surely lose its life."

Hearing this, Tao Qian sighed internally.

Considering the ruthless and cruel demeanor of the Changchun Society's leader, if he really captured this supernatural creature, it would indeed be as Lin Xiaohua described; not a good outcome.

It would be a disaster for the creature called "Little Age" and for nearly a hundred thousand people in Seeking Immortal County as well; the Changchun Society would not likely use the captured spiritual creature to save people.

In the blink of an eye, Tao Qian made a decision.

At such a moment, he had no time to think further.

He was about to stimulate the "Sacrificial Sword Intent" brewing within him and, regardless of whether he could slay this villain, he would first use the Nascent Soul Escaping Skill to take Lin Xiaohua and the other two away.

Tao Qian was decisively determined, without a hint of delay.

Unfortunately, Lin Xiaohua's voice transmission was noticed by the leader. Although he couldn't hear the specific content, this fellow was entirely clever, not arrogant or conceited. He transferred the cost of casting when possible and immediately used another tactic upon sensing the threat within the seemingly frail scholar's body.

Suddenly, the ruffian reached into his robes and pulled out a horn made from the bone of some devil beast.

Without any delay, he blew it.

It sounded as though it came from a battlefield, wild and piercing, resounding throughout Seeking Immortal County.

Whether it was the nearby Star-picking Pavilion or the area outside the city where the Demon Suppression Army was stationed, both showed signs of activity because of this sound.

Tao Qian's face changed drastically, but the leader still stared at the four of them, his eyes bloodier by the second, directing other Changchun Society cultivators to encircle them, while he rasped:

"I, from Changchun Society, follow the court's decree, assisting the Forbidden Immortal Hall and the Demon Suppression Army in managing the order in Seeking Immortal County."

"To protect the region and ensure the safety of its people; how can we allow devil spies like you to escape into the city?"

"In a short time, experts from the Forbidden Immortal Hall will arrive, and if you're brave enough, you can make your move now."

Saying this, the leader let out a grim laugh and slowly retreated behind his subordinates.

Indeed, a person who could lead a group of low-class cultivators was cunning and shameless, which made Tao Qian almost laugh out of anger.

How dare such an organization involved in selling fake elixirs and fake charms while profiteering claim to protect the region and ensure its safety?

But the bone horn and the activities of the Star-picking Pavilion and the Demon Suppression Army confirmed he wasn't lying.

This organization indeed had official backing, capable of mobilizing resources to overwhelm individuals like Tao Qian and Lin Xiaohua, who lacked support.

Lin Xiaohua, for some reason, was not in the right state.

And Tao Qian, merely a Loose Cultivator in the Energy-Introducing Realm Fetus Formation Stage, though confident in using a "Sacrificial Sword Intent" to slash uncertain life and death of that fellow.

But what then?

Once the people from Star-picking Pavilion and the Demon Suppression Army appeared, would they allow them to argue their case?

By then, they would likely be beyond help, with a tragic end.

These many complex thoughts flashed instantaneously through Tao Qian's mind.

Similarly, a new inspired decision emerged at that moment, firmly occupying Tao Qian's spirit.

Knowing that in times like these, indecision was not an option.

Tao Qian narrowed his eyes and took a deep look at the hiding Changchun Society leader, then suddenly, his figure abruptly moved, throwing down Lin Xiaohua and the two little things, he actively leaped toward the onlooking crowd.

This act, this motion, was much like that of a person admitting defeat and fleeing.

The watching cultivators and those from the Changchun Society instinctively thought so.

Only the leader hesitated, his poison-filled eyes showing a hint of confusion.

Until he saw Tao Qian leap into the crowd and did not stop but continued flying towards the front of the square and a massive stone archway, did he suddenly realize.

"Bad, stop him."

Despite his realization, it was too late to stop him.

Within the towering Star-Picking Pavilion, as several beams of sword light shot out, Tao Qian's figure had already appeared in front of two bounties, first reaching out to remove the copper token from the first bounty, then, on second thought, taking the second copper token as well.

Even Tao Qian himself hadn't expected that this second copper token would cause such a great commotion.

There seemed to be some sort of prohibition on it.

The moment he removed the copper token, Tao Qian felt as if the heavens and earth trembled before his eyes; an extremely terrifying gaze, from a distant region, suddenly locked onto him.

At the same time, the leader of the Changchun Society became agitated.

He first greeted the young cultivators of high cultivation realm flying out from the Star-Picking Pavilion with a bow, but did not seek their help. Instead, he turned to face a troop of soldiers.

Nearly a hundred men, all clad in menacing black armor, revealing only their eyes, with golden runes inscribed all over it, emitting a ferocious and extreme aura, especially when they stood together, exuding a terrifying presence that seemed to deter both gods and ghosts.

The leader of the Changchun Society seemed quite familiar with the leader among the soldiers, approaching him immediately for help, "General Lian, quickly, these people have sneaked into the city as demon spies. I have confirmed this through a secret technique bestowed from above. Capture them quickly and throw them into the Forbidden Immortal Prison. There will surely be rewards from above."

It was unknown what the connection was between the leader and the young general, but after hearing a few words, he believed without a doubt.

Nodding his head, he waved to the men behind him; then all these nearly hundred men stood firm, forming a special array with a pitch-black spear in hand, and then launched an attack toward Lin Xiaohua and her two companions.

Boom!

A terrifying scene came into existence without any warning. The armor of each soldier brightened with golden light, then gathered together to form a gigantic shadow of a spear, made purely from black-golden light, immediately causing the street beneath their feet and the buildings on both sides to crumble as though made of tofu under its horrific suppressive power.

The horrifying aura of slaughter contained within turned the complexions of the Loose Cultivators deathly pale, causing them to retreat continually. Those who were too slow knelt on the ground with thuds.

Seeing that the three were in peril, Tao Qian's expression hardened, and his figure suddenly transformed into a Spirit Infant, appearing in front of Lin Xiaohua and the others, accompanied by a fragrant scent.

In his hand, a nameless longsword immediately met the black-gold spear with a strike.

"Sacrifice!"

In an instant, almost ninety percent of the Spirit Treasure Source Qi in Tao Qian's body was emptied by some force.

Before Tao Qian could feel the weakness, an extremely terrifying sword light burst forth violently, resembling a polar light that could extend indefinitely, carrying an unstoppable and destructive killing intent. It first destroyed the longsword in Tao Qian's hand, and then shattered the frightening black-gold spear into a myriad of light spots.

Along the way, the Loose Cultivators from Changchun Society and the nearly one hundred soldiers from the Demon Suppression Army who suffered backlash were swept away like ants.

Just as the sword light was about to continue extending, clearing several streets in its path,

suddenly, within this area, a voice that could numb the soul rang out.

"Hmm?"

With this sound, the area seemed frozen.

Everyone lost control of themselves, including Tao Qian and the Sacrificial Sword Intent he had released.

Flower petals with a natural fragrance scattered all around, fairy music sounded in waves, and amidst the rampant rainbow light, a figure descended that left everyone speechless.

It was hard to describe the grace and beauty of this female cultivator; everyone ignored the four maid-like fairies that stood behind her.

The female cultivator's beauty was simply akin to an immortal from heaven, her eyes filled with gentleness, wearing a gold-embroidered robe with jade fringes, extraordinarily splendid. She was much taller than an ordinary man, always seemingly surrounded by rainbow lights, her fair collarbone exposed.

Yet what was truly astonishing was the expansiveness and unimaginable softness of her bosom.

Yet not a single person produced any lewd thoughts toward her.

At first glance, this female cultivator seemed almost like a "mother".

Even Tao Qian felt this way, as if he was still a child, wanting to rush into her arms.

However, Tao Qian quickly snapped out of it.

Clearly, he had fallen for a trick.

This was likely some kind of passive polluting effect, indicating a gap in cultivation realms between them that was too large to bridge.

On the other side, noticing the commotion here,

inside the Star-Picking Pavilion, hundreds of figures used various methods to fly out, originally approaching with raging momentum.

But upon seeing the female cultivator, they all bowed in reverence, saying respectfully, "Greetings, Master Xiao!"

The female cultivator, referred to as Master Xiao, waved her hand to signal everyone not to be overly formal.

Then, her gaze completely focused on Tao Qian, who was now physically depleted.

She naturally stepped forward, and with a faint fragrance, Master Xiao appeared before Tao Qian.

She first glanced at Lin Xiaohua and the two little ones, seeming to see through everything with one look, a hint of surprise flashing through her eyes.

Then, she stared straight at Tao Qian, furrowing her brows before spitting out words that made Tao Qian's pupils constrict, nearly losing his composure,

"You used the Secret Demon Body Sacrifice Sword, employed the Small Innate Nascent Soul Escape Technique from my Ten Thousand Infant Sect, but cultivated the Spirit Treasure Basic Method, even the Life Seed is set... such a strange junior."

"However, since you took that copper token, you clearly know the condition of my house's Du Du?"

"Tell me what you want; this True Master can satisfy your request."

Chapter 69 Outside Seeking Immortal City, Commoners Seek Survival

The first sentence nearly made Tao Qian lose his composure.

And the third sentence made him desperately wish he could bare his heart and spill all he knew.

It was only when that familiar throbbing feeling suddenly surged in his mind, and he, right in front of this resplendent female cultivator, shuddered with a chill that bordered on irreverence.

Having come to his senses, Tao Qian also immediately realized what he had done.

To avoid being killed by a slap from this evidently terrifyingly powerful female fairy, Tao Qian hurriedly spoke to change the subject,

"True Master, I indeed have a way to inquire about the situation inside the Demon Cave of Iron Buddha Mountain, and I'm quite confident that I can find out about the condition of that Immortal Infant."

"However, there are too many people here, it's not a good place for serious discussion. Why don't we..."

Before Tao Qian could finish, the female fairy raised her hand ready to cast a spell, creating a secluded space for the two of them.

At this moment, the leader of the Changchun Society who by chance did not die under Tao Qian's Sacrificial Sword Intent suddenly knelt and paid his respects, while loudly saying,

"Master Xiao, do not be fooled by the nonsense of this demon spy."

"How could a loose cultivator in the Energy-Introducing Realm know the internal situation of the Demon Cave in Iron Buddha Temple, something even you cannot fathom? And how could he manage to find out the secrets of the Great Demon, Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva?"

"This thief must be trying to deceive true master with lies to seize an opportunity to escape."

"Now that the hundred thousand people of Seeking Immortal County are protected and entrusted to true master's care, please do not be deceived by this crook."

"The demonic aura of that sword he released just now is the clear proof."

These logical and justice-entwined words nearly made Tao Qian laugh out loud.

The leader had previously been cunning and venomous, and Tao Qian wondered if, having nearly died from a touch of his Sword Intent, his mindset had cracked, to dare throw such derogatory threats at a clearly Great Cultivator.

Even those with a better temper would have had enough of this man's nonsense.

As expected, right after he finished speaking, the originally infinitely gentle "Master Xiao" suddenly narrowed her eyes coldly.

Without even glancing at the Changchun Society and Demon-suppressing Soldiers below, she stated indifferently,

"I know you all belong to that Qin Military Advisor, thinking you can do whatever you please in this Mortal World, exercising unrestrained power."

"What you plan to do, I don't care to meddle."

"However, if you think you can extend your reach over me, you are badly mistaken."

"In consideration of Ji Xianxian, I will not kill you this time but will punish you severely as a warning."

As she spoke, Master Xiao suddenly made her move.

Waving her splendid sleeves, a milky white radiance passed, and all the Changchun Society cultivators and the Demon-suppressing Soldiers in the street shook uncontrollably, visibly shrinking and reverting to infancy, transforming from strong, mature men into babies.

They involuntarily cried and tumbled to the ground, their clothes no longer fitting, leaving them bare-bottomed.

Had it been just this, it might have been bearable, but Master Xiao, although she had broad tolerance, did not have a very kind heart.

The bodies of these cultivators had been changed into babies, and their minds reverted to an infant state, but their faces remained unchanged.

Thus, all over Seeking Immortal County, many people saw the familiar faces of Changchun Society cultivators each wearing a wrinkled old face, with the bodies of infants, running around naked and crawling all over the streets.

Some unlucky ones were surrounded by dog feces, chicken feces, human excrement, and other filth, grabbing them and shoving them into their mouths.

When the punishment ended, Tao Qian and Master Xiao both disappeared from the air before the eyes of the crowd.

Everyone knew this was the doing of the True Master creating a secluded space.

Tao Qian, now unable to see anyone else and only Master Xiao, also acknowledged this.

Master Xiao, who had appeared endlessly gentle in front of others, like a mother, now gazed at Tao Qian with a profound look.

Clearly, the recent demonstration served as a warning: kill the chicken to scare the monkey.

Tao Qian felt a chill on his scalp under her gaze, and deep within, he compared the strength of this True Master to the "Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva," wondering who was stronger.

He concluded that perhaps the Beautiful Corpse was a bit stronger, but this one wasn't far behind.

Whenever Tao Qian encountered supernatural beings or objects, whether living or non-living, he had an impulse to reach out and touch them to trigger insight.

But he had no such impulse towards either the figure before him or the Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva.

Don't dare touch, don't dare touch!

Tao Qian's thoughts began to drift, but he dared not show any neglect on his face. After thinking for a moment, he decided to speak some degree of the truth.

He bowed respectfully before speaking:

"Replying to True Master, I currently do not know the situation of that Immortal Infant, but it's not that I'm deceiving or fooling you. It's just that I hadn't accepted this task before, hence I didn't make inquiries."

"Due to a fortunate coincidence, I planted an undercover agent in the Demon Cave of Iron Buddha Mountain."

"Although I cannot directly ask the Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva, I can easily make contact with the high-ranking demons within the Demon Cave and safely gather reliable news."

"As long as the Immortal Infant is still alive, and the Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva has not deliberately hidden her, give me some time, and it won't be hard to find results."

Tao Qian said everything in one breath and then waited with an earnest look for Master Xiao's judgment.

And so, at that time, a Great Cultivator and an obscure nobody locked eyes for several moments.

During that time, Tao Qian felt an extremely bizarre aura sweep across his Divine Soul; it was as if it could unearth all the secrets in his mind, leaving his Sea of Consciousness naked and exposed before Master Xiao.

A moment later, Master Xiao showed a faint look of disappointment and said, "You haven't lied."

Immediately as her voice fell, the secluded space vanished, and the two reappeared before everyone's eyes.

Without waiting for Tao Qian to say anything, Master Xiao had already arranged a plan.

She didn't even have to turn around; four fairy-like female cultivators appeared behind her, silently obeying her orders.

"Take this Daoist friend to my residence," she instructed, "and also bring the abandoned disciple of the Heavenly Talisman Sect lying on the ground, that Taisui Baby, and that monster of an alien species with you."

"Make sure to treat them well, no negligence is allowed."

"Yes!"

Although her tone contained no arrogance and could even be described as very thorough and polite,

Tao Qian knew that he, along with Lin Xiaohua and the others, were destined to be taken away.

Not until he communicated with his Puppet Body did he find out the situation of the Immortal Infant, Tong Dudu.

However, compared to the fate of clashing with Forbidden Immortal Hall and the Demon-suppressing Army, ending up slain on the spot, or being pursued, this was already a most favorable outcome.

Just as Tao Qian was comforting himself, planning to catch up with Lin Xiaohua, and to inquire about the cultivation technique he had long been obsessed with,

another calamity suddenly erupted within Seeking Immortal County.

Moreover, this time, it was a development so fantastical that even Tao Qian was taken aback.

Boom!

Without any warning, accompanied by a thunderous roar, the city wall on the south side of Seeking Immortal County collapsed explosively.

Amidst the dust-filled skies, numerous shouts could be heard.

One could see that from those low shanties and densely-packed houses in the south city, suddenly a multitude of civilians, carrying bundles, along with their entire households, rushed out through the breach in the wall as if they were fleeing for their lives.

Although the current guards in Seeking Immortal County were strict, allowing entry but not exit, the sudden surge of people was too much for the few constables in the area to stop.

Neither did those few dare to halt the flood of people, lest they be trampled to a pulp.

The tide of humanity surged forth, and within a few breaths, perhaps thousands had rushed out.

None of the cultivators present were fools; after a few moments of thought, they understood this was definitely a long-planned operation.

However, it was not for rebellion, not for sedition.

It was for... survival!

The dire situation within Seeking Immortal County, although it hadn't deteriorated to the point of unspeakable occurrences yet,

the civilians had guessed after a painful three-day wait that the county government and those lofty immortals were powerless to resolve the "Human-faced Worm Disaster."

With the insect rain coming daily, and each time adding more victims,

a panic-stricken atmosphere spread wildly, forcing these lower-class civilians to embark on a bid for self-rescue.

Everyone knew that to stay in Seeking Immortal County was almost no different from waiting for death.

The south city of Seeking Immortal County was full of mixed characters; it was normal for some brave and smart low-level heroes to help the civilians plan this operation.

The sudden blasting open of the city walls and the thousands of civilians swarming out was something the guards simply couldn't stop.

Yet, if this operation was just as it appeared, it seemed to lack significance.

Because the surroundings of Seeking Immortal County, having been nearly wiped clean by the Iron Buddha Temple demons, left the civilians nowhere to go even if they escaped. They wouldn't get far in the wilderness, and soon the army and the constables would catch up to them and escort them back one by one.

If they were not brought back, an even worse fate awaited them, likely to become blood food for the roaming demons and fierce beasts in the wilderness.

The dozen or so young disciples from the Great Sect at Forbidden Immortal Hall also thought of these possibilities.

Among them, the heroic female cultivator holding the "Divine Fire Stone Cover," from the great Daoist Fire God Temple sect, looking at the blasted city wall, said with a furrowed brow:

"Friends, although the civilians acted out of desperation for survival, the outside of the city is even more dangerous now."

"If those demons from Iron Buddha Mountain discover that so many mundane humans have escaped, they will undoubtedly come to capture them as blood food."

"We should take the trouble to bring the civilians back, pacify them, and then think of another plan."

Upon finishing, the rest of the disciples nodded in agreement.

As they spoke, the group was about to employ their Escape Skill and then cast spells to wrap up the thousands of civilians and bring them back.

However, it was at this moment that Tao Qian seemed to hear a weird sound, something he hadn't heard for a long time, but which lingered deep in his memory.

Whoo Whoo Whoo!

When the sound of the steam whistle roared from afar to near, Tao Qian's expression froze.

A steam train?

At this moment, Tao Qian finally vaguely remembered that the two bosses, Li Sanyu and Jia Qiang, had mentioned in passing that as the external trade port of Southern Yue, Seeking Immortal County not only had steam iron ships on the full river but also had a railway line to the provincial city outside the city.

Even when the route was being laid out, it had encountered conflicts with the local villagers, who believed that such a monster, whistling wildly and belching black smoke, would disrupt the feng shui of their village.

Just now, everyone was saying that the civilians' plan was not well-thought-out, that once out of the city there was nowhere to go.

Who would have expected that their comeuppance would come so swiftly.

As people with keen ears and sharp eyes, the cultivators could see far beyond what ordinary humans could perceive.

And at this moment, they all observed an incredibly bustling, yet somewhat absurd and magical scene.

Upon the long railway tracks, a train, like a monstrous steam beast, roared towards them, slowing down as it approached the Seeking Immortal County area.

Thousands of civilians, with families in tow, took this opportunity to scramble aboard the train.

Clearly, the timing of the wall's demolition was not chosen haphazardly but was aimed to coincide with the train's passage.

The planner indeed possessed both courage and wisdom.

Chapter 70: The Pest Disasters are Settled, Meeting the Matchmaker Again

Outside Seeking Immortal City, amidst the howling westerly winds, a colossal iron monstrosity spewing black smoke and wailing noisily made its way from the distant mountains and across the flat fields. Suddenly, a cacophony exploded as thousands of emaciated people with their families frantically burst forth.

Seizing the moment as the steam train slowed down, they used every means to begin climbing aboard, with able-bodied youths boarding first, then pulling the elderly and weak up after them, desperately stuffing up children and packages.

Amid the process, cries, howls, and shouts were incessant; some made it onto the train, while others did not manage to squeeze on.

After all, it was just a steam train, how could it carry thousands of people?

Moreover, more civilians kept pouring out from the gaping holes in the city walls, those who couldn't get on the train had no choice but to cling to their families and gather together anxiously waiting for the next train while nervously watching whether a large army was coming from the direction of the city walls.

Even though everyone was uncertain how long the steam train would take to reach the provincial city, what accidents might happen en route, or what would be the situation upon arrival in the provincial city,

They couldn't concern themselves with much else, wanting only to escape the present Human-faced Worm Disaster plaguing Seeking Immortal County where people died at any moment.

The future was unclear, but at least there was still a light of survival in their eyes.

But in the next moment, that light was rapidly extinguished.

Because the train, filled with people, began slowing down amid urgent wails and clanging noises until it came to a complete halt.

The train had to stop, for unknown to them, a person had appeared in front of the tracks.

It was a figure resembling a general, extremely tall with Black Gold Armor covering his body and revealing only a pair of black eyes, holding a Fangtian Halberd that dragged along the ground.

Even his mount was armored, and it was not an ordinary horse, but a creature like a devil beast with black flames on its hooves, a single sneeze causing black flames to erupt and vanish in the air.

With the appearance of the Black Armored General, a large number of figures in black gold continuously swept forward in a particular area.

Even as they advanced, they formed arrays as unstoppable as bamboo, filling onlookers with terror.

The driver of the steam train, already panic-stricken by the throngs of people clinging onto it, now seeing the scene ahead had no more concerns and obediently brought the train to a stop.

With this stop, at the back of the train,

All the civilians were stunned, then they began to wail.

Not long after, heart-wrenching cries echoed outside Seeking Immortal City.

"Oh, Heaven above, all we want is to survive."

"I can die, but my children cannot."

"Please, let us leave this place; we've done nothing wrong, we just want to live."

"My parents were eaten by those insect creatures, and my wife is gone, too; all I want is to save my daughter's life."

...

These howls couldn't sway the hearts of the general and soldiers.

They were the Demon Suppression Army, a new type of force trained by Ji Xianxian, the Governor of Southern Yue, using Daoist and Buddhist secret techniques. Besides having the power to suppress Evil Demons, each one of them had a will as firm as steel; the cries and pleas of the civilians did not affect them.

After assembling, they simply looked coldly at the thousands of fleeing civilians and shouted loudly:

"Return to the city!"

"Return to the city!"

Instantly, thousands of civilians were so shaken that they were dizzy.

Cries suddenly ceased, and colors of despair and fear spread everywhere.

Despite the recent failure of this Demon Suppression Army under Master Xiao at the Iron Buddha Mountain, it wasn't due to their combat. First, their numbers were too few, and second, the Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva was well-prepared, having set up the Hundred Demon Embryo Blood Refining Array in advance.

If this army had reached the tens of thousands, able to form the Demon Refining Array, even the Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva's true body would have been put to the test.

Since they had appeared, the civilians' plan to escape was destined to fail without question.

Looking at the desolation outside the city, there was Tao Qian, who together with Lin Xiaohua, Taisui Baby, and a sentient Alien Species, was about to be packed off by Master Xiao's maids.

Tao Qian suddenly stopped and immediately turned to look at Lin Xiaohua and the chubby Taisui Baby.

Just then, Xiao Hua Daoist also looked over and nodded directly, confirming to Tao Qian the previous statement.

Without hesitation, Tao Qian took out two copper tokens from his arms.

Then he turned to Master Xiao, who seemed somewhat troubled and unwilling to harm, and said:

"Senior Xiao, the reward I claimed is not the only one."

"I also accepted the mission concerning the Human-faced Worm Disaster in Seeking Immortal County. Xiao Hua Daoist is my good friend; knowing about the disaster here, he especially brought this Taisui Baby to draw out and eradicate all human-faced insects in the city with its Essence Blood, safeguarding nearly a hundred thousand civilians from harm."

"My only request is for you, Senior, not to harm the very Life of this baby, as it is a naturally born Spiritual Object that should not have its Dao Foundation damaged."

"If Senior agrees, we can proceed now, and I will accompany these four sisters to your residence. Just give me a quiet room, and I will immediately begin casting to determine the situation of that Immortal Infant."

"How does that sound?"

As soon as Tao Qian finished speaking, he immediately felt an approving gaze fall upon him.

Master Xiao, generous in spirit, cast an interesting glance at Tao Qian, and with a wave of her hand, the two copper tokens in his hand fell into hers.

At the same time, a soft voice was heard:

"Seeing you execute the Sacrificial Sword with decisive killing intent, it was unexpected that your nature is actually a seed of righteousness, no wonder you were able to practice the Spirit Treasure Root Skill."

"Don't worry, since this Taisui Baby is willing to offer its flesh and blood, the plague of human-faced worms will be resolved here and now."

"This little one will not suffer any harm, and I, Master Xiao, will grant it some benefits."

"As for this abandoned disciple of the Heavenly Talisman Sect..."

At this point, the expression of this outrageously powerful expert from the Ten Thousand Infant Sect suddenly furrowed as if they had witnessed something inconceivable.

Then, pondering, she said, "I see, I almost failed to notice."

After these cryptic words, Master Xiao then gestured for her four maids to take away Tao Qian, Lin Xiaohua, and that sentient alien species.

She herself, with the Taisui Baby, instantly appeared outside the city.

Her gentle, motherly aura of a female fairy immediately dispelled all negative energies.

Without a glance at the fierce Demon Suppression Army, she waved her sleeve and brought thousands of civilians back into the city. Her infinitely tender voice then pierced into the ears of almost a hundred thousand citizens within the next moment: "Everyone, be at ease, the worm disaster will be eradicated forthwith."

It was a magical and yet perfectly natural change.

Once Master Xiao spoke, the atmosphere of fear that had lingered over the city for three long days instantly vanished.

A few breaths later, a scene that filled all the citizens with joy and tears unfolded:

Those patients who were weakened and near death from being parasitized by the "human-faced worms" suddenly had the tumors on their necks burst open. Inexplicably, the parasites voluntarily emerged and even before leaving, returned the essence blood they had consumed back to the mother bodies.

The source of this eerie event was none other than the top floor of the Star-picking Pavilion.

Master Xiao was seated in meditation in the pavilion that seemed to pluck stars from the sky. In front of her was a Jade Table with a Jade Plate on top of it containing a piece of meat that resembled "jelly",

surrounded by a ring of translucent liquid. This exotic fragrance which was unbearable for almost any living creature began to permeate outwards.

And under the drive of some secret technique, once diluted, it began to cover the entire Seeking Immortal County.

It was this fragrance that drove all the human-faced worms madly to it, and in their desire to consume more essence, they instinctively regurgitated the essence blood they had already sucked out.

At the time of the human-faced insect's rampage, in front of the Jade Table, the plump baby called "Little Age" was looking pitiful, with chubby hands covering its own little behind. It was apparent where the piece of flesh was cut from.

Perhaps the incision was a bit too harsh; the lovable features of the baby were wrinkled together, as it sobbed and sniffled.

That pitiable sight even made Master Xiao feel a pang of sympathy. Her fair and soft palm gently smoothed over the baby's head, petting it as she comforted: "There, there, you were so brave when you were cut, and now you turn so aggrieved. If those junior cultivators saw this, they might think I'm taking advantage of you."

"Since I promised you benefits, here you go."

Before the words fell, a rich and milky "Source Qi" suddenly emerged from Master Xiao's palm.

Suddenly flushed with this Source Qi, the previously distressed Taisui Baby immediately widened its eyes, and its face embarrassingly showed a look of relief.

Then it crouched down like a little kitten, all smiles and blissfully lazy, as it enjoyed the Source Qi massage from the Great Cultivator.

That sight made Master Xiao both amused and sentimental.

"I hope Du Du is alright!"

"The madwoman Beautiful Corpse, she has provoked Guanyin Temple not enough, and now she's provoking my Ten Thousand Infant Sect. What exactly is she planning..."

...

While Seeking Immortal County was jubilant over the resolution of the insect disaster.

The isolated upper area of the Star-picking Pavilion, designated as Master Xiao's residence.

Tao Qian hardly had time to catch up with Lin Xiaohua, immediately entering a quiet room, sitting cross-legged, starting to communicate with his Puppet Body from a distance.

To avoid disturbance, Tao Qian's true body went into seclusion for three days, and the Puppet Body also found an excuse to close off for the same duration.

Now was precisely the time to come out of seclusion.

At Iron Buddha Mountain, within Peach Blossom Courtyard, the door of the quiet room opened with a "creak".

Tao Qian, controlling his Puppet Body, revealed a face full of exhaustion and disappointment.

As soon as he stepped out the door, sure enough, a pink glow shot towards him.

With pink peach blossoms dancing in the air, the figure of Nongyu Immortal Pan Hongniang appeared.

There was no need for Tao Qian to put on any realistic, impressive act, as Pan Hongniang instantly saw through the unchanged realm of her lover's cultivation. Coupled with his dejected expression, the outcome of his retreat to breakthrough spoke for itself.

Without needing to explain, Pan Hongniang moved in for a hug and tenderly comforted:

"Don't be disheartened, Fei'er, seeking a breakthrough through sudden insight has never been easy."

"If you really want to step into the Qi Refining Realm, I can help you."

"After all, we are not Daoist and Buddhist Practitioners bound by all those nonsensical strictures about heart and moral codes."

"If I let go of my Divine Soul to blend and Dual Cultivate with you, allowing you to absorb from me, tonight you can step into the Qi Refinement Realm without exerting the slightest bit of effort."

"Even though this will bring me nothing but harm and no benefit, if it makes Fei'er happy, I am more than willing."