

Struggling to Survive with Regression Power in the Primordial Saint Sect

Chapter 34: Three Rivers Recruitment, Foundation Establishment Opportunity

[1,154 words]

Outside the cave dwelling, following Lü Yang's breakthrough, information about him was laid out before those with vested interests, and his background was swiftly investigated thoroughly.

Just as Lü Yang had anticipated earlier, his background could be summed up in four characters:

"Roots upright, seedling dark."

Every year, the Saint Sect recruited new disciples.

After officially joining through the Pleasure Hall, he profited greatly by trading Substitute Death Yin Puppets, and then went into seclusion.

"This is a diligent cultivator."

Looking at the materials on the table, a female cultivator with a delicate face and a sharp gaze couldn't help but praise.

She was also a late-stage Qi Refining cultivator, but compared to Lü Yang, who had just broken through, her cultivation had already reached the ninth level of Qi Refining, just one step away from perfection.

The female cultivator was named "Feixia," and she was quite renowned within the Saint Sect.

Not only because of her appearance but also because she was one of the few talisman cultivators in the Saint Sect, gaining the favor of a sect elder through her talisman-making skills.

"A diligent cultivator alone cannot reach the late stage of Qi Refining."

Beside Fairy Feixia, a young man with a feather fan and silk scarf smiled slightly: "He clearly made a fortune by trading Substitute Death Yin Puppets, yet he keeps a low profile."

"This shows that he is a cautious and intelligent person."

"Understandable, this is within reason."

Fairy Feixia sighed upon hearing this: "For ordinary disciples like us to stand out, talent, caution, intelligence, and courage are all indispensable."

"So, it's decided?"

Fairy Feixia nodded and said, "I will recommend him. This person broke through to the late stage of Qi Refining in just ten years. Our Three Rivers Society needs such talent."

Inside the cave dwelling, Lü Yang sat cross-legged on a meditation cushion.

In front of him, more than a dozen talisman books were neatly laid out, each one an olive branch, claiming that as long as he was willing to join their faction, they would immediately offer generous gifts, including but not limited to cauldrons, cultivation methods, divine abilities, treasures, and pills—everything one could wish for.

"In my previous life, I didn't pay attention. I didn't expect so many factions within the Saint Sect."

Basically, as long as one had late-stage Qi Refining cultivation, they could gather a considerable team within the Saint Sect.

For example, Liu Xin in his previous life did just that.

Lü Yang wasn't surprised by this.

After all, without factions, there would be all sorts of oddities.

The Saint Sect was so vast; it was impossible for everyone to be of one mind.

People would always band together for their own interests.

Of course, those factions were like rootless duckweed, without foundation.

The ones truly capable of recruiting him were the factions established by some elders or even true disciples of the Saint Sect, and the conditions they offered were relatively more genuine and credible.

But that was all.

"I still overestimated myself."

Lü Yang shook his head.

The conditions offered by those major factions were indeed good, often amounting to tens of thousands of contribution points.

However, he happened not to lack money.

After all, he hadn't even spent all the contribution points he earned from trading Substitute Death Yin Puppets.

What he lacked was "authority," the ability to truly access the middle levels of the Saint Sect and purchase things that were otherwise unavailable.

Just as Lü Yang was contemplating, suddenly, the formation outside the door trembled.

Lü Yang looked up in response and saw the illumination array he had set up in front of the cave dwelling shine brightly, revealing a graceful and curvaceous silhouette.

It was none other than Fairy Feixia.

"Junior Brother Lü, you understand formations?"

Fairy Feixia looked around at the emerging formation patterns in surprise, her pretty face showing unexpected delight.

Lü Yang cupped his hands: "Senior Sister, may I ask the purpose of your visit?"

Fairy Feixia didn't feign modesty and gracefully returned the salute: "I am Feixia, a steward of the Saint Sect's Three Rivers Society. I have come for you, Junior Brother."

"Oh? Please, Senior Sister."

Lü Yang hurriedly offered hospitality and quickly became alert.

The Three Rivers Society—wasn't that the faction behind Zhao Xuhe?

They actually came to recruit him?

Lü Yang didn't know much about the Three Rivers Society, but he knew Zhao Xuhe was a member.

More importantly, as a disciple of the Mending Heaven Peak Master, Zhao Xuhe seemed to be just a mid-to-low-level member of the Three Rivers Society.

This alone showed the value of the Three Rivers Society.

"I hope Senior Sister doesn't mind my ignorance. May I ask what the Three Rivers Society is?"

Lü Yang asked cautiously.

Fairy Feixia wasn't surprised by his question and smiled: "The Three Rivers Society was established by three senior brothers who are true disciples."

"The eldest senior brother is already a Foundation Establishment True Person and has opened a peak within the Sea of Clouds."

"The second and third senior brothers haven't established their foundations yet, but they have both cultivated third-grade true qi and are at the peak of Qi Refining, ready to establish their foundations at any time."

"I heard that Junior Brother Lü also comes from an ordinary background. You should know how difficult life is for ordinary disciples in the early stages."

"The three senior brothers came from humble beginnings like us, so after achieving great cultivation, they established the Three Rivers Society to help ordinary disciples overcome early difficulties."

"I see."

Lü Yang looked respectful: "The three senior brothers are truly virtuous."

Bah!

If it weren't for the fact that in previous lives he had borrowed money from the Three Rivers Society and personally witnessed their 36% annual interest rate, he might have believed this nonsense.

Lü Yang cursed inwardly.

He was always cautious and wouldn't make a hasty decision just because of Fairy Feixia's words.

He immediately said cautiously: "It would be an honor to be invited to join the Three Rivers Society, but may I ask what the benefits are?"

"You can rest assured, Junior Brother."

Fairy Feixia replied calmly: "As long as you're willing to join, I can immediately grant you a true disciple-level divine ability secret technique."

"After joining, there will be an annual contribution point offering."

"Moreover, as long as you have money, you can use the society's true disciple authority to purchase desired items, or even request guidance from the three senior brothers."

"Of course, there are requirements."

At this point, Fairy Feixia took out a jade slip and placed it in front of Lü Yang: "All members must sign a contract and leave a drop of essence blood."

"That's simple."

Lü Yang glanced at the contract in front of him.

It was nothing more than some standard faction clauses, confidentiality obligations, etc.

Some might feel that doing so would lose their freedom and make many things beyond their control, but Lü Yang didn't care.

He boldly signed his name.

It was just a matter of this lifetime, and it wouldn't affect the next.

He even wished the constraints were greater, so he would be more likely to be considered one of their own and receive better resources.

Seeing Lü Yang so straightforward, Fairy Feixia nodded in satisfaction.

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Chapter 35: Senior Brother Zhao and I Are Fated!

[1,394 words]

Two lifetimes ago, starting from Lü Yang's current point in time and going forward about twenty years, the Primordial Saint Sect would launch an extermination war against a righteous sect.

The righteous sect that was wiped out was called "Divine Martial Sect".

In that same lifetime, Zhao Xuhe eventually cultivated to the peak of Qi Refining and, along with Fairy Feixia, became the manager of the sect's marketplace in the outside world.

That marketplace was located in Skeleton Mountain, right next to the Divine Martial Sect.

Before the war, the Primordial Saint Sect transported a large amount of resources under the guise of the marketplace.

It was said that during that time, the two of them discovered a rare Foundation Establishment treasure.

Afterward, as the war broke out, both of them performed brilliantly, earning significant merit, and then exchanged it for another Foundation Establishment treasure within the sect.

They then asked an alchemist to combine the two treasures into one and refined a “Foundation Establishment Pill”, finally obtaining the chance to break through.

Although they ultimately failed, the opportunity was real.

“I cultivated the same Nine Transformations Dragon Art as Zhao Xuhe; if he had a chance to break through to Foundation Establishment, maybe I do too. Either way, it’s worth a try!”

Another three days passed.

Lü Yang was meditating in his cave dwelling when suddenly, a human-faced owl flew to his entrance.

Its beak moved and it spoke in a crisp and pleasant voice:

“Junior Brother Lü, please come to the cave dwelling.”

It was Fairy Feixia.

Upon seeing this, Lü Yang's eyes flickered slightly.

He immediately flew on a sword light toward Fairy Feixia’s cave dwelling and was then guided to a scenic tea pavilion amidst mountains and waters.

Inside the tea pavilion, Fairy Feixia was brewing tea.

Her fair hands moved gracefully, pouring spiritual water, igniting true fire, and brewing the tea with fluid and pleasing motions.

Lü Yang happened to arrive just in time and immediately caught a whiff of the delicate fragrance of tea, which calmed his mind and even invigorated his spiritual senses.

“Please sit, Junior Brother.”

Only then did Fairy Feixia raise her brows to look at him.

Once Lü Yang took his seat, she got straight to the point:

“This time I called you over because we’ve received the reply from the association.”

“Oh?” Lü Yang deliberately showed a look of excitement. “Could it be that my divine ability has arrived?”

“Indeed.” Fairy Feixia smiled slightly. “Second Senior Brother has already delivered the list of divine abilities. Junior Brother may now choose one to cultivate.”

“Many thanks, Senior Sister!”

Lü Yang cupped his hands, received the jade slip containing the list, and opened it.

He was instantly dazzled by the densely packed divine abilities.

After carefully browsing through them, he couldn't help but curse inwardly.

Most of these divine abilities he had already seen in the Library Pavilion of Mending Heaven Peak.

However, those versions were castrated—much weaker than the complete versions in this list.

Although they looked similar, the difference was like heaven and earth.

This showed just how strictly the sect controlled its resources.

It was utterly outrageous.

If not for joining the Three Rivers Society and signing a sell-body contract, gaining the backing of a true disciple, he would probably never have come into contact with these complete divine abilities in his lifetime.

After a moment, Lü Yang’s eyes suddenly lit up.

Because he actually saw a familiar term in the list: Heavenly Demon Blood-Transforming Divine Light—or to be more precise, its complete version!

《Taiyin Body-Shedding Corpse Liberation True Method》!

“Refine the body with lunar energy, surpass the Nine-Turn Pill. The form becomes proper and solemn, the complexion like a spiritual cloud. Ascend to the Supreme Polar Palace and be granted the title of True Person.”

This was a great divine ability!

The Heavenly Demon Blood-Transforming Divine Light was just its first step.

Once fully cultivated, the user would be beyond the Five Elements, immune to weapons, and even known as a “Corpse-Transcending Immortal”.

“This is the one!”

Lü Yang made the decision instantly.

He copied the contents of 《Taiyin Body-Shedding Corpse Liberation True Method》.

Then he looked at Fairy Feixia and solemnly cupped his hands:

“Now that this matter is done, does Senior Sister have any other instructions?”

“To be frank, Junior Brother.” Fairy Feixia chuckled softly. “I’ve been planning to apply for an external assignment—to take charge of the marketplace in Skeleton Mountain. I happen to be lacking a few reliable assistants.”

So it really came!

Lü Yang wasn’t surprised by her invitation.

Sweet dates always came with sticks.

Since the Three Rivers Society had given him benefits, how could they not make him work?

“If Senior Sister does not mind, I am willing to accompany you.”

Lü Yang didn’t hesitate at all and nodded immediately.

After all, this concerned the opportunity for Foundation Establishment.

Even if Fairy Feixia hadn’t invited him, Lü Yang had already planned to take on a mission at the Merit Hall to head to the marketplace at Skeleton Mountain.

Seeing Lü Yang so decisive, Fairy Feixia’s eyes became even more satisfied:

“Just as I thought, Junior Brother is a person of steadfast Dao heart. For ordinary disciples like us, if we sink into complacency, we’re doomed to remain obscure in the sect. Only by venturing out and seeking opportunities can we find a glimmer of hope.”

“Burn the boats, disregard life and death—only then can one hope for Foundation Establishment!”

After a conversation, Lü Yang noticed that Fairy Feixia’s gaze toward him had grown more cordial.

She clearly regarded him as a like-minded companion.

Disregarding life and death was indeed accurate.

But not because he had no retreat.

Rather, because he had the 【Book of a Hundred Lifetimes】 and feared no failure.

If he died, so what?

He could just restart!

Ten days later, aboard the flying boat bound for Skeleton Mountain—

Lü Yang soared in a stream of light, landed steadily on the deck, greeted Fairy Feixia, and then quietly blended into the crowd below.

He did not intend to be too conspicuous on this trip to Skeleton Mountain.

Rather than attracting attention, he preferred to blend in, ideally fading into the background with just a slight frown.

Very soon, many cultivators gathered on the flying boat.

The leaders, besides Fairy Feixia, included two Qi Refining seventh-layer cultivators.

One of them, Lü Yang even recognized—Lu Yuanchun, a disciple under the main branch of Mending Heaven Peak.

“Hmph, I’ll settle scores with him sooner or later.”

A cold glint flashed in Lü Yang’s eyes, then quickly faded.

He looked around.

Since Lu Yuanchun was here, would Zhao Xuhe also show up?

It was entirely possible that this lifetime’s Foundation Establishment opportunity would still fall into his hands.

Sure enough, after scanning the crowd, Lü Yang really spotted Zhao Xuhe quietly sipping spirit wine in a remote corner of the flying boat.

However, Zhao Xuhe now was several times more dejected than in any previous life.

Lü Yang wasn't surprised.

After all, in this life, Zhao Xuhe couldn't find him.

His fated opportunity had vanished into thin air.

The Substitute Death Yin Puppet had bankrupted him.

And his lover, Qing Chen Fairy, surely had left him as well.

He had truly lost everything.

Lü Yang was already impressed that Zhao Xuhe hadn't jumped off Mending Heaven Peak yet.

"Senior Brother Zhao? Is that you, Senior Brother Zhao?"

Lü Yang took the initiative to approach, deliberately putting on a surprised expression:

"Never expected to see you here! We must be fated, Senior Brother!"

"Ah? You are..."

Zhao Xuhe stared blankly for a moment before recognizing Lü Yang by memory, and was instantly dumbfounded:

"Junior Brother Lü? You've reached mid-stage Qi Refining?!"

Zhao Xuhe was indeed down and out.

He couldn't see through Lü Yang's aura-concealing technique, and had no way of knowing his true realm.

Even so, mid-stage Qi Refining was enough to shock him.

After all, ten years ago, Lü Yang had seemed like a totally insignificant figure.

Thinking of this, Zhao Xuhe grew even more dispirited.

"Hmph, you've come to laugh at me too, haven't you? Get lost!"

“Why would you say that, Senior Brother?” Lü Yang looked confused and quickly said:

“I’ve always remembered your kindness back then—how could I ever mock you?”

Kindness?

What kindness?

Zhao Xuhe was stunned again.

Then he recalled that he had once helped Lü Yang secure a loan.

Could that really count as kindness?

Was this guy a fool?

Just as Zhao Xuhe was about to mock him—

“I noticed your cultivation seems stuck at the sixth layer of Qi Refining. If you don’t mind, Senior Brother, I have a spiritual pill that might help.”

“Is that... appropriate?”

Zhao Xuhe dazedly accepted the spirit pill that Lü Yang forcibly handed him.

Strangely, when he looked at Lü Yang again, he actually felt a sense of closeness!

As if they had known each other in a past life.

Could we really be fated?

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Chapter 36: Skeleton Mountain Market

[1,356 words]

With his understanding of Zhao Xuhe from several lifetimes, Lü Yang quickly became acquainted with him, allowing Zhao Xuhe to feel a long-lost sense of respect from outsiders.

To be honest, he hadn't felt this way in many years.

Ever since the price of Substitute Death Yin Puppets plummeted, Panlong Island mysteriously disappeared, and even his master, the Mending Heaven Peak Lord, couldn't calculate the cause and effect, his days had become increasingly difficult.

First, his master grew more and more disappointed in him; second, his cultivation stagnated, remaining at the mid-stage of Qi Refining for ten years without breaking through the bottleneck.

If there was any good news, it was that his master, seeing his declining state, canceled his engagement with his junior sister.

The vicissitudes of life and the warmth and coldness of human relationships—Zhao Xuhe had experienced them all in these ten years.

Therefore, upon hearing that Lü Yang had exited the market at the peak price of Substitute Death Yin Puppets and achieved financial freedom, Zhao Xuhe's eyes turned red with envy.

"Ah, junior brother, your Dao heart is firm, not corrupted by wealth; your future achievements are limitless. It's a pity I didn't have your Dao heart back then."

"Senior brother, you mustn't belittle yourself."

Lü Yang softly comforted, "Fortune doesn't favor just one moment. As long as you are determined on the path of immortality, what are temporary setbacks?"

"You're right."

Zhao Xuhe nodded, seemingly a bit more spirited, then glanced at Lü Yang with hesitation, opening his mouth but saying nothing.

Such behavior made his intentions clear to Lü Yang.

He wanted to borrow money.

Lü Yang smiled slightly.

Since Zhao Xuhe didn't mention it, he naturally wouldn't bring it up either. After all, if it's too easy to obtain, it won't be cherished.

At this moment, a voice suddenly came from the flying boat:

"Skeleton Mountain has arrived!"

Northern Frontier, Skeleton Mountain.

Though called a mountain, it was actually a vast mountain range stretching hundreds of miles, with peaks clustered like waves, each inch of land brimming with spiritual energy.

The Saint Sect established a market here for good reason.

Although it couldn't compare to the Sky-reaching Sea of Clouds, for secular rogue cultivators, Skeleton Mountain was already a treasure land.

At the center of the range was a White Bone Cave, where the Saint Sect's market was located.

"This place's geomancy is of extreme yin."

On the flying boat's deck, Lü Yang overlooked Skeleton Mountain's terrain, somewhat surprised: "Any cultivator buried here will inevitably transform into a zombie within ten years."

"Junior brother, your insight is sharp."

A sudden burst of rosy light appeared as Fairy Feixia, her feathered cloak fluttering, stepped out: "That's why the Saint Sect sent us to guard Skeleton Mountain and maintain market order."

"As you said, due to the unique geomancy, Skeleton Mountain experiences a massive zombie tide every thirty years. These zombies lack intelligence and only know to devour the living. It's a risk of Skeleton Mountain but also an opportunity, as these zombies are excellent materials for refining artifacts."

After explaining, Fairy Feixia continued:

"The market is protected by the 'Hundred Bones Return to True Formation.' Fellow Daoists Lu and Chen will each handle two formation eyes. Shall junior brother and I take one each of the remaining two?"

"At your command, senior sister."

Fairy Feixia nodded upon hearing this, then slightly furrowed her brows, glancing at Zhao Xuhe beside Lü Yang, who was wide-eyed and full of disbelief.

"What's wrong?" Lü Yang asked curiously, "Senior sister, do you know Senior Brother Zhao?"

"...I don't."

Fairy Feixia indifferently withdrew her gaze, no longer looking at Zhao Xuhe, and instead gave Lü Yang a gentle smile: "I'll be counting on you in the future, junior brother."

With that, she soared away on a beam of rosy light.

Zhao Xuhe remained in place, his expression complex, clearly realizing that Lü Yang's ability to oversee the market meant his strength wasn't just mid-stage Qi Refining as he sensed.

"Senior Brother Zhao?"

Lü Yang's voice came, and Zhao Xuhe froze.

His face showed a mix of joy and sorrow, his lips moved without sound, and finally, his demeanor became respectful as he clearly called out:

"My lord."

Seeing this, Lü Yang could only sigh helplessly: "Senior Brother Zhao, I have official duties to attend to. If you have any difficulties in the future, feel free to contact me."

With that, he also departed in a beam of light.

Only Zhao Xuhe remained, his expression uncertain, quickly collecting his previous emotions, his eyes revealing a thoughtful look.

"He's wary of me. Seems I was too hasty."

Entering the market, Lü Yang recalled Zhao Xuhe's earlier reaction and couldn't help but chuckle: "Just as I expected, he has another purpose for coming to this market."

"Good, good!"

"In this lifetime, I must consider him a close friend!"

Lü Yang wasn't afraid of Zhao Xuhe's wariness because he had enough patience.

If necessary, he could even give up this lifetime and truly be lifelong friends with Zhao Xuhe, gathering intelligence to prepare for the next life!

While pondering, Lü Yang arrived in front of a pavilion.

This was one of the four major formation eyes of the market and also the area with the most spiritual energy in Skeleton Mountain, estimated to have about thirty percent of the Saint Sect's cave dwelling level.

"Heaven-Slashing Blood River Sword Formation, activate!"

With a wave of his sleeve, Lü Yang sent the Blood Sun Sword Pill into the pavilion, anchoring the center. Then, formation patterns expanded, replacing the original ones.

Although the market's 'Hundred Bones Return to True Formation' was more marvelous than the Heaven-Slashing Blood River Sword Formation, firstly, Lü Yang only occupied one formation eye; secondly, as a formation master, he disliked entrusting his life to a formation set up by others.

"After all, I have many secrets."

"Moreover, the Skeleton Mountain market has been established for so long; even if the 'Hundred Bones Return to True Formation' is brilliant, its effects are already well-known."

The more one's background is exposed, the easier it is to be targeted.

So, if a formidable figure attacks the Skeleton Mountain market, they must be prepared with methods to break the 'Hundred Bones Return to True Formation.'

Therefore, by then, this formation might not be of much use.

That said, Lü Yang didn't abandon the formation directly but instead opened a new area within the pavilion, hiding a formation within a formation, serving as a trump card.

After completing all this, Lü Yang nodded in satisfaction.

Then, with another wave of his hand, he named the pavilion 'Blood Garment Tower,' marking his official residence in the Skeleton Mountain market and providing an external title.

At that moment, over a dozen beams of light flew in.

These were all Saint Sect disciples assigned to Lü Yang's area, mostly at the early to mid-stage of Qi Refining, here to perform tasks.

After the lights entered the Blood Garment Tower, they dispersed, revealing cultivators of various appearances, male and female, young and old, all respectfully arriving at the tower platform.

Beside the platform stood a handsome young man in blood-colored robes, leaning on the railing with a smile, overlooking them all.

"Greetings, Tower Master!"

The disciples didn't dare be negligent, bowing one after another.

Although within the Saint Sect they could address each other as senior and junior brothers, outside the sect, titles were used.

Especially since this was a senior brother at the late stage of Qi Refining!

Early, mid, late, and great perfection stages of Qi Refining might seem like four minor realms, but the gaps between them were vast.

"Rise."

Looking at the row of figures below, Lü Yang nodded in satisfaction, thinking to himself: "Not bad, all seem like cattle and horses at a glance, no capable ones."

The Saint Sect's cultivation environment was top-notch, so generally, those choosing external assignments were either like Lü Yang and Fairy Feixia, aiming for Foundation Establishment, or like these individuals—poor aptitude, older age, and little wealth, unable to survive in the sect.

"If I wanted, I could kill them all with one sword each."

Those intending to build a force might be dissatisfied with this situation, but Lü Yang felt it was just right; the weak atmosphere made him feel at ease.

"Disperse. Handle minor matters yourselves; no need to come to me."

Lü Yang casually instructed, then directly dismissed them, sealing the Blood Garment Tower, preparing to cultivate peacefully until the opportunity for Foundation Establishment arose!

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[1,583 words]

"This 『Taiyin Body-Shedding Corpse Liberation True Method』 is kind of difficult."

After a night of closed-door cultivation, Lü Yang looked at the mystical scroll before him and furrowed his brows. "Great divine ability — only those with great power can practice it. It is the pinnacle of all mystical arts."

The so-called "Great Divine Ability" was not a rank of divine abilities, but rather a method of combining them.

Simply put, by merging several top-tier, compatible mystical arts together to unleash dozens of times their usual power — that was called a Great Divine Ability.

『Taiyin Body-Shedding Corpse Liberation True Method』 was such a technique. To master this Great Divine Ability, one must first learn three top-tier arts: Heavenly Demon Blood-Transforming Divine Light, Profound Yin Form-Capturing Grand Art, and Taiwei Pardon Talisman.

Each of these three mystical arts was extremely difficult to master, and without heaven-sent opportunities, success was impossible.

This was a common trait among all Great Divine Abilities.

It wasn't something that could be learned just by wanting to. One needed perception, luck, and merit — lacking even one would lead to failure.

Take the first art, the Heavenly Demon Blood-Transforming Divine Light, for example.

That alone had stumped countless cultivators, as the process of skin-stripping cultivation was equivalent to severing one's path to immortality.

Even if completed, it held no meaning.

As for the second, the Profound Yin Form-Capturing Grand Art, it didn't have such severe drawbacks.

The difficulty lay in the required item: a “Mysterious Female Taiyin Treasure Jade.”

Without this rare treasure, no matter how high your cultivation or how keen your perception, you couldn't master the art.

And this “Mysterious Female Taiyin Treasure Jade” was extremely rare.

How rare? One phrase summed it up — it didn't even appear on the exchange list of the Saint Sect. You couldn't buy it even with Contribution Points.

Considering how vast and resource-rich the Saint Sect was, yet still lacked such a treasure, it was clear how rare it was.

Thus, mastering this mystical art depended entirely on fate. Without that luck, even scouring the entire world would be fruitless.

Because of this, Lü Yang gave it up after just a glance and instead turned his focus to the third art — the Taiwei Pardon Talisman.

However, what frustrated him was that although this mystical art didn't require rare items or have severe side effects, it was just too difficult.

Lü Yang studied it the entire night, yet gained very little.

"It's kind of like an array, and also like a talisman, yet it's classified as a mystical art. Whether it can be learned depends entirely on comprehension. If you can't learn it, you simply can't."

Thinking this, Lü Yang scratched his head again, unwilling to concede.

"Even arrays, as hard as they are, I've fought through them. How long can a single divine art block my way? At worst, I'll spend another twenty years — I'll learn you eventually!"

The reason why 『Taiyin Body-Shedding Corpse Liberation True Method』 held Lü Yang so tightly was because it was simply too tempting — he couldn't bear to give it up.

The power of the Heavenly Demon Blood-Transforming Divine Light went without saying.

The Profound Yin Form-Capturing Grand Art was equally domineering — once a person's qi mechanism was captured and condensed into a "Soul Shadow," killing that shadow would instantly kill the person, even from thousands of miles away.

And the Taiwei Pardon Talisman was even more outrageous.

Once mastered, it didn't target the body or soul, but directly broke merit and luck. Even a Heaven's Chosen would become unlucky if struck by it.

But of course, the most powerful effect lay in the union of all three arts.

This was also the most tempting part of 『Taiyin Body-Shedding Corpse Liberation True Method』 — it could increase the chances of breaking through to the Foundation Establishment Realm!

That alone made Lü Yang determined to obtain it at any cost.

Time flew like an arrow.

In the blink of an eye, five years passed.

Inside Blood Garment Tower, Lü Yang leaned on the railing, gazing at the sky, silently operating the 『Nine Transformations Dragon Art』. With each breath, he inhaled and exhaled clouds and mist, conjuring all kinds of illusory visions.

The eighth transformation — Mirage Transformation!

Although the spirit veins in Skeleton Mountain were poor, Lü Yang was wealthy and had stockpiled large amounts of spirit stones in advance. Thus, his cultivation remained unhindered.

After five years of bitter cultivation, even though his progress in the Taiwei Pardon Talisman remained stagnant, he suddenly experienced a stroke of insight while studying divine arts. His true qi broke through on its own, and by the time he regained his senses, the qi seed in his dantian had transformed again, vaguely taking the shape of a dragon.

Qi Refining, Eighth Layer!

“Though going from seventh to eighth layer isn’t as drastic as from sixth to seventh, the true qi and power have nearly doubled.”

“In the end, realm is the foundation!”

“So what if I haven’t learned a Great Divine Ability? With my current strength, even a mid-stage Qi Refining core disciple, I can defeat across realms!”

“Not to mention, there’s still the ninth transformation.”

Lü Yang’s heart burned with passion.

The ninth transformation — Flying Fish Transformation — would break his bottleneck.

In other words, once he reached the ninth layer, he could immediately attempt full perfection!

“The Immortal Path is in sight. This calls for celebration!”

Thinking this, Lü Yang felt cheerful.

The shadow of failure in mastering the Taiwei Pardon Talisman was swept away, and he joyfully walked out of his secluded chamber.

But before that, Lü Yang first performed the Qi Concealment Technique.

In the next second, his newly elevated and surging aura was fully concealed, returning to that of a Qi Refining Seventh Layer — just slightly stronger than five years ago.

“Always keep three parts for attacking, seven parts as a trump card. One can never have too many aces.”

Not long after, the disciples under the Blood Garment Tower of the Saint Sect rushed in. Upon seeing Lü Yang, they saluted without hesitation.

“Congratulations to Tower Master on emerging from seclusion!”

“Rise.” Lü Yang waved casually and asked, “In the five years I’ve been in seclusion, has there been any trouble near Skeleton Mountain?”

“Reporting to Tower Master, there has been none.”

An elderly Saint Sect disciple took the initiative to respond, “Only once — a disciple from the Divine Martial Sect of Northern Frontier came to provoke, but was sent away by Fairy Feixia.”

“What about the Mysterious Female Taiyin Treasure Jade? Any news?”

“None yet.”

After learning of the events over the past five years, Lü Yang dismissed the others, planning to enter seclusion again until the opportunity for Foundation Establishment emerged during the righteous-demonic war.

But just then, a streak of multicolored light descended beside the Blood Garment Tower.

“Junior Brother Lü, may I have a word?”

Upon hearing this, Lü Yang swept his divine sense over and quickly rose to greet her with a smile. “Troubling Senior Sister to come in person — I should’ve been the one to visit.”

“Junior Brother, something has happened.”

Fairy Feixia looked serious and solemn. “Recently, the Terrain Observation Device detected that the corpse tide, originally set to erupt in fifteen years, has advanced.”

“At this moment, tens of thousands of zombies are heading toward the market!”

“This sudden anomaly came with no signs beforehand. There must be someone behind the scenes. I suspect it may be those brutes from the Divine Martial Sect in the Northern Frontier.”

“What?”

Lü Yang frowned at her words. When he noticed her staring intently at him, he frowned deeper. “Senior Sister needs my assistance?”

“Indeed. Junior Brother, would you dare to challenge the corpse tide with me?”

Fairy Feixia smiled. “The corpse tide is a crisis, but also an opportunity. Whoever triggered it early must be relying on some rare treasure.”

“If we join forces, we might seize it and create our own fortune.”

“Even if something unexpected happens and we are caught within the tide, with our cultivation levels, the risk is minimal!”

As she spoke, Fairy Feixia’s brows danced, her aura radiant, exuding bold confidence.

However, Lü Yang shook his head.

“Apologies, Senior Sister... I’m not like you. My strength is low, and I haven’t learned any divine arts — only some basic formations. It’s best I stay behind and hold the fort.”

Even if the risk was small, it was still a risk.

A gentleman does not stand beneath a crumbling wall. He was currently on a steady path to breakthrough. Why take unnecessary risks?

It wasn’t worth it.

His foremost goal this lifetime was to reach the peak of Qi Refining. He could afford to take risks after that — for now, caution was the key.

“You’re not going?”

Seeing Lü Yang’s refusal, Fairy Feixia frowned slightly. Her usually cold expression softened into something almost pitiable. “The Immortal Path is short and bitter. To succeed, one must cut off all retreats. I thought you understood this.”

Lü Yang remained unmoved, his Dao heart like iron. “This is not the past. I ask for Senior Sister’s understanding.”

“You’ve changed.”

Fairy Feixia shook her head in disappointment. “In that case, stay and guard the market. But the opportunity, when it comes, won’t be yours.”

“.”

Lü Yang only smiled at her words and said nothing.

To be honest, he felt that Fairy Feixia didn't quite act like a Saint Sect disciple. How should he put it — she seemed like someone who had never been beaten by the Saint Sect before.

With the corpse tide approaching, even if she got some great opportunity, wouldn't she still have to flee back to the market he was guarding?

At that time, saying the opportunity wasn't his?

Then don't blame him for saying: you all died bravely on the front line fighting the corpse tide.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[1,386 words]

At dusk, within the Blood Garment Tower.

The setting sun resembled blood; as another cycle of cultivation concluded, Lü Yang slowly refined the spiritual energy of heaven and earth into his dantian, transforming it into true qi that flowed through his limbs and bones.

Qi coursed through his meridians like a dragon returning to the sea.

“Soon, once I master the final Flying Fish Transformation and merge the nine transformations into one, I can fully cultivate the third-grade true qi of the 『Nine Transformations Dragon Art』 —the ‘True Dragon Qi’.”

“Once I achieve the ‘True Dragon Qi’, it will coincide with the onset of the righteous and demonic war. It will be the perfect opportunity for me to compete for the Foundation Establishment opportunity at Skeleton Mountain. Only the Foundation Establishment opportunity is worth the risk and effort; everything else is illusory.”

After completing his cultivation for the day, Lü Yang exited the meditation chamber.

Outside the chamber, a woman with a proud posture and sharp brows had been waiting for some time.

Upon seeing Lü Yang, she immediately stepped forward and handed him a jade slip.

“Daoist Brother, today's movements of the corpse tide have been delivered.”

Lü Yang accepted the jade slip with a slight smile. "Thank you, Daoist Friend Yun."

This woman was none other than Yun Miaoqing.

She was originally a disciple of the Jade Pivot Sword Pavilion.

Although Lü Yang had already mastered the 『Divine Firmament Sword Control True Formula』, considering their past connection, he had purchased her.

To be fair, his intention was that since they had engaged in dual cultivation in a previous life, helping Yun Miaoqing wouldn't hinder him. He didn't mind doing a good deed; following him was better than being bought by other sect disciples and used as a cauldron, drained into a wretch.

Unexpectedly, this decision brought him a pleasant surprise.

Perhaps because he hadn't engaged in dual cultivation with Yun Miaoqing in this life and instead treated her with respect, focusing solely on diligent cultivation, Yun Miaoqing's affection for him grew significantly.

"Daoist Brother, you are a good person. Why stay in the Primordial Saint Sect?"

Yun Miaoqing approached Lü Yang and whispered, "Now that the corpse tide has erupted, why not feign death and follow me to the Sword Pavilion to embrace the righteous path?"

As she spoke, Yun Miaoqing looked at Lü Yang, her beautiful eyes filled with emotion.

At her most desperate and powerless moment, it was this man who rescued her from the sea of suffering. Not only did he not harm her, but he also provided her with a place to stay.

Though born of the Demon Sect, he was a gentleman.

Moreover, over the past ten years, she had witnessed his step-by-step growth. His cultivation was profound, his talent exceptional, and most importantly, he was very handsome.

If he could join the Sword Pavilion, perhaps they could...

As she pondered, Yun Miaoqing's pretty face suddenly flushed, though it was unclear what she was thinking.

This demeanor reminded Lü Yang of how, in previous lives, she had defiantly called him a demon. He found it quite amusing.

Of course, he had no interest in romantic affairs.

What truly mattered to him was Yun Miaoqing's seemingly significant status in the Jade Pivot Sword Pavilion. She claimed that with her recommendation, the Sword Pavilion would surely accept him.

"Cultivating in the Holy Sect is like walking on thin ice. If possible, I'd prefer to join a sect with better conduct."

Yun Miaoqing might be the key to his future transition to the righteous path.

"How are Senior Sister Feixia and the others?"

"Those demonic cultivators were still at Jueyin Ridge a few days ago, breaking through the corpse tide. A mysterious expert intervened, but they repelled him and pursued him afterward."

Yun Miaoqing handed over another jade slip.

Lü Yang took the jade slip and scanned it with his spiritual sense. The events of that day immediately came to mind.

"So that's how it is. It seems there's indeed a mastermind behind the early eruption of the corpse tide. A disciple of the Divine Martial Sect? And the rare treasure they used to catalyze the corpse tide..."

Upon seeing this, Lü Yang suddenly froze, then abruptly stood up.

"The Mysterious Female Taiyin Treasure Jade!?"

Indeed, the intelligence indicated that the mastermind behind the corpse tide's eruption, a disciple of the Divine Martial Sect, possessed a thumb-sized Mysterious Female Taiyin Treasure Jade!

"If I can obtain this treasure jade, I can immediately cultivate the Profound Yin Form-Capturing Grand Art. Given time, even the 『Taiyin Body-Shedding Corpse Liberation True Method』 wouldn't be a dream. Considering the rarity of this treasure jade, this might be my only chance in this life. If I miss it, I might never get another opportunity."

"However... if not in this life, then in the next. Missing it is missing it!"

Lü Yang's expression turned grim as he sat back down.

Despite unexpectedly discovering the coveted Taiyin Treasure Jade, he felt no joy.

He only felt a bone-chilling cold and was filled with vigilance.

“Whatever I desire seems to come to me... How could there be such luck in the world? After all, I’m not someone like Xiao Shiye, a child of destiny.”

Moreover, Xiao Shiye’s luck was bestowed by others!

“Could it be that Daoist Hong Yun is behind this again?”

The thought that a Foundation Establishment True Person might be manipulating karma and scheming in the shadows made Lü Yang immediately decide.

“I won’t go out!”

The current situation at Skeleton Mountain was treacherous.

It was safest to stay within the market city and manage the formation.

As long as a Foundation Establishment True Person didn’t intervene, he would remain unshaken.

“Besides, even if I don’t go out, it doesn’t mean I have no chance to obtain the treasure jade.”

After all, there were still Fairy Feixia and the others.

According to the intelligence, they had pursued the enemy. If they could seize the treasure jade and escape back to the market city, wouldn’t that be his opportunity?

Thinking of this, Lü Yang couldn’t help but sincerely cheer for Fairy Feixia.

Time flew by.

Another day, within the Blood Garment Tower.

While Lü Yang was meditating and refining qi, he suddenly sensed something and immediately rose into the air, flying outside the tower to gaze into the distance toward the outskirts of the market city.

“Boom!”

In the distant sky, thunderous explosions accompanied by expanding clouds of blasts rapidly spread from the horizon toward the market city. It was clearly a chase involving flying lights. Leading the charge was Fairy Feixia’s distinctive multicolored flying light.

“One is missing?”

Lü Yang raised an eyebrow.

Including himself, there were four late-stage Qi Refining cultivators in Skeleton Mountain's market city: Fairy Feixia, Lu Yuanchun, and an unnamed senior brother.

However, at this moment, Lü Yang only saw Fairy Feixia and Lu Yuanchun.

“Activate the formation.”

Unperturbed, Lü Yang issued a command. The Saint Sect disciples within the market city immediately took their positions, banners fluttering as a grand formation was erected in an instant.

The Hundred Bones True Grand Formation!

This formation ranked as a seventh-grade formation, the pinnacle of Qi Refining level formations.

With Lü Yang overseeing it, he could even contend with cultivators at the peak of Qi Refining.

However, in the next moment, an unexpected change occurred!

Lu Yuanchun suddenly produced a token and, forming a seal, activated it, directly opening a gap in the originally sealed formation.

“Now!”

Almost simultaneously, an extremely excited shout echoed from outside the market city.

Several beams of spiritual light shot out, transforming into formation banners that spread in all directions.

Immediately afterward, a miniature formation appeared at the gap Lu Yuanchun had opened, stabilizing it so that even Lü Yang couldn't close it!

“Divine Martial Sect.”

Lü Yang's brows furrowed slightly as he instantly recognized the attackers.

Clearly, the Divine Martial Sect had been lying in ambush outside the market city for some time, waiting for such an opportunity.

Now that the formation had been forcibly opened, the Divine Martial Sect could fully exploit this breach to invade the market city!

As for the culprit behind all this, Lu Yuanchun merely cast a cold glance at the market city before soaring away in the opposite direction!

He clearly understood what he had done, but he didn't care.

In fact, he had done it deliberately, treating the market city as a discarded piece to secure his own escape.

After all, for the Divine Martial Sect, it was more advantageous to annihilate the Skeleton Mountain market city than to continue pursuing him.

As for the Saint Sect disciples within the market city?

They were just unlucky!

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[1,393 words]

“Lu Yuanchun! Bastard!”

Upon seeing a breach torn open in the market's grand formation, Fairy Feixia's eyes widened with fury.

Immediately, she made a move completely opposite to Lu Yuanchun's.

“Junior Brother, let's join forces!”

With a flash of light, Fairy Feixia descended directly into the market.

She then turned around to guard the breach in the formation: “We absolutely cannot let the Divine Martial Sect charge into the market.”

Hearing this, Lü Yang glanced at Fairy Feixia, his opinion of her improving.

After all, judging by her appearance—blood staining her red lips and her energy waning—she had clearly sustained significant injuries.

If she had fled with Lu Yuanchun, she might have had a chance to escape.

Yet, she chose to stay within the market.

Could she be a traitor?

Holding onto the belief that there were no good people in the Saint Sect, Lü Yang immediately suspected Fairy Feixia.

She also noticed the wary look in his eyes.

“There's no escape!”

Fairy Feixia sighed helplessly, seemingly guessing Lü Yang's thoughts, and said softly, “The Divine Martial Sect has been plotting for a long time; fleeing would only lead to death.”

“Staying behind to hold the fort and await reinforcements offers a sliver of hope!”

Lü Yang still harbored doubts: “Senior Sister understands this reasoning; wouldn't Senior Brother Lu know it as well? If so, why did he choose to flee?”

“Because the precious jade is with him!”

At this, Fairy Feixia became furious: “The Divine Martial Sect used the mysterious Mysterious Female Taiyin Treasure Jade as bait to set an ambush. Lu Yuanchun, greedy for the jade, forcibly seized it, dragging us into the trap. He disregarded Senior Brother Chen's life and death, abandoning us to escape on his own!”

“So, he's fleeing to evade punishment?”

Lü Yang suddenly understood.

Clearly, Lu Yuanchun knew his actions were dishonorable.

If he stayed in the market, sooner or later, Fairy Feixia would hold him accountable.

Thus, he chose such an extreme method.

In this light, it was reasonable that Fairy Feixia didn't flee with Lu Yuanchun.

Had she done so, she might have been silenced by him.

“Demonic scum, today is your death day!”

A blazing aura illuminated the sky, resembling fiery clouds rolling through the air.

Finally, a burly man in armor appeared, leading the charge with a fierce expression.

“It's 'Divine Fist' Wu Zhichong!”

Fairy Feixia's face turned solemn, and she whispered, “This man is already at the ninth level of Qi Refining, just a step away from perfection. Junior Brother, be extremely careful.”

“Senior Brother Chen was destroyed by a single punch from him.”

Before Fairy Feixia finished speaking, the burly man named Wu Zhichong had already flown over, his arm raised high like drawing a bow.

“Die!”

In the next second, he threw a punch!

A piercing explosion echoed instantly in all directions.

The square-shaped fist imprint struck straight ahead.

In an instant, Lü Yang felt as if a mountain was crashing down upon him!

Boom!

At the critical moment, Fairy Feixia stepped forward, her cloud-like sleeves fluttering.

She emitted layers of clear, misty light clouds to catch Wu Zhichong's punch.

In an instant, colorful clouds and mist exploded, finally stopping Wu Zhichong outside the market.

However, the colorful clouds lost most of their brilliance as a result.

Seeing this, a trace of pain flashed in Fairy Feixia's eyes.

These colorful clouds were part of her magical treasure, the “Qixia Smoke Net Shield,” which she had painstakingly refined over many years.

Now, it had suffered repeated damage.

Meanwhile, another light descended from the sky.

After revealing himself, it was none other than Lu Yuanchun, who had just fled.

His face was extremely unsightly, and he was followed by another cultivator.

“Mountain-Moving Daoist! Duanmu Yuan.”

Fairy Feixia frowned, recognizing the one intercepting Lu Yuanchun as another late-stage Qi Refining cultivator from the Divine Martial Sect, whose strength was on par with hers.

“Lu Yuanchun, if you still want to live, come back and join forces with me!”

Fairy Feixia said in a deep voice.

Although the Divine Martial Sect was pressing aggressively, she believed that with three late-stage Qi Refining cultivators on their side, they still had a chance.

Even if Lü Yang was an ordinary disciple without any special abilities, he could handle early and mid-stage Qi Refining opponents.

As long as she and Lu Yuanchun could hold off Wu Zhichong and the Mountain-Moving Daoist, Lü Yang could deal with the other Divine Martial Sect disciples.

There might still be a chance to defend the market!

“Alright! Then let's fight to the death. Buy me some time!”

As he spoke, Lu Yuanchun took a deep breath and directly burned his essence blood.

Blood light surged from his crown, and his energy instantly skyrocketed several times.

Seeing this, Fairy Feixia finally breathed a sigh of relief.

'After all, this person is the disciple of the Mending Heaven Peak Lord, under the Foundation Establishment lineage. He might have some powerful techniques. With my assistance, we should be able to defend the market.'

Thinking this, Fairy Feixia held nothing back and once again summoned the “Qixia Smoke Net Shield,” trying to buy time.

“Stop him!”

Although Wu Zhichong didn't know Lu Yuanchun's abilities, he couldn't let him act freely.

He immediately launched a light towards Lu Yuanchun's direction to kill him.

Fairy Feixia, seeing this, mustered all her true energy to block the Mountain-Moving Daoist Duanmu Yuan, another late-stage Qi Refining cultivator from the Divine Martial Sect.

At the same time, she shouted to Lü Yang beside her: “Junior Brother Lü, act quickly! As long as we stop Wu Zhichong, we still have a chance to turn the tables.”

“Lü Yang? An ordinary disciple... even if he broke through to the late stage of Qi Refining, what use is that?”

Lu Yuanchun glanced at Lü Yang, sneering inwardly.

In his eyes, Lü Yang was just a nobody who had a stroke of luck to reach the late stage. He couldn't compare to someone like him, a Foundation Establishment disciple.

Thinking this, he became more determined in his thoughts.

Fairy Feixia thought there was still hope, but Lu Yuanchun didn't think so.

Because in his view, Fairy Feixia had clearly overlooked a decisive factor.

That was the corpse tide!

Even if they could block the Divine Martial Sect members, as long as the formation's breach remained, once the corpse tide arrived, they would still be annihilated!

Therefore, in the next second, Lu Yuanchun made his move.

“Behold my divine power!”

As he spoke, Fairy Feixia's spirits lifted.

She saw blood light condense around Lu Yuanchun, manifesting a majestic demonic shadow.

She didn't expect Lu Yuanchun to kill Wu Zhichong outright; just severely injuring him would give them hope.

“Blood Shadow Sky Escape Technique!”

With a flash of the demonic shadow, Lu Yuanchun's figure instantly disappeared, transforming into a blood light that appeared hundreds of meters away, speeding towards the outside of Skeleton Mountain.

For a moment, Fairy Feixia was dumbfounded.

She had clearly underestimated Lu Yuanchun's shamelessness.

She never imagined that Lu Yuanchun would pretend to cooperate with her, only to use her as a shield.

However, at that moment, the sky outside Skeleton Mountain suddenly darkened.

“Trying to leave? Better stay!”

With a cold laugh, the blood-colored escape light that Lu Yuanchun had transformed into was suddenly cut off, forced to return to Skeleton Mountain.

From within came Lu Yuanchun's terrified shout:

“Qi Refining Perfection!?”

He had burned most of his essence blood to perform the blood escape.

No one in the late stage of Qi Refining could stop it.

Only someone at the perfection stage of Qi Refining could!

“Heaven wants me dead...”

Lu Yuanchun's heart was full of unwillingness.

He had finally seized the Mysterious Female Taiyin Treasure Jade.

If he could escape, he would surely gain the favor of the Mending Heaven Peak Lord.

Especially now that Zhao Xuhe had been abandoned by the Mending Heaven Peak Lord, this was his opportunity!

But now, everything was in vain.

At that moment, Lü Yang's voice suddenly came to Lu Yuanchun's ears: “Senior Brother Lu, return to the market first.”

“At this point, what's the use?”

Lu Yuanchun was utterly despondent, not even interested in responding to Lü Yang.

In his view, both he and Lü Yang were just facing death sooner or later.

In the next second, Lü Yang, who had been silent until now, suddenly stepped forward.

His sleeves fluttered, and his ten fingers flicked rapidly.

In an instant, he cast dozens of formation patterns around the market, breaking the micro-formation that fixed the breach in the Divine Martial Sect's grand formation.

He then manipulated the formation to merge it seamlessly.

Boom!

In an instant, dense formation patterns emerged, transforming into a light screen that enveloped the market inside and out.

The grand formation was thus restored to completeness!

“Ah?”

Seeing this, Lu Yuanchun's eyes widened instantly.

He shivered and quickly manipulated the blood light to escape back, shouting loudly:
“Brother Lü, save me!!!”

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[1,349 words]

“Formation, arise!”

Above the Skull Mountain market, the restored Hundred Bones True Formation rumbled into motion, instantly startling Wu Zhichong and Duanmu Yuan, causing them to retreat.

Seizing this opportunity, Lu Yuanchun transformed into a streak of blood light and dashed past.

The formation patterns outside the grand array parted in response, allowing Lu Yuanchun to pass through, then swiftly closed again, leaving no chance for others to exploit.

“Many thanks for your assistance, Brother Lü.”

Upon entering the formation, the blood light dissipated, revealing Lu Yuanchun's disheveled appearance; his pale face still bore traces of shock and uncertainty.

“Brother Lü, you're actually a formation master?”

If not for being a formation master, how could he have restructured the formation and resolved the previously fatal crisis?

“Forgive me for the jest, but I'm merely a ninth-grade at best,” Lü Yang replied with a faint smile. “After several days of study, I can now barely unleash some of this grand formation's power.”

Lü Yang spoke modestly, but Lu Yuanchun's expression turned solemn.

Among the myriad arts of cultivation, formation arts reign supreme!

A late-stage Qi Refining cultivator and a formation master of the same level are incomparable; the latter is nearly equivalent to a perfected Qi Refining cultivator!

“Speaking of which, Brother Lu, you seem to have gained quite a bit this time.”

Lü Yang looked at Lu Yuanchun with a half-smile, and under his gaze, Lu Yuanchun's expression gradually stiffened, cold sweat streaming down.

However, in the next moment, he regained his composure.

“Brother Lü, I've safeguarded the 'Mysterious Female Taiyin Treasure Jade' for you for quite some time; today, it's time to return it to its rightful owner!”

With that, Lu Yuanchun directly took out a small box, opened the lid, revealing a white jade stone resembling a human figure with seven apertures.

As the saying goes, a wise man submits to circumstances.

Lu Yuanchun, being a senior disciple of the First Saint Demon Sect, naturally understood that if he didn't hand over the jade now, he would soon perish on the front lines of the righteous-demonic battlefield.

Moreover, with the Divine Martial Sect dispatching a perfected Qi Refining cultivator, escaping alive was no longer possible.

Lu Yuanchun abandoned any illusions; rather than keeping the treasure, it was better to hand it over publicly, both to avert disaster and to shift the attention of the Divine Martial Sect and others onto Lü Yang.

“Mysterious Female Taiyin Treasure Jade.”

Seeing this, Lü Yang nodded in satisfaction, then stored the small box in his storage pouch, turning to calmly face the figure that had suddenly appeared outside the market.

It was a handsome young man wielding a spear.

He wore a martial crown, clad in scale armor, and the long spear in his hand was engraved with dragon patterns. Rather than a cultivator, he resembled a general from the mortal world.

“Ninth-grade formation master?”

The young man's gaze was as sharp as a blade, seemingly able to pierce through the formation's concealment and directly see Lü Yang at the center: “I didn't expect such an unexpected variable.”

At the same time, 'Divine Fist' Wu Zhichong and 'Mountain-Moving Daoist' Duanmu Yuan also approached, each respectfully saluting the spear-wielding youth: "Senior Brother Ouyang, we failed in our task and have disappointed you."

"No matter."

Ouyang Haoze shook his head, his expression gentle: "Demonic cultivators are cunning; it's normal for you two to have some oversights. Just make amends with merits later."

After speaking, he looked toward the Skull Mountain market, his eyes brimming with killing intent.

"Our sect has planned for many years; we cannot afford any mishaps. If possible, we should first eliminate the demonic sect's remaining spies here to minimize variables."

In the next moment, Ouyang Haoze's figure flickered, and the aura of a perfected Qi Refining cultivator was fully released.

Instantly, a stream of vital energy soared skyward, manifesting a deafening battle cry, with countless armored soldiers seemingly arrayed behind him, bolstering his spirit.

"Break it for me!"

Suddenly, a thunderous sound echoed, directly crashing into the Skull Mountain market, causing several lower-level cultivators to vomit blood from the sheer force of the shout.

"Perfected Qi Refining."

Lü Yang, presiding over the formation, wore a grave expression.

This pinnacle of the Qi Refining realm in major sects symbolizes not only cultivation but also status.

Any perfected Qi Refining cultivator is undoubtedly a true disciple of their sect!

The Divine Martial Sect, though smaller than the First Saint Demon Sect, possesses several astonishing divine abilities, which only true disciples can cultivate.

"If he has mastered a divine ability, I must abandon the formation and flee immediately."

While preparing to escape, Lü Yang approached the edge of the formation, confronting Ouyang Haoze across the array: "I am Lü Yang. May I know your name, fellow cultivator?"

“With your status, you're not worthy of knowing my name.” Ouyang Haoze sneered: “If you know what's good for you, surrender now. I might spare your life by abolishing your demonic cultivation. But if you resist, once the formation is broken, none shall be spared!”

“An eye for an eye will never end.”

Lü Yang maintained his smile, speaking gently: “Though we stand on opposite sides, we've never interfered with each other. Why not grant me a favor?”

“Grant you a favor?”

Ouyang Haoze burst into laughter, mocking: “Such arrogance! A mere eighth-level Qi Refining cultivator. Even if I don't grant you a favor today, what can you do?”

“Why bother?”

Lü Yang shook his head: “Since that's the case, please proceed to break the formation.”

“Seeking death!”

A flash of killing intent appeared in Ouyang Haoze's eyes.

The wolf smoke formed from his vital energy fully retracted, and he launched a punch that, at first glance, seemed like ordinary martial arts.

However, Lü Yang's expression turned solemn upon seeing this, not daring to be careless.

He immediately summoned the Blood Sun Sword Pill, merging with the sword light to slash at Ouyang Haoze.

In an instant, fist and sword clashed, unleashing unparalleled sharpness and fist force, resembling sparks blooming mid-air.

Ouyang Haoze moved like lightning, delivering hundreds of punches in the blink of an eye.

The Divine Martial Sect differs from other cultivation sects, emphasizing body cultivation, with most divine abilities focusing on fists and kicks.

Their close-combat speed even surpasses that of sword cultivators!

“Rain of Arrows!”

Ouyang Haoze spread his arms wide, as if drawing a massive bow, then unleashed a barrage of fist shadows like arrows, instantly engulfing Lü Yang's position.

Boom!

Amidst the explosions, Lü Yang felt his surrounding spiritual energy being drained, replaced by endless fist shadows aiming to pulverize him!

A thousand strikes in an instant, leaving no room for counterattack—clearly a superior divine ability!

Though Ouyang Haoze spoke arrogantly, underestimating Lü Yang, he showed no negligence when fighting, going all out.

In a flash, explosive shockwaves surged.

Under his barrage, Lü Yang lasted less than ten seconds before being shattered, his sword light dissipating, turning into a sky full of skeletal remains.

The punching ceased abruptly, and Ouyang Haoze hovered mid-air, frowning slightly.

Meanwhile, above the market, the Hundred Bones True Formation operated, and a figure materialized, stepping out unscathed—it was Lü Yang, completely unharmed.

“Your fist power is unmatched; I am impressed.”

Ouyang Haoze didn't respond, launching another punch, still the Rain of Arrows technique. Lü Yang resisted tenaciously, once again being shattered after over ten seconds.

Yet, in the blink of an eye, Ouyang Haoze saw Lü Yang's corpse turn into skeletal remains, while an unscathed Lü Yang emerged from the formation, his robes flowing, demeanor unchanged, even his true energy and mana untouched. He cupped his hands: “Shall we battle again, fellow cultivator?”

“The Hundred Bones True Formation truly lives up to its name.”

Ouyang Haoze's expression turned serious.

As he knew, this formation ranks as a seventh-grade, containing a hundred skeletal soldiers.

A cultivator within can manifest their full combat power through these skeletal soldiers.

In this way, it's equivalent to the skeletal soldiers fighting in place of the real body.

Victory brings joy; defeat has no impact on the real body.

Moreover, as long as the formation continues operating, the skeletal soldiers can quickly regenerate even if destroyed.

Thus, no matter how fiercely he attacks, it's futile—a waste of effort.

This is because he's outside the formation and hasn't ventured in; otherwise, once inside, Lü Yang could summon all skeletal soldiers to swarm him.

Even a perfected Qi Refining cultivator would suffer greatly!

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[1,508 words]

“Demon, do you truly believe that relying on a seventh-grade grand formation makes you invincible?”

Ouyang Haoze sneered coldly at Lü Yang through the formation's light screen: “Formations are ultimately lifeless constructs; for us cultivators, cultivation realm is paramount!”

“In the end, it's all about proving oneself in combat.”

Lü Yang's heart was alarmed, but his expression remained calm: “If you have confidence, fellow Daoist, feel free to enter the formation and fight. Otherwise, it's best to retreat obediently.”

“Courting death!”

Ouyang Haoze let out a sinister smile, then took a step forward and exhaled forcefully. A thunderous sound erupted as a powerful sonic wave burst from his throat.

This was a superior divine ability of the Divine Martial Sect, known as “Thousand-Mile Shattering Divine Sound.” It involved a secret method of absorbing and exhaling the world's spiritual energy, enhanced by the sect's unique third-grade true qi “Divine Martial True Yang Art,” and then unleashed in a single roar.

The resulting sound wave would pulverize everything within a thousand miles, friend or foe alike.

In an instant, the intense divine sound surged into the formation.

Numerous formation patterns shattered, revealing skeletal soldiers of various appearances.

The massive formation was forcibly blasted open, creating a breach!

Immediately after, Ouyang Haoze produced a round mirror.

“Requesting assistance from Lord Taixiao.”

He formed a hand seal and pointed, offering the mirror into the air. A grand beam of light projected downward, solidifying the void and forcibly stabilizing the breach in the formation!

The marketplace trembled violently!

Many cultivators retreated, not daring to approach the formation's edge, their faces filled with panic.

Fairy Feixia turned pale, then suddenly looked at the strangely behaving Lu Yuanchun and shouted sharply: “Stay here! You're not allowed to go anywhere!”

Having been deceived before, Fairy Feixia no longer trusted Lu Yuanchun. Her beautiful face even showed a hint of ferocity: “If it weren't for Junior Brother Lü, you'd already be dead outside the marketplace. If you dare to escape amidst the chaos again, I'll kill you without hesitation!”

“Fairy Feixia, you've misunderstood.”

Lu Yuanchun forced a smile.

Seeing her menacing demeanor, he felt apprehensive and suppressed the sinister thoughts that had just arisen.

With the two late-stage Qi Refining cultivators maintaining order, the chaos in the marketplace quickly subsided.

Of course, everyone knew this was only temporary.

The outcome between Lü Yang and Ouyang Haoze would be the final straw that broke the camel's back.

Therefore, Fairy Feixia could only place her trust in Lü Yang now.

She believed he could create a miracle.

“Is that... a spiritual treasure?”

Lü Yang looked at the round mirror in the sky, his expression changing dramatically: “And it restrains the Earth Fiend Yin Qi, specifically designed to counter the 'Hundred Skeletons Returning to True Grand Formation'—a supreme Yang spiritual treasure!?”

Ouyang Haoze laughed triumphantly: “The 'Hundred Skeletons Returning to True Grand Formation' has stood on Skeleton Mountain for many years. Since our Divine Martial Sect dared to make a move, how could we not have prepared a method to break the formation in advance?”

“With the 'Taixiao Mirror' here, you're doomed today!”

This spiritual treasure didn't belong to him but was specially crafted by a Foundation Establishment True Person of the Divine Martial Sect to counter the 'Hundred Skeletons Returning to True Grand Formation.' Its power was self-evident.

In the sky above the marketplace, Lü Yang's expression was grim. Without a word, he turned and fled.

“Hmph! Trying to escape?”

Ouyang Haoze didn't hesitate.

He leaped forward and unleashed another divine sound, instantly shattering the surrounding skeletal soldiers, then pursued Lü Yang.

However, at that moment, an unexpected change occurred!

As Ouyang Haoze stepped into the formation, his expression changed. He instinctively tried to retreat, but when he looked back, he saw only a sea of crimson formation patterns.

“Didn't expect you'd actually dare to enter...”

Lü Yang stopped fleeing and turned to look at Ouyang Haoze.

The panic from earlier vanished, replaced by a sinister smile.

“This can't be!”

Ouyang Haoze's eye twitched, filled with doubt: “The 'Hundred Skeletons Returning to True Grand Formation' was clearly stabilized by my 'Taixiao Mirror.' Why are formation patterns still appearing? Is there a second formation in the marketplace? Where did it come from? Why didn't I detect any signs of its setup beforehand?”

“Because I didn't need to set it up at all.”

Lü Yang sneered inwardly. His Heaven-Slashing Blood River Sword Formation relied entirely on the Blood Sun Sword Pill as its formation treasure.

With a mere thought, the formation was established, leaving no trace!

In the next moment, Lü Yang held a fluttering flag in his hand.

Innate True Qi Myriad Spirits Banner!

As the banner waved, countless banner spirits flew out, landing on various formation nodes of the Heaven-Slashing Blood River Sword Formation, moving autonomously.

When designing this formation, Lü Yang had already incorporated the Innate True Qi Myriad Spirits Banner. Now, over Myriad souls within the banner arranged themselves, occupying the formation nodes and revealing profound mysteries. In an instant, the world turned crimson, and a torrential blood river flowed from south to north, crashing down upon Ouyang Haoze!

Ouyang Haoze groaned and staggered.

Heavenly Demon Blood-Transforming Divine Light!

Within the formation, Ouyang Haoze couldn't evade the divine light's power. He felt his once-mighty blood and qi rapidly draining from his body like a breached dam.

In the next moment, he shouted: "Lord Tianguang, save me!"

Golden-scaled armor gleamed like the sun, enveloping Ouyang Haoze in layers of protective light. For a moment, it actually halted the devouring effect of the Heavenly Demon Blood-Transforming Divine Light.

Spiritual treasure, Celestial Radiance Helmet!

This treasure was forged using "Demon-Subduing Heavenly Light" and had properties opposing the Heavenly Demon Blood-Transforming Divine Light. When the two collided, they neutralized each other.

Only then did Ouyang Haoze barely catch his breath.

After all, he hadn't expected that, despite his cultivation level and the preparation of both the Taixiao Mirror and Celestial Radiance Helmet, he would still nearly suffer a setback.

"At this point, there's no escape..."

Ouyang Haoze's eyes turned blood-red. Instead of fleeing, he looked toward Lü Yang deep within the formation, his gaze filled with murderous intent.

“Only by counterattacking!”

As a true disciple, his will was unyielding. He understood the principle that “in a narrow path, the brave wins.” He knew that if he focused solely on escaping now, Lü Yang would toy with him to death. To break the formation, he had to seek life in death and find a way to kill Lü Yang. Once Lü Yang died, the formation would naturally collapse!

Boom!

In the next moment, under the protection of the Celestial Radiance Helmet, Ouyang Haoze charged toward Lü Yang. His unparalleled spear pointed directly at the Innate True Qi Myriad Spirits Banner in Lü Yang's hand!

“That banner seems to be the core of the formation. If I can't kill Lü Yang, destroying it might offer a way out...”

“Good timing!”

Lü Yang raised the banner, and a figure appeared—it was Liu Xin. His face was filled with confusion, seemingly not yet fully conscious.

In the next moment—

“Explode!”

Boom!

A loud explosion! Liu Xin involuntarily opened his mouth and shouted “Kill,” unleashing the Killing Curse designed for mutual destruction!

In Lü Yang's view, Liu Xin's use of the Innate True Qi Myriad Spirits Banner was too superficial.

After all, banner spirits were immortal. Even if temporarily destroyed, as long as their true spirits remained, they could be resummoned by expending mana. Since that was the case, why let them fight conventionally?

They should be taught self-destructive killing moves!

Since they could revive, having them unleash techniques that killed a thousand enemies at the cost of eight hundred of their own lives upon appearance was the correct usage!

In an instant, the spiritual tide swept everything.

When the dust settled, Liu Xin had vanished, and Ouyang Haoze was forcibly halted mid-air, his expression extremely grim.

So far, he had employed numerous methods.

Divine abilities, spiritual treasures, and cultivation suppression—dealing with a late-stage Qi Refining cultivator should have been effortless.

Who would have thought that none of them succeeded?

Instead, his mana was greatly depleted.

“If this continues, I might truly die here...”

Thinking of this, a ruthless glint flashed across Ouyang Haoze's face. He formed a hand seal, and the Celestial Radiance Helmet on his body suddenly emitted a mournful sound.

“This is... not good!”

Lü Yang's expression changed drastically. He flashed and instantly moved behind the Blood Sun Sword Pill, then summoned the sword pill's blood shadow to shield himself.

Boom!!!

The spiritual treasure Celestial Radiance Helmet self-destructed!

The resulting spiritual light resembled the scene previously created by Xiao Shiye, sweeping in all directions and instantly shattering Lü Yang's sword formation diagram, revealing the clear sky.

Although Lü Yang reacted swiftly and quickly reassembled the formation, Ouyang Haoze was even faster.

At the critical moment, he broke free from the formation's encirclement. Lü Yang only managed to unleash the Heavenly Demon Blood-Transforming Divine Light, draining another thirty percent of his blood and qi, leaving him looking like skin and bones.

“You destroyed my treasure. If I don't tear you to pieces, I won't be satisfied!”

Standing outside the marketplace, Ouyang Haoze's face twisted with rage. He poured his remaining mana into another spiritual treasure, the Taixiao Mirror, causing it to emit a mournful sound.

“Even if I have to sacrifice all my spiritual treasures today, let's see if you can produce a third grand formation!”

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[1,266 words]

Rumble!

A violent wailing sound accompanied increasingly intense spiritual energy fluctuations as they rippled from mid-air, and Ouyang Haoze's eyes were blood-red—he had clearly gone berserk.

Seeing this scene, the other two late-stage Qi Refining cultivators from the Divine Martial Sect, Wu Zhichong and Duanmu Yuan, could no longer sit still.

“Senior Brother Ouyang!”

Wu Zhichong stepped forward first, looking at Ouyang Haoze's current disheveled appearance with some fear, and whispered, “The Taiwei Mirror is of great importance after all.”

“I understand.”

Ouyang Haoze turned to glance at Wu Zhichong, and the fury in his blood-red eyes quickly calmed as he said coolly, “But that demon in the formation is even more important! So young and already skilled in formations, with decent cultivation as well—if he reaches the peak of Qi Refining, he may very well break through to Foundation Establishment.”

“If we can kill a potential Foundation Establishment seedling of a Demon Sect, sacrificing one Taiwei Mirror is worth it!”

Buzz buzz!

In mid-air, the Taiwei Mirror emitted intense vibrations, as if expressing its disagreement.

However, Ouyang Haoze turned a deaf ear.

It was just a spiritual treasure—when it was useful, they called it “Lord Taixiao”, but when it wasn't, what did it amount to?

Seeing Ouyang Haoze's resolute attitude, Wu Zhichong could only sigh and no longer try to dissuade him.

After all, Ouyang Haoze, at the peak of Qi Refining, was the acting leader of this Divine Martial Sect mission.

Since he had made the decision, the consequences would naturally be his to bear; Wu Zhichong had done his part by trying to advise him.

Meanwhile, inside the marketplace.

Lü Yang put away the Blood Sun Sword Pill that had been mostly destroyed in the explosion, and held the Innate True Qi Ten Thousand Spirits Banner in hand, his expression unreadable as he looked toward Ouyang Haoze outside the market.

“Junior Brother Lü, you’re not dead?”

Fairy Feixia and Lu Yuanchun approached.

One had a face full of joy, while the other, having just survived a calamity, looked at Lü Yang with deep wariness.

“Brother Lü is truly a hidden dragon!”

Lu Yuanchun loudly praised, “Driving off Ouyang Haoze like this, the marketplace is safe for now—we can hold out until the Holy Sect receives word and sends reinforcements!”

“Driven off? Far from it.”

Lü Yang shook his head.

“Indeed, judging by Ouyang Haoze’s state, he’s seriously injured with depleted vital energy—not just repelled, but severely wounded. That should teach him a harsh lesson!”

Fairy Feixia clapped her hands and laughed.

Hearing this, Lu Yuanchun quickly joined in with flattery.

Yet Lü Yang merely sneered and said something shocking: “Merely driving him off isn’t enough to be done with it. I’ve never liked leaving threats behind.”

“Better to just kill—clean and simple!”

“Kill who?”

Ouyang Haoze?

For a moment, Fairy Feixia and Lu Yuanchun froze in place.

Because not even in their most optimistic fantasies had they imagined such a possibility.

That was a peak Qi Refining cultivator, a true disciple of the righteous path!

Who could kill him?

How could it be done?

The next moment, Lü Yang took out the “Mysterious Female Taiyin Treasure Jade” that Lu Yuanchun had returned to him earlier, and began forming seals and channeling energy, placing it in his palm.

Soon, the jade began to melt under Lü Yang’s control, eventually transforming into a circular radiance.

It resembled a cold, transparent treasure mirror.

Under its illumination, numerous silhouettes began to appear in Lü Yang’s eyes.

Each silhouette corresponded to a lingering Qi signature.

From the reactions of others, it seemed only Lü Yang could see them.

Fairy Feixia, Lu Yuanchun, Ouyang Haoze, Wu Zhichong, Duanmu Yuan—all those who had fought here left behind traces of their Qi.

“This is the Profound Yin Form-Capturing Grand Art.”

The second divine ability within the 『Taiyin Shedding Form Corpse Dissolution True Method』 .

Its only difficulty lay in the external component.

Thus, Lü Yang had mastered it moments after obtaining the jade!

“Let’s test its power.”

Lü Yang lowered his eyelids and quickly locked onto one lingering Qi signature—that of Ouyang Haoze.

He captured it using the Profound Yin Form-Capturing Grand Art.

“Profound Yin Form-Capturing...”

Lü Yang activated the divine ability.

The circular radiance formed from the Mysterious Female Taiyin Treasure Jade devoured Ouyang Haoze's Qi and then projected his image.

"...Nail-Head Life-Claiming!"

Immediately, Lü Yang slashed down with his fingers like a blade.

With a sharp "crack!", the circular radiance split in two—along with Ouyang Haoze's image, which was bisected from head to toe.

To be safe, Lü Yang cut vertically.

Almost at the same time.

Outside the marketplace, Ouyang Haoze had just finished speaking with Wu Zhichong and turned to face the market.

He raised his hand and hurled the Taiwei Mirror into the formation.

Although the mirror struggled violently, his mind was made up—it was to be detonated.

But in the next instant, Ouyang Haoze's movements froze.

Then, a bizarre slash mark appeared out of nowhere on top of his head and rapidly extended downward.

It erupted into a spray of blood.

He split apart.

His corpse fell from mid-air, with half his face still bearing a look of shock.

His eyes twitched slightly, as though he hadn't yet realized what had happened.

"What's going on? I... died?"

His consciousness dissipated in confusion.

With Ouyang Haoze no longer in control, the Taiwei Mirror that had fallen into the formation also calmed down.

Lü Yang reached out, and it flew over on its own.

Northern Frontier, main headquarters of the Divine Martial Sect.

Inside a bright great hall.

This place was called the “Soul Lamp Hall”.

As the name suggested, it housed the soul lamps of many high-ranking figures within the Divine Martial Sect, including the Sect Master, elders, and true disciples.

As a time-honored power in the Northern Frontier, the Divine Martial Sect had ruled for over a thousand years, and its reputation was deeply rooted in the region.

It was extremely rare for high-ranking members to die, so the disciples assigned to this post were usually idle, treating it as an easy job with sect stipends.

Today was no different.

The guard disciple performed his routine soul lamp inspection.

Entering the hall, he glanced around.

Lit, lit, lit, lit, extinguished, lit, lit...

Huh?

The disciple blinked, instinctively turned to look again, then rubbed his eyes.

His casual expression shifted into one of terror.

“Extinguished—it’s extinguished! Senior Brother Ouyang’s soul lamp is extinguished!?”

His voice echoed out instantly.

The next moment, a middle-aged Daoist appeared out of thin air in the hall.

His gaze fell on the extinguished soul lamp, his expression one of shock and fury.

How many years—how many years had it been since a true disciple of the Divine Martial Sect had perished?

“Ouyang... Skeleton Mountain!?”

The Daoist’s face turned ashen.

He suddenly stretched out his hand, summoned Ouyang Haoze’s soul lamp, and used his power to forcibly reignite it!

Of course, the dead could not return to life.

Reigniting the lamp could not save Ouyang Haoze, but it could project the final scene he had witnessed in life.

Very soon, the lamp projected an image.

The Daoist immediately recognized it as the market of the First Saint Demon Sect at Skeleton Mountain.

In the scene, a handsome young man stood gazing at the sky.

Him?

He killed Ouyang Haoze?

Hatred as deep as bone welled up in the Daoist's eyes.

Because Ouyang Haoze was not only a true disciple of the sect, but also the most outstanding member of the younger generation of the Ouyang family—he was the one upon whom the Daoist had pinned his hopes!

This blood feud... would not end until one of them was dead!

“Hm?”

Inside the Skeleton Mountain marketplace, just after collecting the voluntarily surrendering Taiwei Mirror, Lü Yang suddenly frowned and looked up at the sky, a chill rising in his heart.

This feeling was very familiar.

It was the sensation of one's karmic fate being manipulated by an external force.

In his previous life, when the Mending Heaven Peak Lord calculated his karma, he had experienced a similar feeling.

Could it be that another Foundation Establishment True Person was trying to divine him!?

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[1,566 words]

The invasion by the Divine Martial Sect ended abruptly.

With Ouyang Haoze's death, Wu Zhichong and Duanmu Yuan didn't dare to linger; they turned and fled without a word, as if a monstrous flood was behind them.

In stark contrast to the Divine Martial Sect's panicked retreat, the market was filled with joy and excitement.

After all, following this battle, the Skeleton Mountain market had become impregnable.

As long as a Foundation Establishment cultivator didn't intervene, the Divine Martial Sect would find it hard to shake this turtle shell.

As for the corpse tide, it was merely a minor ailment, not worth mentioning.

In short, it was safe!

A safe market would inevitably become a financial hub; it was foreseeable that future transactions here would be more frequent, and opportunities to make money would increase.

Good days were ahead!

However, the bustle belonged to others; Lü Yang only found them noisy.

At this moment, he was still immersed in the lingering fear from earlier, unable to recover for a long time.

For a long time, or rather since Xiao Shiye was lured away by Daoist Hong Yun, Foundation Establishment cultivators had become an inescapable shadow in Lü Yang's heart.

When he realized that another Foundation Establishment cultivator might be plotting against him, the joy of just killing Ouyang Haoze vanished instantly.

Instinctively, he grasped the "Innate Primordial True Divine Talisman" around his neck.

After ensuring it was still functioning, his anxious heart slightly calmed.

"The divine talisman is still operating, indicating that the other party can't calculate me."

That said, the Innate Primordial True Qi Divine Talisman's effect had its limits.

Strictly speaking, it didn't sever causality but obscured it, overlaying a layer of false causal lines on Lü Yang to achieve protection.

After all, completely severing causality would be too conspicuous.

Therefore, when a Foundation Establishment cultivator tried to deduce him, they wouldn't get no result but would derive a flawless yet entirely false outcome.

The advantage of this approach was greater concealment; the downside was the inability to completely block the influence from Foundation Establishment cultivators.

Thinking of this, Lü Yang had an answer in his heart: "So, the other party wasn't specifically targeting me but inadvertently involved me?"

In this way, the matter of the Mysterious Female Taiyin Treasure Jade could also be explained.

It wasn't that he had a stroke of luck, but someone deliberately delivered this item to him, aiming to use him to achieve some unspeakable purpose.

"What purpose?"

Lü Yang's gaze shifted to Ouyang Haoze's corpse.

He then waved the Myriad Spirits Banner, drawing the bisected corpse over.

Perhaps he could glean some clues from this person.

Moreover, as a true disciple of the Divine Martial Sect, Ouyang Haoze's collection must be substantial!

Soon, Ouyang Haoze's corpse was refined into the Myriad Spirits Banner.

Unfortunately, since the body was split in two, the extracted true spirit wasn't complete.

The Myriad Spirits Banner recorded banner spirits.

Whether it could maintain the banner spirit's combat power, memory, and consciousness from life generally depended on the body's completeness.

The better preserved the body, the closer the banner spirit would be to its state in life, like Liu Xin.

As for Ouyang Haoze, Lü Yang barely preserved seventy percent of his former state.

Even so, he still learned many secrets.

"So this was the Divine Martial Sect's true objective."

"Within Skeleton Mountain lies a secret realm left by the ancient Witch Ghost Path. The yin energy in the earth veins beneath Skeleton Mountain leaks from that secret realm."

"The Divine Martial Sect wanted to monopolize the secret realm, hence their plan to remove the Primordial Saint Sect's market here."

"This is indeed valuable information.

If reported back to the Primordial Saint Sect, it would surely earn considerable contribution points, and the sect would send reinforcements."

"Although monopolizing this information would yield greater benefits, why should I monopolize it?"

"After all, I don't intend to explore that Witch Ghost secret realm. It's better to hand it over to the sect, earn some contribution points steadily, and watch others fight to the death!"

With this thought, Lü Yang felt more at ease.

Knowing that Skeleton Mountain was now under the covert scheming of Foundation Establishment cultivators, he was more determined to stay hidden in the market and not venture out.

Next, Lü Yang began to handle Ouyang Haoze's belongings.

However, just as he picked up Ouyang Haoze's storage pouch, a round mirror trembled and floated over, affectionately rubbing against his hand.

It was the Taiwei Mirror.

This spiritual treasure behaved like a diligent little dog, circling Lü Yang and even hopping twice, its actions full of loyalty.

"Are you switching allegiance?"

Lü Yang was somewhat surprised.

To be honest, such a pure yang spiritual treasure actually choosing to follow a demonic cultivator like him indicated that Ouyang Haoze had truly hurt it deeply.

Seeing that Lü Yang's attention was finally on it, the Taiwei Mirror first reflected the storage pouch in Lü Yang's hand, then shook left and right.

Immediately, a voice sounded in Lü Yang's mind, carrying a childish tone, like a newborn who had just learned to speak:

"They are not acceptable!"

Then, the Taiwei Mirror emitted a strong light, shook up and down, and its voice changed, filled with innate pride and confidence:

"I am acceptable!"

It was recommending itself.

Lü Yang's eyes grew increasingly astonished.

Although he had long known that spiritual treasures possessed their own intelligence and were incredibly mysterious, this was his first time witnessing it.

"Very well, let's use you for now."

Lü Yang reached out, and the Taiwei Mirror immediately descended voluntarily.

With its cooperation, he quickly mastered every aspect of this spiritual treasure.

"Excellent! Truly a fine treasure!"

Lü Yang's face was full of joy; the reputation of spiritual treasures was well-deserved!

It was well-known that achieving the peak of Qi Refining involved nurturing the internal qi seed to its limit, thereby transforming into a "Perfect True Qi" cultivator.

Continuing translation despite the timeout error—here's the next part:

For example, his 『Nine Transformations Dragon Art』 would transform into a "True Dragon Fiend" upon reaching the peak of Qi Refining.

In other words, Perfect True Qi was the mark of Qi Refining completion, and also the most powerful means to suppress all those below the peak.

Yet this Taiwei Mirror, as a spiritual treasure, actually innately possessed a strand of Perfect True Qi, named "Taiwei Wind and Thunder Qi"!

In other words, as long as one wielded this treasure, even with only first-layer Qi Refining cultivation, one could match the might of a Qi Refining peak cultivator while using it.

"But this spiritual treasure still has quite a few restrictions inside..."

Lü Yang examined the Taiwei Mirror.

A treasure, to be truly usable, must not be limited—even among righteous sects, this was no exception.

Inside the Taiwei Mirror remained numerous restrictions that controlled its movement.

If it were used in front of Divine Martial Sect disciples, they might only need to make a hand seal for the mirror to fly back on its own.

This wasn't about the mirror's own will, but the hidden backdoor left by the one who refined it.

"A treasure like this, if I can't use it, that'd be a real loss."

Lü Yang pondered for a moment, then his eyes lit up.

Though his current formation skill wasn't yet enough to break the mirror's internal restrictions, there was a workaround.

In the next moment, he shook the Myriad Spirits Banner and summoned Ouyang Haoze once again.

Then he refined Ouyang Haoze into a strand of "Innate True Qi," and injected it into the Taiwei Mirror.

He would use Ouyang Haoze to control the mirror from within, bypassing its internal restrictions.

Boom!

In an instant, the Taiwei Mirror in Lü Yang's hand burst forth with dazzling radiance.

Within the light echoed the sound of wind and thunder—the power clearly reached the Qi Refining peak!

"...It really works!"

Lü Yang laughed heartily, then suspended the Taiwei Mirror behind his head.

In that moment, even the light it emitted turned crimson, stained with his own color.

"Not bad! Not bad!"

Lü Yang laughed again, then put the Taiwei Mirror away and opened Ouyang Haoze's storage pouch.

Instantly, a surge of spiritual energy made him squint slightly.

Inside was a massive pile of spirit stones!

In addition, there were various precious pills, magical tools, and materials.

Lü Yang made a rough estimate—selling all this to the sect would fetch at least thirty thousand contribution points.

“Truly a massive haul... what a shame there won't be another chance like this.”

After all, with Ouyang Haoze's demise as precedent, no one below Foundation Establishment would dare charge into the formation again.

‘Once the news of the Witch Ghost Secret Realm spreads, Skeleton Mountain will be drenched in blood again... There must be Foundation Establishment cultivators scheming behind this.’

‘But as long as I don't go out and get involved... unless they strike personally, what can they do to me?’

Lü Yang solidified his resolve.

He packed everything up, dispelled the formation, and flew back to the market, landing on the tower of the Blood Garment Tower.

From this day on, Skeleton Mountain fell into an eerie calm.

The Divine Martial Sect sent more reinforcements. The Primordial Saint Sect's support followed one after another.

But on the surface, nothing stirred—only undercurrents surged in the shadows.

Under such circumstances, Lü Yang's story inexplicably spread far and wide.

Ten years ago, he joined the sect as a mortal. He earned big by flipping Substitute Death Yin Puppets, then broke through to late-stage Qi Refining in seclusion.

As an array master, he then killed a true disciple of the Divine Martial Sect.

Such an inspiring underdog tale of reaching the Qi Refining peak invigorated the common disciples of the sect like a shot of adrenaline.

Gradually, out of awe and reverence, people stopped calling him by name.

Instead, he came to be known by another title:

‘Blood Garment Tower Master’!

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[921 words]

Skeleton Mountain, White Bone Cave, outside the marketplace.

A streak of light concealed itself within the forested mountains, revealing three figures.

Two of them were Wu Zhichong and Duanmu Yuan, who had previously attacked the marketplace but had fled in disarray.

The third was an elderly man with snow-white hair.

"Elder Ouyang."

Wu Zhichong spoke cautiously, fearing that this elder, who had reached the peak of Qi Refining, might act rashly.

Ahead lay a perilous trap.

"Rest assured, I understand the gravity of the situation," Ouyang Feng replied sternly.

Though his gaze toward the marketplace brimmed with deep-seated hatred, his tone remained calm and unwavering.

"That demon is a ninth-grade formation master. He has set up both inner and outer formations in the marketplace, making it nearly impossible for ordinary individuals to breach. It's no wonder he's remained unscathed and has even earned the title 'Blood Garment Tower Master.' However, he hasn't truly reached the peak of Qi Refining; his foundation is ultimately unstable."

"But Elder Ouyang, the Taiwei Mirror has also fallen into his hands," Wu Zhichong quickly added, then whispered,

"The Taiwei Mirror is enigmatic and unpredictable. If that demon can wield it, he might rival someone at the peak of Qi Refining."

"I've considered this," Ouyang Feng sneered.

"The Taiwei Mirror is a spiritual treasure of our Divine Martial Sect. It's not something a mere demon can use at will. If he dares to use it, all the better!"

"I've already summoned Master Yang Yanzi, the original craftsman of the Taiwei Mirror. He's furious that the mirror has fallen into demonic hands and has agreed to come to

Skeleton Mountain to reclaim the treasure and restore order. With him here, if that demon dares to use the Taiwei Mirror against me, he's courting death!"

Though Ouyang Feng was enraged, he remained rational.

Especially after Ouyang Haoze's previous failure, he wouldn't risk charging into the formations again.

After much deliberation, he concluded that luring Lü Yang out of the formation was the better strategy.

"When does he usually leave the marketplace?"

"Uh..."

Faced with Ouyang Feng's question, Wu Zhichong and Duanmu Yuan exchanged glances, speechless.

Seeing this, Ouyang Feng frowned and said displeased,

"Haven't you been monitoring the marketplace for a long time? How can you not know such a trivial matter?"

"Reporting to Elder, he hasn't left the marketplace at all."

"...Not at all?"

Ouyang Feng was taken aback.

"Didn't you relay the news about the Witch Ghost Secret Realm inside?"

Doesn't he know that Skeleton Mountain is now teeming with opportunities?"

The two looked aggrieved.

"We informed him long ago."

"Then perhaps the Primordial Saint Sect's reinforcements haven't arrived, making the demonic path weaker, so he's afraid to leave?"

"In fact, the sect's reinforcements arrived three months ago and have been active in Skeleton Mountain. Yet, he hasn't left even once."

"Ah?"

After hearing the report, Ouyang Feng finally showed a puzzled expression.

"I'm not going out."

Inside the Blood Garment Tower, Lü Yang sat across from Fairy Feixia.

He declined her invitation while handing her a cup of spiritual tea.

"Junior Brother, you truly are..."

Fairy Feixia looked at Lü Yang, her delicate face suddenly dazed.

Once, she had been deeply disappointed by this junior brother's timidity.

Yet, he had meticulously planned each step, earning the formidable title of Blood Garment Tower Master.

It's known that all cultivators strive against the heavens for longevity.

A single misstep could lead to death.

Even with the concept of reincarnation, one might not retain their destiny or identity in the next life, making it unreliable.

But now, seeing Lü Yang again, he remained as before.

Calm, serene, seemingly indifferent to all things.

Such a rare temperament among cultivators reminded Fairy Feixia of a saying:

"Water benefits all things without contention; thus, nothing can contend with it."

But in life, if you don't strive, how can you seek the Dao?

In the next life?

Thinking of this, Fairy Feixia sighed.

"Ashamed, I fear I may never attain Junior Brother's profound state of mind."

"Senior Sister flatters me," Lü Yang smiled slightly.

"Didn't we agree before coming here? This time, we won't discuss major matters, only the Dao. I'll teach you formations, and you'll teach me talismans."

"I shall impart all I know," Fairy Feixia replied, gently sipping her tea.

She lifted her veil, revealing a stunningly beautiful face.

Beneath her thin rosy attire, her figure was alluring.

Even her voice became unconsciously tender.

"Speaking of which, I haven't yet thanked Junior Brother for saving my life earlier."

The next day, as the sun rose high.

In the marketplace, a disheveled young man paced within his cave dwelling, his face full of struggle.

It was none other than Lü Yang's old friend, Zhao Xuhe.

"How could this be?"

How could this be?"

At this moment, Zhao Xuhe was at his wit's end.

"The news about the Witch Ghost Secret Realm is now widespread. If I don't act soon, I'll miss my chance!"

Thinking of this, Zhao Xuhe's aura suddenly surged.

He was no longer at the sixth level of Qi Refining as when he first arrived at the marketplace but had broken through to the seventh level, reaching the late stage.

It was precisely because he had overcome the bottleneck that had plagued him for years that he now considered venturing into the secret realm to seek opportunities.

But having the intention doesn't equate to having the strength.

Without the opportunities from Panlong Island, he could only cultivate the Yin-Yang Great Bliss Ode from Mending Heaven Peak.

His true Qi was merely fifth-grade, and his magical powers and treasures were subpar.

In such circumstances, seeking opportunities would be courting death.

After much contemplation, Zhao Xuhe finally gritted his teeth, took out a long-sealed jade slip, infused it with mana, and contacted someone he hadn't seen in a long time.

The jade slip emitted a halo, and after a long while, a voice emerged:

"Who is it?"

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[1,328 words]

Several days later, inside a quiet chamber of the Blood Garment Tower.

Fairy Feixia had already departed gracefully, while Lü Yang sat cross-legged on a meditation cushion, beginning to study the talismanic techniques he had acquired during his recent discussions with her.

As for matters of romance, Lü Yang had never been one to dwell on them.

He understood clearly that within the Saint Sect, there was no such thing as true love—only exchanges of benefits.

Saving her life was one aspect; another was that he managed the marketplace and, being at the peak of Qi Refining, was not easily subdued—Fairy Feixia needed his assistance.

Additionally, dual cultivation accelerated the pace of their discussions.

After all, the Saint Sect possessed the Ode of Yin-Yang Great Bliss, a dual cultivation method that allowed direct absorption of knowledge, making physical interaction more efficient than verbal communication.

However, if Fairy Feixia intended to leverage their recent interactions to demand any benefits from him, that was utterly impossible.

After all, he had also taught her about formations during these days.

A fair trade—money and goods settled!

"Talismanic techniques, huh."

As one of the myriad arts of cultivation, talismanic techniques were quite favored, and after several days of deep exchange, Lü Yang had gained a deeper understanding of them.

In his view, talismanic techniques were essentially temporary micro-formations.

Although their power was far inferior to full formations, they were convenient to carry, required no geomantic veins or spiritual energy support, and had no geographical restrictions—activation only needed the user's mana.

Lü Yang focused his mind and looked at the panel of the Book of a Hundred Lifetimes.

【Golden Light Talisman (Beginner), Five Thunder Talisman (Beginner), Sword Qi Talisman (Beginner), Returning Wind and Reigniting Fire Talisman (Beginner)】

Fairy Feixia had imparted to him four talismans in total.

Among them, the Golden Light Talisman, Five Thunder Talisman, and Sword Qi Talisman were quite common, each ranked at the ninth grade.

Only the last one, the Returning Wind and Reigniting Fire Talisman, was a seventh-grade major talisman.

This talisman could imprint and preserve a cultivator's state at a certain moment, allowing them to overlay it later and temporarily return to their peak condition.

For instance, after a fierce battle leaving one severely injured and nearly depleted of mana, using this talisman would instantly restore them to an unscathed, peak state.

Although the subsequent backlash would worsen their injuries by thirty percent, it was invaluable in critical moments.

Fairy Feixia's successful escape back to the marketplace previously owed much to this talisman.

That she willingly taught such a life-saving talisman indicated that, despite other intentions, she held some genuine sincerity during their discussions.

Of course, the effects of the Returning Wind and Reigniting Fire Talisman couldn't be stacked.

Moreover, due to its outstanding efficacy, it had a longer cooldown period—after one use, a three-month interval was required before the next.

"Heaven is round, Earth is square, laws in nine chapters; as I write, all spirits submit."

Several talisman papers floated in the air.

Lü Yang formed hand seals with one hand and channeled mana with the other to inscribe on the papers.

Occasionally, mana would go out of control, causing the talisman paper to be destroyed.

However, Lü Yang would promptly draw in new talisman papers to replace them.

After a long while, Lü Yang finally concluded his work.

Before him lay four talismans, each glowing with spiritual light, differing in color and script.

"Success!"

Lü Yang first stored away the most precious Returning Wind and Reigniting Fire Talisman.

Then, he took the remaining three talismans in hand, scrutinizing them intently, and suddenly had an idea.

"Unlike the Returning Wind and Reigniting Fire Talisman, the Golden Light, Five Thunder, and Sword Qi Talismans are quite standard."

"They don't require advanced talismanic skills."

"With the right materials and sufficient practice, they can be mass-produced."

"The only issue is finding enough people to draw them for free."

Fortunately, this was never a concern for Lü Yang.

Conveniently, the banner spirits within the Ten Thousand Spirits Banner were idle all day.

By teaching them the art of talisman drawing, he could assign them tasks to pass the time.

This approach could even save money.

After all, hiring Saint Sect disciples to draw talismans required payment.

But banner spirits? Just kidding—they should consider it a blessing to be given work.

Demanding wages? Then don't blame him for layoffs!

Upon exiting the quiet chamber, Yun Miaoqing, who was waiting outside, brought Lü Yang unexpected news.

"Zhao Xuhe?"

Lü Yang raised an eyebrow, pondering why Senior Brother Zhao would suddenly seek him out, especially since their last conversation was filled with caution.

Seeing Lü Yang frown, Yun Miaoqing softly said, "If you don't wish to see him, shall I send him away?"

"No need."

Lü Yang smiled slightly.

"Let's meet him."

Soon, Zhao Xuhe was led into the reception room of the Blood Garment Tower.

Lü Yang discreetly observed for any anomalies before entering.

"Senior Brother Zhao! I've missed you!"

Lü Yang laughed heartily.

Upon entering, he embraced Zhao Xuhe enthusiastically.

"To be honest, I had a fierce battle with that true disciple from the Divine Martial Sect recently."

"Although I killed him, I was severely injured and took a long time to recover."

"Sorry to have kept you waiting."

"No, no."

Zhao Xuhe smiled awkwardly yet politely, though inwardly he was seething.

He had seen Fairy Feixia leaving the Blood Garment Tower!

Nevertheless, he quickly composed himself, his Dao heart steadfast.

"Junior Brother Lü, I've come to ask a favor."

Zhao Xuhe got straight to the point.

"Are you aware of the Witch Ghost Secret Realm?"

"Recently, news about this secret realm has been widespread."

"Of course I know."

Lü Yang nodded.

Zhao Xuhe seized the opportunity.

"To be honest, I have some clues about the Witch Ghost Secret Realm."

"They might be related to Foundation Establishment opportunities!"

"Oh."

Lü Yang's indifferent response left Zhao Xuhe momentarily stunned.

This wasn't right.

In his expectations, the prospect of Foundation Establishment was monumental.

Shouldn't Lü Yang be eagerly inquiring about the details?

Unbeknownst to him, Lü Yang remained calm.

He had initially learned about the Witch Ghost Secret Realm after converting Ouyang Haoze into a banner spirit—a highly confidential matter.

But now?

The entire Skeleton Mountain was abuzz with talk of the Witch Ghost Secret Realm.

Everyone was discussing it, as if finding the secret realm would guarantee Foundation Establishment, even for mortals.

"When even the neighborhood aunties start discussing stock trading, it's time to exit."

A secret known to all was no longer a secret.

This was a setup to harvest the naive!

Lü Yang saw through it clearly.

The more the Witch Ghost Secret Realm was hyped, the more determined he was not to step outside the marketplace.

With this in mind, Lü Yang immediately shook his head.

"Apologies, Senior Brother."

"I'm not interested in the secret realm."

"This..."

Zhao Xuhe's mouth hung open.

He quickly tried to persuade him.

"Junior Brother, cultivation is arduous."

"We only live once."

"How can we shrink back at critical moments?"

"The Ancient Witch Ghost Path was a major demonic sect."

"Although it was eventually destroyed by the Jade Pivot Sword Pavilion, a centipede dies but never stiffens."

"There must be valuable treasures, possibly even Foundation Establishment wonders."

"Are you truly unmoved?"

"Opportunities come once in a lifetime."

"Miss it, and it's gone forever!"

"Opportunities come once in a lifetime... for you."

"For me, it's different."

"If not this life, then the next."

Lü Yang mused inwardly.

On the surface, he firmly shook his head.

"My mind is made up."

"One must accept what fate bestows and not force what it withholds."

Zhao Xuhe stood there, speechless.

There was nothing more to say.

Lü Yang had made his decision.

All Zhao Xuhe could do was curse the damned old tortoise in his heart.

"Since that's the case, let's drop it."

"However, I have another transaction to discuss with you."

Zhao Xuhe gritted his teeth and moved to his second plan.

"I possess a secret technique that can increase the success rate of Foundation Establishment."

"I'd like to use it as collateral to borrow thirty thousand contribution points from you."

"A Foundation Establishment secret technique?"

Upon hearing this, Lü Yang, who had been ready to see him out, suddenly brightened.

Looking at Zhao Xuhe, he felt a surge of affection.

This man was truly his lucky star.

From the Substitute Death Yin Puppet, the Ninefold Transforming Dragon Art, to the Skeleton Mountain marketplace.

Now, he had brought a Foundation Establishment secret technique!

So far, every opportunity Lü Yang had relied upon was connected to dear Senior Brother Zhao.

His achievements today owed much to him!

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[1,370 words]

"This technique is called 'Stealing Heaven's Secrets.'"

Upon receiving Lü Yang's approval, Zhao Xuhe took out a jade slip, injected his memory into it, and handed it to Lü Yang. It contained a brief description of the secret technique for Foundation Establishment he had just mentioned.

Lü Yang swept it with his spiritual sense and immediately showed a look of amazement.

At a glance, he could tell that this "Stealing Heaven's Secrets" technique was created by a high-ranking expert from the Primordial Saint Sect, because every word carried the unique style of the sect.

As the name implied, “Stealing Heaven’s Secrets” involved first identifying an opposite-sex cultivator whose age, talent, and cultivation were on par with one’s own, and then forming a Daoist couple with them.

Afterward, through continuous dual cultivation, one would gradually implant one’s own Qi seed into the partner’s body, eventually replacing theirs.

Once successful, the partner would no longer be cultivating their own Qi seed, but that of the spell caster.

From then on, regardless of the partner’s fortuitous encounters or breakthroughs, all of it would be harvested by the spell caster. Their entire life’s cultivation would become someone else’s wedding dress.

Sinister and venomous—treating people as tools.

Truly a classic.

Thinking this, Lü Yang glanced at Zhao Xuhe again, and suddenly recalled that in his life two cycles ago, he had heard that Zhao Xuhe had become Daoist partners with Fairy Feixia.

‘So that’s how it was. No wonder after their Foundation Establishment failure, both perished together.’

‘Looking at it now, Zhao Xuhe probably killed Fairy Feixia first, then failed in Foundation Establishment himself. After all that scheming, it still ended in vain.’

While he mocked in his heart, Lü Yang also secretly felt alarmed.

Because from his perspective, Zhao Xuhe of two lifetimes ago had prepared thoroughly—he had used every available resource.

In that lifetime, after forming a Daoist bond with Fairy Feixia, Zhao Xuhe had risen swiftly by leveraging Skeleton Mountain.

He not only broke through to the peak of Qi Refining but also obtained two rare Foundation Establishment treasures. If this “Stealing Heaven’s Secrets” was considered, then Fairy Feixia’s portion also counted as Zhao Xuhe’s.

All things considered, Zhao Xuhe had prepared three full methods to achieve Foundation Establishment!

And yet the result?

Still a failure!

“Foundation Establishment, Foundation Establishment, the foundation of the Dao and Immortality. Without it, one is ultimately a mediocre mortal. No wonder only those at Foundation Establishment are called True Persons.”

“Foundation Establishment is harder than ascending to the heavens.”

After sighing, Lü Yang looked back at the jade slip in his hand.

“What does Junior Brother think?”

Zhao Xuhe looked expectant. “Using this as collateral, I’d like to borrow thirty thousand contribution points from Junior Brother. The term is three months. I promise to repay the debt after three months.”

“If I can’t repay it, the secret technique will be yours to settle the debt.”

“But even if I repay it, I’ll still give you the secret technique as thanks for your timely help and for aiding me through this crisis!”

Zhao Xuhe spoke generously, but Lü Yang sneered inwardly.

‘Sounds like as long as I agree to the loan, this “Stealing Heaven’s Secrets” technique is mine either way—no loss on my part. But that’s absolutely not the case!’

The crux wasn’t in the secret technique, nor in the money.

It lay in the three-month deadline.

Because once he lent the money, if Zhao Xuhe encountered any danger within those three months, Lü Yang would have to intervene—or risk never recovering the loan.

So this wasn’t a loan of money, but of manpower!

Zhao Xuhe clearly wanted to use this Foundation Establishment secret technique to tie him down, forcing him to be liable for whatever risks or karma Zhao Xuhe incurred!

In short, it was a sugar-coated cannonball.

And since it concerned Foundation Establishment, he couldn’t simply refuse.

“But what if I want the technique, but not the responsibility...”

Lü Yang stared at the jade slip in his hand, contemplating how he could eat the sugar and throw away the cannonball—perhaps by sending Zhao Xuhe to team up with Liu Xin.

However, he quickly dismissed that idea. Just like how he had accepted Ouyang Haoze as a banner spirit but failed to obtain the core technique of the Divine Martial Sect from him, the cultivation world had countless methods to prevent the leakage of techniques and divine abilities. If Zhao Xuhe dared to come to him, he must be prepared.

The success rate was too low.

Lü Yang paused in silence for a moment, then suddenly said, "...Very well."

"I can agree to Senior Brother's loan, but I also have one condition. If Senior Brother cannot accept this condition, I'd rather give up the technique."

Zhao Xuhe was overjoyed upon hearing this. "Please speak, Junior Brother!"

"The condition is simple," Lü Yang said softly. "You must hand me the original copy of the secret technique. Otherwise, what if you go back on your word in the future?"

"Of course, you can place a restriction on the original copy—say, it will self-destruct if forcibly opened. You can lift the restriction after three months. With your magic power, the restriction can last at least eighty years. That way, I can rest assured, and so can you. What do you think, Senior Brother?"

Zhao Xuhe thought for a moment. It didn't seem to have any issues?

The only problem was that his magic power was limited.

After eighty years, the restriction would dissolve on its own due to power exhaustion—but by then the cabbage would be cold.

One had to know, a Qi Refining cultivator's lifespan was around 150 years.

And once over a hundred years old, their energy and spirit would decline, making it virtually impossible to achieve Foundation Establishment.

Lü Yang was already over twenty. Eighty years later, he would be over a hundred and halfway into the grave. Even if he got the secret technique, it would be useless.

After all, if this lifetime was over, how could he still establish a foundation?

In the next life?

The more Zhao Xuhe thought about it, the more he felt that Lü Yang's well-thought-out proposal achieved a deal and avoided mutual suspicion—a true win-win!

"Junior Brother's request is perfectly reasonable. Let's do it!"

Zhao Xuhe nodded decisively and immediately took out another jade slip. He first used his magic power to inscribe a restriction onto it, then handed it over to Lü Yang.

Lü Yang, seeing this, accepted it with a smiling face.

For a moment, both host and guest were satisfied.

“From now on, Zhao Xuhe is of no use.”

“If he manages to come back alive, then fine. But if he stirs up trouble, I won’t care. At worst, I’ll look at the secret technique again in eighty years.”

“Either way, I don’t lose.”

After sending off Zhao Xuhe, Lü Yang hummed a little tune and cheerfully began arranging the marketplace, since it was now his foundation for survival.

Moreover, the Hundred Bones True Array within the marketplace was a seventh-grade formation, while his Heaven-Slashing Blood River Sword Formation was only ninth-grade, relying entirely on the Heavenly Demon Blood-Transforming Divine Light for power.

So if he could fully comprehend the Hundred Bones True Array, it would greatly enhance his formation mastery through analogy.

Soon, time passed.

In the blink of an eye, another month went by. Lü Yang woke from meditation and suddenly smelled a fragrant breeze. Then he saw a graceful figure walk into the Blood Garment Tower.

“Senior Sister.”

Lü Yang smiled brightly and said, “You wouldn’t come to the Three Treasures Hall for nothing. Could it be that you’ve gained new insights into formations and want to discuss them with me?”

“How many times have I told you? Just call me Feixia.”

Fairy Feixia rolled her eyes at Lü Yang, sat habitually on his lap, and then softly whispered, “Someone from the Saint Sect has arrived.”

“Didn’t they already come before?”

Lü Yang said carelessly, “I told you last time—I just want to cultivate quietly and avoid trouble. I’m not interested in that Witch Ghost Secret Realm.”

“This time is different.”

At these words, Lü Yang’s eyes narrowed. “...Who is it?”

“It’s Second Senior Brother.”

Fairy Feixia looked serious. “Second Senior Brother of the Three Rivers Society, a true disciple at the peak of Qi Refining. This time, he personally sent me to deliver the message.”

Lü Yang’s face gradually darkened upon hearing this.

Because, if he remembered correctly, the Three Rivers Society—the major faction within the Saint Sect—was founded by a Foundation Establishment True Person.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 47: The Hidden Dragon Does Not Emerge from the Abyss

[1,302 words]

Perhaps it was due to being a startled bird, or perhaps it was undue worry, but regardless, Lü Yang was now wary of all forces with a Foundation Establishment background.

Especially those forces that had taken notice of him.

‘Unlike before, in this lifetime, I have the protection of divine talismans. Mending Heaven Peak cannot calculate against me, and the Divine Martial Sect, being part of the righteous path, shouldn’t harm their own. That being said, the Foundation Establishment True Person who remains hidden and is plotting over Skeleton Mountain might truly be the one behind the Three Rivers Society!’

The more Lü Yang thought about it, the more suspicious he found the Three Rivers Society, yet he maintained a calm facade:

“So that’s how it is. Could it be that Second Senior Brother wishes to see me?”

“Indeed.” Fairy Feixia nodded: “Second Senior Brother has come to Skeleton Mountain and is in need of capable assistance, so he hopes you can lend a hand.”

Assistance? More like cannon fodder!

Lü Yang decisively shook his head: “Although I have some knowledge of formations, without them, my strength diminishes significantly. How could I be worthy of Second Senior Brother's favor?”

“Please have Second Senior Brother seek someone more capable.”

Lü Yang spoke with confidence.

Although he had joined the Three Rivers Society and signed a legal contract, he was not their slave. He still had some autonomy; who could force him?

Fairy Feixia evidently thought the same, so she was merely delivering a message.

Now that the message was conveyed, her expression gradually turned ambiguous, her fair and delicate face blushing, her glances full of charm.

“Junior Brother, I have recently encountered some difficulties with formations. I hope you can guide me.”

“That would be wonderful.”

Lü Yang immediately perked up.

Over the next three months, Lü Yang's pace of life slowed down.

Each day, he would either discuss the Dao with Fairy Feixia or study the Hundred Bones True Formation outside.

Sometimes, when the mood struck, he would do both simultaneously.

However, compared to his peaceful days, Skeleton Mountain outside the market was in complete chaos.

Not only were the Divine Martial Sect and the Primordial Saint Sect involved, but also their subordinate sects, and even some powerful rogue cultivators were drawn in.

When the three sides met, battles naturally ensued.

During this period, several relics of the Ancient Witch Ghost Path were unearthed, further confirming the existence of the Witch Ghost Secret Realm.

It was at this time that Fairy Feixia brought him news that Zhao Xuhe, under his name, had seized many opportunities outside the market.

“Who would have thought my name would be so useful?”

Lü Yang was somewhat surprised upon hearing this.

Zhao Xuhe had competed for opportunities several times and found himself in peril, but each time, he escaped danger by invoking Lü Yang's name.

Clearly, Ouyang Haoze's death had made many wary of him.

Of course, this was also because Zhao Xuhe was clever and knew when to advance or retreat. So far, he hadn't provoked any truly formidable figures, allowing him to bluff successfully.

“Junior Brother, are you truly going to ignore this?”

Fairy Feixia's fair face turned stern, her words cold: “This person is using your name, bringing you karmic entanglements. I say we should kill him first!”

“Leave him be.”

Lü Yang shook his head.

Zhao Xuhe now never returned to the market, focusing solely on searching Skeleton Mountain for the Ancient Witch Ghost Path and the Witch Ghost Secret Realm.

If Lü Yang wanted to kill him, he would have to leave the market.

But how could that be possible?

“Let him be. He once mortgaged some contribution points with me, and I agreed to let him use my name. There's nothing more to say.”

After sending off Fairy Feixia, Lü Yang's expression gradually became serious.

“Heh!”

“Interesting. Over the past few months, everything I've heard and seen seems to be urging me to leave the market?”

A term involuntarily surfaced in Lü Yang's mind: calamity!

He was merely a small Qi Refining cultivator, yet he was being targeted by a Foundation Establishment True Person, with karma deduced and various schemes. If this wasn't a calamity, what was?

“Damn karma!”

“No matter what, with calamity looming, I must not act rashly. Only by closing my cave door and quietly reciting the Yellow Court Scriptures can I hope to avoid disaster.”

First, there was the Three Rivers Society, applying external pressure.

Now, Zhao Xuhe was causing internal entanglements.

“No matter how you try to bait me, I won't bite. The hidden dragon does not emerge from the abyss. What can you do to me?”

Thinking this, Lü Yang felt his mind clear. His previously restless thoughts settled, and he felt relaxed, as if he had shed another layer of karma.

Time flowed, and another month passed.

Skeleton Mountain Market, over a thousand miles to the east.

A streak of escape light was seen fleeing desperately, seemingly burning blood essence, with seven or eight escape lights in pursuit.

“Zhao Xuhe! Where do you think you're going!”

The pursuers were all clad in armor, their blood energy soaring, clearly disciples of the Divine Martial Sect, mostly in the late stages of Qi Refining, none at the peak.

Otherwise, with Zhao Xuhe's cultivation, he wouldn't have been able to escape.

Even so, fleeing to this point had nearly exhausted him. The only reason he hadn't collapsed was due to hope.

“I can still be saved!”

“I've already sent a flying message to Lü Yang. As long as... as long as I can escape to that place, to the area around the market, Lü Yang will surely save me!”

Zhao Xuhe fled desperately, convincing himself.

“There is still my restriction on the Stealing Heaven's Secret. As long as he still wants to break through to Foundation Establishment and not wait until he's eighty and frail, he must come to save me!”

“He will come to save me!”

“He definitely will!”

At that moment, Zhao Xuhe was overjoyed to see a brilliant escape light rising from the market's direction, seemingly aware of his peril.

“He's coming! I knew he wouldn't abandon me!”

Seeing this, Zhao Xuhe was invigorated, and his pursuers slowed down, seemingly waiting for something.

However, as time passed, they realized something was wrong.

The brilliant escape light was still approaching, but it never arrived.

Eventually, Zhao Xuhe could run no more, and the Divine Martial Sect pursuers reluctantly surrounded him, and a fierce battle ensued.

This battle lasted for half a day.

In the end, the pursuers didn't dare to strike hard, fearing they might kill Zhao Xuhe with a single blow, occasionally glancing towards the escape light.

Upon closer inspection... was that escape light moving farther away?

Finally, Zhao Xuhe completely broke down.

“No! Why!?”

He suddenly spat out a mouthful of heart blood, then knelt on the ground, utterly drained, his life force rapidly fading.

Before death, only one thought remained in his heart.

Could it be that Lü Yang didn't want the Stealing Heaven's Secret technique?

“Why didn't you save me!?”

Little did he know, this was also the thought of the person behind the orchestrated pursuit.

In the shadows, Elder Ouyang Feng of the Divine Martial Sect was equally puzzled, looking towards the distant Skeleton Mountain Market, his eyes filled with unwillingness and helplessness.

“Why didn't he save him?”

“Only a fool would save him!”

Retracting his escape light, Lü Yang looked at yet another of Zhao Xuhe's desperate flying messages and casually tossed it aside: “Did he really think he could use a secret technique to threaten me?”

“It's just eighty years. I can wait!”

“Once your restriction naturally dissipates, the secret technique will still be mine! If not this lifetime, then the next...”

Thinking this, Lü Yang couldn't help but lament Zhao Xuhe's misfortune. If he had managed to escape into the market, Lü Yang wouldn't have minded helping him.

But outside the market? That was just unfortunate.

“Senior Brother Zhao, rest in peace. You sacrificed for the Saint Sect. In the future, I will petition the Mending Heaven Peak Master to grant you a grand burial.”

“As for your debt, let's forget it this lifetime. I'll collect it in the next!”

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[1,275 words]

Blood Garment Tower, another early morning.

Fairy Feixia leaned against the tower balcony, sunlight filtering through her wind-swayed thin garments, casting a graceful silhouette that stirred endless imagination.

"During this time, thank you, Junior Brother Lü."

The two had just concluded a night of interaction, and with Lü Yang's wholehearted guidance, Fairy Feixia had reached her limit, making further progress difficult in the short term.

"Today, I plan to leave the market."

Turning back, Fairy Feixia looked intently at Lü Yang: "My state of mind can't compare to Junior Brother's, nor my talent, yet I refuse to fade into mediocrity."

"Feixia's departure may mean a long time before we meet again." Fairy Feixia raised her eyes, her expression evoking pity, then sighed softly: "The path ahead may lead to enlightenment or to a foreign grave. The immortal road is lonely, especially in the Primordial Saint Sect. Feixia only hopes to see old friends again."

After speaking, Fairy Feixia smiled sweetly at Lü Yang.

Her beautiful face and elegant smile seemed to open her heart to Lü Yang for the first time: "Junior Brother... would you be willing to be that old friend for Feixia?"

"..." Lü Yang remained silent for a long time.

A stunning woman gazed at him affectionately, like a web slowly entangling him, enough to make any man lose himself.

However, Lü Yang resisted.

He calmly raised his hand: "Senior Sister is always welcome to return for tea."

A polite farewell.

In an instant, Fairy Feixia's eyes flickered, revealing a mix of disappointment and helplessness, then she withdrew her smile, returning to her usual cool demeanor.

"I take my leave."

As her words fell, a light resembling colorful clouds soared into the sky, disappearing into the horizon.

Only after she left did Lü Yang exhale deeply, turning back into the quiet room of the Blood Garment Tower, hiding within the formation, clutching the Innate Primordial True Qi Divine Talisman.

Finally, he stopped his body from trembling.

"Damn it, this must be a Foundation Establishment cultivator scheming against me!"

Regarding Fairy Feixia, Lü Yang had always been emotionally detached, their interactions purely for learning, with dual cultivation merely a method of study.

But just now, he had been moved!

Towards Fairy Feixia, he had been momentarily confused, nearly saying "willing" several times. Such emotions were clearly wrong and inconsistent with his true intentions!

With experiences from previous lives, Lü Yang quickly concluded: "The Foundation Establishment cultivator behind the scenes is getting impatient, starting to use forceful methods, using Fairy Feixia as bait to bind me to her... trying to lure me out of the market!"

"Seclusion... I need to go into seclusion!"

Thinking this, Lü Yang immediately announced a closed-door retreat, refusing visitors for the time being, to minimize entanglement in others' causality.

"...Impressive."

Outside the Skeleton Mountain market, on a cliff, a figure stood with hands behind his back, a respectful blood-clad youth standing behind him.

The next moment, the figure smiled: "An ordinary disciple, without background, yet able to develop such a firm Dao heart, truly rare. I've tried several times to lure him, but he never took the bait. Junior Brother, I don't know whether to praise your insight or question it."

"Please forgive me, Senior Brother."

The blood-clad youth bowed respectfully, his tone somewhat helpless: "I originally intended to find a scapegoat, but I didn't expect a dragon to emerge from shallow waters..."

The blood-clad youth was named "Luo Wuya," the "Second Senior Brother" of the Three Rivers Society.

His cultivation had reached the peak of Qi Refining, and he mastered a great divine ability, making him the strongest openly in the Skeleton Mountain area of the Primordial Saint Sect, a veritable big figure.

And the person he treated with such respect, the figure with hands behind his back, had an identity that was self-evident.

The leader of the Three Rivers Society!

His Dao title was "Yinshan." After successfully establishing his foundation ten years ago, he became a high-ranking member of the Primordial Saint Sect, authorized by the sect master to establish the Yinshan branch within the Sea of Clouds.

"But Senior Brother, I still don't understand. Must it be a disciple of the Primordial Saint Sect?"

"Junior Brother, you don't understand."

True Person Yinshan shook his head: "The Ancient Witch Ghost Path is a major demonic sect, its secret realm heavily laden with causality. Even I am reluctant to get involved lightly."

In this world, causality is everywhere.

Receiving benefits and forming causality means one must repay.

The Ancient Witch Ghost Path set up a secret realm to find someone with great fortune, planting causality through sect inheritance, seeking a chance for the sect's revival.

"If I personally took action, finding the Witch Ghost Secret Realm would be easy. It might even reveal itself to me. But in doing so, the causality of the Witch Ghost Path would fall upon me, bringing unknown troubles and hindering my cultivation."

In essence, True Person Yinshan wanted the goods without paying the price.

"That's why I need someone to open the Witch Ghost Secret Realm for me. Since the Witch Ghost Path is a major demonic sect, choosing a disciple from the Primordial Saint Sect is most suitable."

"I initially chose that 'Blood Garment Tower Master,' even attracting several significant enemies for him. As long as he was willing to leave the market, I would back him, help him eliminate his enemies, accumulate fortune, and once sufficient, the Witch Ghost Secret Realm would be drawn out by his fortune."

If Lü Yang were here, hearing this would surely feel familiar.

Because that's exactly how Xiao Shiye died.

A man-made child of destiny, seemingly blessed with great fortune, invincible in battle, but in reality, merely bait used by a Foundation Establishment cultivator to lure out opportunities.

Once the opportunity was drawn out, the bait was no longer needed.

Behind True Person Yinshan, blood-clad youth Luo Wuya lowered his head deeply, secretly alarmed by the terrifying methods of Foundation Establishment cultivators manipulating causality and fate.

"...Forget it."

Suddenly, True Person Yinshan shook his head: "Since that 'Blood Garment Tower Master' is unwilling to cooperate, let's choose another. It's not necessarily him."

At this point, True Person Yinshan chuckled: "Junior Brother, do you remember how the Ancient Witch Ghost Path was destroyed?"

"I do, by the Jade Pivot Sword Pavilion."

Luo Wuya nodded: "The sect master of that generation, a Golden Core True Lord, struck a sword from the Seven Star Cliff of the Sword Pavilion, causing the Witch Ghost Path's mountain gate to collapse instantly."

"Correct, with just one sword."

True Person Yinshan sighed: "At its peak, the Ancient Witch Ghost Path had over ten Foundation Establishment cultivators and even a fourth-grade formation suppressing its fortune."

"Even so, they couldn't withstand a single sword strike from a Golden Core True Lord across thousands of miles."

"Moreover, that sword still resides within the Witch Ghost Path's secret realm!"

At this point, True Person Yinshan's eyes revealed a hint of dread: "The decree of a True Lord, sword energy lingering in the world. As long as the Witch Ghost Path isn't destroyed, the sword energy remains."

This was also why he was unwilling to personally intervene.

The sword energy of a Golden Core True Lord, especially from the righteous leader Jade Pivot Sword Pavilion—what if he went to open the secret realm and that sword energy struck him?

Therefore, finding a scout was a safer approach.

"That sword energy and the Witch Ghost Secret Realm have intertwined over countless years, becoming inseparable. So, if we can't open the secret realm through a disciple of the Primordial Saint Sect, we can try another approach—lure a disciple from the Jade Pivot Sword Pavilion to obtain that sword energy. The effect would be the same."

At this point, True Person Yinshan's gaze shifted, finally leaving the market.

Almost simultaneously, Lü Yang, who was in seclusion within the market, suddenly felt his body lighten, as if shedding an immense burden, revealing a look of surprise.

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Chapter 49: Not Even a Bit Within One's Control

[1,406 words]

"It seems that the Foundation Establishment True Person behind the scenes has finally given up!"

Lü Yang looked up at the sky; it was only because he possessed the Innate Primordial Qi Divine Talisman and had the experience of several lifetimes that he could vaguely sense the changes in fate.

This feeling of a clear Dao heart and boundless freedom was something he hadn't experienced in a long time.

"Good, good!"

Discovering that the Foundation Establishment True Person was no longer scheming against him, Lü Yang immediately felt much more relaxed.

What pleased him even more was that another of his projects had made significant progress.

Lü Yang took out the Innate Primordial Qi Myriad Spirits Banner and then summoned his Innate Primordial Qi Incarnation.

The Myriad Spirits Banner was very special; although it contained a mustard seed space, only entities related to the Innate Dao Book, such as the Innate Primordial Qi Incarnation, could enter it.

As the incarnation entered, Lü Yang immediately felt a blur before his eyes.

In the next second, a vast and boundless scroll slowly unfolded before Lü Yang's eyes, like a series of comic panels, each depicting a banner spirit.

These images were diverse: some showed mountain villages, others isolated overseas islands, imperial palaces, or celestial palaces in the heavens.

In each image, a banner spirit radiating spiritual light moved about—eating, drinking, playing, or meditating in cultivation—appearing almost lifelike.

Even though he had seen this many times, each viewing still made Lü Yang sigh:

"These images are probably manifestations of the banner spirits' memories from their lifetimes. Letting the banner spirits live within the paintings helps maintain their consciousness and memories. What an incredible magical tool!"

With a thought, Lü Yang changed the scenes within the paintings.

All the banner spirits were gathered in one place, and the original images of mountain villages and such transformed into a massive factory and an assembly line.

At first, the banner spirits seemed a bit dazed.

But soon, as the strongest among them, Liu Xin was the first to regain clarity. He quickly approached Lü Yang and respectfully said, "Subordinate greets the master."

"How is the work progressing?"

"Reporting to the master, we have produced 132 Golden Light Talismans, 153 Five Thunder Talismans, and 210 Sword Qi Talismans. Please review them."

As he finished speaking, Liu Xin presented a thick stack of talismans.

"Well done. However..."

Lü Yang scanned the talismans with his spiritual sense, satisfied, but soon his expression darkened:

"...who allowed them to rest?"

Since exchanging insights on talisman techniques with Fairy Feixia, he had assigned the production of three low-level talismans to the banner spirits within the Myriad Spirits Banner.

Therefore, the banner spirits were supposed to work tirelessly, day and night, year-round, drawing talismans for him. Yet, upon his inspection, he found them all resting.

This was unacceptable! It was outrageous!

As banner spirits, if they dared to rest today, who knows what they might dare to do tomorrow? Such unhealthy tendencies must be nipped in the bud!

Thinking of this, Lü Yang narrowed his eyes and said in a deep voice:

"Senior Brother Liu, I am pleased that you can organize the banner spirits to produce so many talismans. However, I am not pleased that you allowed them to rest."

"Master, this was a necessary measure."

Liu Xin hurriedly explained: "Talisman drawing requires living beings to use their mana as the brush and their spiritual wisdom as the ink. However, banner spirits are beings that are seemingly alive but essentially dead."

"While they possess mana, their spiritual wisdom diminishes with each use."

"If they continue drawing talismans without rest, they will eventually deplete all their spiritual wisdom, leading to their inexplicable dissipation."

"So what?"

Lü Yang's response left Liu Xin momentarily stunned.

"The Myriad Spirits Banner lacks everything but banner spirits. If they dissipate from exhaustion, that's perfect. I can acquire new ones, which would be more efficient."

"Oh, and the dissipated banner spirits can be used to feed other banner spirits."

"If banner spirits can endure hardship, they can endure more hardship."

"You banner spirits exist solely to work for me. Those that cannot serve me have no value and should dissipate on their own."

Lü Yang spoke calmly, but Liu Xin listened in terror.

'Beast... a beast indeed!'

Observing Lü Yang's utilization of the Myriad Spirits Banner, Liu Xin felt that he himself was a great philanthropist, having previously only summoned banner spirits during battles.

Perceiving his emotions, Lü Yang smiled gently: "Senior Brother Liu, you should understand how fierce the competition among banner spirits is now. Honestly, if it weren't for our shared sect background, I wouldn't have entrusted you with this task. You should learn to be grateful."

"Otherwise, think about it: using this banner spirit or that one makes no difference. Why should I choose you?"

"Isn't it because we're fellow disciples? I've achieved what I have today thanks to you. Rest assured, as long as you work diligently, I won't treat you unfairly."

Liu Xin: "..."

While Lü Yang was inspecting the work within the Myriad Spirits Banner, in another secret chamber of the Blood Garment Tower, Yun Miaoqing was experiencing an internal struggle.

"How could this be..."

Her expression was a mix of joy and surprise, and the token around her neck, symbolizing her identity as a disciple of the Jade Pivot Sword Pavilion, was emitting light.

It was a communication light!

By channeling mana into it, one could communicate with the person on the other end. She had never imagined that her token had this function!

But why had no one contacted her before?

In the next moment, Yun Miaoqing heard a familiar voice in her ear: "Miaoqing? Good, you're alive. It seems you still have some fate."

"You are... sister!?"

Yun Miaoqing's beautiful eyes widened in astonishment.

She had previously extended an olive branch to Lü Yang, partly because she believed in his character and partly because she was confident in her own background.

As long as Lü Yang was willing to reform, she could have the Sword Pavilion accept him.

Because her Yun family had once produced a Sword Pavilion Sect Master, a Golden Core True Lord. Although they had declined over time, they remained a prominent family within the Sword Pavilion.

However, she herself was not highly regarded by the family. The one truly valued was her elder sister—Yun Miaozen, a true disciple of the Sword Pavilion, who cultivated the Taiyi Golden Radiance Pill Book, focused solely on cultivation, even refusing to use pills to accelerate progress, and was among the rare few who had mastered great divine abilities in the late Qi Refining stage.

Describing her as "Heaven's Favored Daughter" was no exaggeration.

Yun Miaoqing and Yun Miaozen, though sisters with only a one-character difference in their names, had vastly different talents and aptitudes.

"Where are you now?"

The light shimmered, and a cold voice emanated: "Your fate was insufficient, leading to your misfortune in the Demon Sect. Now that it's fulfilled, you should escape the calamity."

Could she return to the Sword Pavilion?

Yun Miaoqing was momentarily stunned, then overjoyed, and quickly said: "I'm in the Blood Garment Tower at the Skeleton Mountain Market. Sister, are you coming to get me?"

"Blood Garment Tower?"

Yun Miaozen paused slightly before saying: "Were you harvested by the Blood Garment Tower Master? So be it. I'll kill him for you, and your merit will be complete."

Upon hearing this, Yun Miaoqing was stunned and quickly said: "Sister, you've misunderstood. Brother Lü may come from the Demon Sect, but he's not a villain. On the contrary, he aspires to righteousness and has exceptional talent. I believe it's better to persuade him to reform than to kill him; he could be an asset to the righteous path..."

Before she could finish, a sharp rebuke interrupted her.

"Absurd!"

In the next moment, outside the Skeleton Mountain Market, a tall woman in white robes with crane patterns, her beautiful eyes gleaming with sword light and exuding heroic spirit, suddenly crushed the jade talisman in her hand.

Beside her, a middle-aged man frowned and asked: "What happened?"

"Miaoqing is beyond saving!"

Yun Miaozen shook her head and sighed: "She pleads for a demon, likely already entangled in calamity and unable to extricate herself, with no hope of escape."

"What does Junior Sister plan to do?"

"...Go to the Demon Sect's market!"

As she spoke, a nameless fury arose in Yun Miaozen's heart.

Yun Miaoqing was her sister, bearing a seven-part resemblance to her.

Now, having been harvested by a demon, the image was akin to herself being...

At this thought, Yun Miaozen felt a wave of discomfort and instinctively closed her legs.

Immediately, a trace of killing intent flashed across her delicate face: "A demon has ensnared my sister. If I don't personally slay him, my thoughts will remain unsettled!"

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[1,083 words]

At the Blood Garment Tower within the Skeleton Mountain Market.

Lü Yang had just withdrawn his consciousness from the Myriad Spirits Banner when he suddenly felt a darkness before his eyes, his spiritual platform clouded. He furrowed his brows slightly and looked toward the distant sky.

In the next moment, he rose into the air on a stream of light and arrived at the edge of the market.

He saw a brilliant light shooting across the sky, swift as fire and lightning, arriving at the market gate before it receded. A tall, valiant woman stepped out.

"So, it's a fellow Daoist from the Sword Pavilion."

Lü Yang, having studied the "Divine Firmament Sword Control True Formula," recognized her background at a glance. He cupped his hands and bowed, saying, "I am Lü Yang. May I ask for your name, fellow Daoist?"

"Jade Pivot Yun Miaozen."

Upon hearing this, Lü Yang narrowed his eyes. After all, Yun Miaozen and Yun Miaoqing—such similar names naturally led to associations.

"Are you here to take back your sect member?"

Thinking this, Lü Yang did not hesitate.

With a casual gesture, he directly pulled Yun Miaoqing out from the Blood Garment Tower and threw her before Yun Miaozen.

"Miss Miaoqing has not suffered any grievances in the Saint Sect. Although she is nominally my cauldron, I have never harvested her over the years, so she remains a

virgin. If you wish to take her back, please do as you please. My cultivation is shallow, so I won't see you off."

In Lü Yang's view, he had no enmity with the Sword Pavilion.

After all, he not only preserved Yun Miaoqing's life but also her chastity. As the leader of the righteous path, Jade Pivot Sword Pavilion wouldn't make things difficult for him.

However, he soon realized he was mistaken.

"Miaoqing... still a virgin?"

Yun Miaozen's beautiful eyes lowered, her gaze falling on Yun Miaoqing. Yet, instead of joy, she showed a hint of disdain and helplessness.

In the next second, she sighed deeply:

"What a pity! Miaoqing, you won't survive this tribulation!"

Upon hearing this, not only Lü Yang but even Yun Miaoqing was stunned, her face full of disbelief: "Sister... what do you mean?"

"You didn't receive the true transmission, so you don't understand."

Yun Miaozen shook her head: "You lack fortune and destiny, yet you forcibly sought immortal fate. Originally, you would have faced three disasters and nine tribulations. Failing any one of them would result in the loss of your Dao and death. Therefore, I specifically asked Master to combine your tribulations into a single ten-year great calamity."

"This ten-year great calamity was your ten years trapped in the Demon Sect."

"During these ten years, if you had endured all the humiliation, your red lips tasted by thousands, yet still maintained a steadfast Dao heart, unwavering in your resolve, the tribulation would have been considered passed."

"Unfortunately... you are still a virgin!"

"Being a virgin and not having suffered humiliation means the tribulation hasn't lessened at all; it might even intensify!"

At this point, Yun Miaozen looked at Lü Yang, her eyes filled with killing intent: "This demon ruined your cultivation. He appears benevolent but harbors malicious intent and should be executed!"

"..."

Lü Yang had to admit he was dumbfounded.

Yun Miaoqing was even more unable to accept it, her lips trembling: "So, the reason I fell into the hands of the Demon Sect ten years ago, becoming a cauldron of the Demon Sect..."

"Naturally, it was all my plan."

Yun Miaozen nodded: "Without this, you would have no hope of establishing your foundation in this life. You are my sister; naturally, I must consider your well-being. This was all for your own good."

Upon hearing this, Lü Yang was speechless.

Damn it, the righteous path has lunatics!

If Lü Yang had previously held some admiration for the Jade Pivot Sword Pavilion, the renowned leader of the righteous path, now he felt nothing at all.

Better to stay in the Saint Sect.

Every disciple in the Holy Sect is a talent; I absolutely love it here!

"Come, return with me."

On the other side, Yun Miaozen paid no attention to Lü Yang and Yun Miaoqing's expressions, saying loudly: "I will think of another way to help you pass this great calamity..."

"I won't!"

Faced with Yun Miaozen's persuasion, Yun Miaoqing instinctively took a step back, looking at her sister as if she were a stranger.

After all, she never imagined that the experience of falling into the Demon Sect's hands ten years ago, nearly leading her to despair, was orchestrated by her own sister. If not for meeting Lü Yang, who preserved her life and chastity, she might have been harvested into medicinal dregs, dying in some corner!

"...Listen to me."

Seeing Yun Miaoqing's reaction, Yun Miaozen frowned slightly: "You haven't learned great divine abilities, nor do you understand cause and effect, so it's naturally hard for you to comprehend my intentions."

"...Intentions?"

Yun Miaoqing took another step back, her tone filled with hatred: “Setting me up to be thrown into the Demon Sect, letting me be humiliated and harvested—this is your intention for me?”

“I am following cause and effect, acting on behalf of Heaven. When you achieve success in the immortal path in the future, you will naturally thank me.”

Yun Miaozen’s tone was calm.

In her view, her actions were entirely appropriate, all in accordance with the natural order and destiny.

Seeing Yun Miaoqing still wanting to argue, she simply waved her hand, and a brilliant light enveloped Yun Miaoqing, knocking her unconscious and casually placing her beside her.

“Words are wasted when opinions differ. I won’t argue with you now.”

After doing all this, she looked at Lü Yang again.

“Why are you looking at me, fellow Daoist Yun?” Lü Yang raised an eyebrow.

Yun Miaozen’s beautiful eyes gazed over, her expression indifferent, and she said lightly: “You deliberately ruined Miaoqing’s cultivation. I wish to borrow something from you as compensation.”

Lü Yang laughed loudly upon hearing this: “You’re not thinking of borrowing my fine head, are you?”

His words were full of sarcasm.

Yun Miaozen nodded slightly, not angered, but her phoenix eyes narrowed, revealing a chilling killing intent: “If you’re unwilling, don’t blame me for eliminating demons to uphold the Dao.”

With that, she raised her delicate hand!

In an instant, a clear light illuminated ten miles around. It was a crystal-clear, glass-like magical sword, its blade reflecting the surrounding mountains and rivers.

“Do you really think I fear you?”

Lü Yang laughed proudly, then turned and leaped, instantly transforming into a stream of light, hiding within the market. The Hundred Bones True Formation and Sword Formation Diagram activated instantly.

A hidden dragon in the abyss—who can kill me?

Seeing this, Yun Miaozen smiled coldly, showing no hesitation.

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