

### **Chapter 541 - The Three Pillars**

Outside the Gate of Hungry Ghosts, the number of Corpse Generals finally exceeded a hundred.

They did not communicate with one another, but they coordinated with tacit understanding. They constantly adjusted the formation in a tense but orderly fashion, leading a million Corpse Soldiers to guard the Gate of Hungry Ghosts.

The solemn silence was deathly still.

They were like an extensive yet delicate machine of war, ready to be activated at any time.

There was a saying, "Within the tens of thousands, people resembled mountains and seas," so what kind of concept was "a million" Corpse Soldiers? It was virtually unimaginable unless someone saw it with their own eyes.

Centred around Burial Mound mountain, over a hundred hills in the surroundings had been completely covered by Corpse Soldiers, rising and falling like the waves of the sea. It spanned as far as the eye could see. It was truly a "sea of corpses".

Under the dark clouds, the hilly terrain had been completely converted into a land of death and danger, and it constantly spread into the surroundings.

The cultivators were all forced back to fifty kilometers away. They did not attempt any more attacks.

Under the lead of the Corpse Generals, the Corpse Soldiers constantly adjusted their formations and expanded their arrays, turning into an unshakable military mountain. Simply a glance of it was enough to throw the heart into uncontrollable turmoil, filled with a sense of despair and powerlessness.

Would mobilising all the cultivators in the Ruyi commandery be enough to breach this military mountain?

And, the Gate of Hungry Ghosts was still rapidly opening wider, surging out with even more and even stronger undead.

Victory was completely impossible!

The end of the Clear River prefecture was here!

Li Qingshan widened his eyes and clenched his fist, but he was not afraid. Instead, he felt irrepressible excitement. A grand sight like this could never be seen in a mountain hamlet!

The Gate of Hungry Ghosts opened wider, but the black pillar of smoke instead began to thin.

Dark clouds no longer shrouded the sky directly above the Gate of Hungry Ghosts. The sky had become grey.

The sun seeped out with dismal light. There was no warmth or life, only cold stillness.

This was not a sight that could bring relief!

The mist-like coldness coiled like strands in the air.

The world was beginning to be converted into the Hungry Ghost realm.

At this very moment.

A gust of wind arrived!

Like a sharp paper cutter, it sliced through the clouds in the air.

The magnificent, resplendent light that poured out of the crack in the clouds was like a signal from god, landing on this land of death, on the boundless sea of corpses.

In a trance, Li Qingshan heard the cry of a hawk. It was far off in the distance in the beginning, but it arrived near him in the blink of an eye.

A glorious, white hawk unfurled its pure-white wings, riding on the light as it descended from above like a shadow from heaven.

It moved like a swift flash, yet also like an ever-fleeting gust of wind.

Even Li Qingshan had to gather his focus before he could barely make out the figure.

That was not a hawk, but a person.

Gu Yanying!

Her speed left Li Qingshan lost in wonder. If he pushed the wings of wind to the limit and beat his phoenix wings as hard as possible, he could achieve the same speed after substantial effort, but he would not be able to maneuver about as freely and as skillfully as Gu Yanying. Moreover, she was clearly still holding back.

Gu Yanying seemed to sense something and suddenly turned her head, looking at Li Qingshan from afar. She seemed to smile at him before sailing off towards the Gate of Hungry Ghosts!

Probably only Li Qingshan managed to capture that "swift" smile of hers.

Hua Chengzan said, "Be careful, commander!"

Was she not flying to her death?

Li Qingshan was taken aback. Gu Yanying was powerful, but what she faced was an army of a million. She probably did not know about the horrors of the military formation, and she would be weakened by the Hungry Ghost realm.

The hundred Corpse Generals roared out together, lifting their weapons high into the air. The Corpse Soldiers immediately responded, except the disturbance they made was akin to a natural disaster, like the awakening roar of a colossal beast.

A hundred wisps of smoke rushed into the air, coiling and entangling as they surged towards Gu Yanying.

Gu Yanying's figure became even more fleeting, weaving between the thick pillars of smoke.

However, the smoke merged together and sealed off all of her space to dodge. She waved her delicate, jade folding fan, and a few streams of air rushed out, severing a few wisps of smoke.

The Corpse Generals immediately changed their formation. They wanted to go from offence to defence, but they were too slow.

Gu Yanying landed in the very centre of the military formation like a white bolt of lightning. Vicious faces revolved around her.

With her clothes whiter than snow, she drifted around like she was flying as streams of air circulated around her, blocking the invading chilly winds.

The hundred Corpse Generals roared furiously together and lunged over.

Although they had no time to control the military formation, the corpse qi from the Corpse Soldiers under their command gushed over, enveloping every single one of them in a greyish-black cloud. With their auras connected, they unleashed an ingenious combined attack, tearing away at the foolish opponent who had walked straight into the enemy's ranks.

She raised her head, her eyes as sharp as hawk's.

She swung her fan. A hundred heads flew into the air.

The smoke dispersed, and the Corpse Generals had all been slain.

From armies of thousands, she had taken the heads of their commanding officers so easily that she could do it with her eyes shut.

Having lost the leadership of the Corpse General, the army of a million immediately showed signs of collapse.

"Alright!"

The cultivators roused with vigour and cheered. She had already reverted the seemingly-hopeless situation in a single instant single-handedly. They felt like they had just gone from hell to heaven.

Li Qingshan also rubbed his chin and murmured inside, Truly the woman who caught my eye!

"Yanying, your atmospheric winds have become even sharper than before!"

Hearty laughter surged through the clouds and a huge, square seal descended from above, falling onto the sea of corpses like a mountain. It directly crushed ten thousand Corpse Soldiers to death while sending a hundred thousand more flying.

The Marquis of Ruyi stood on the serpent's body on the top of the Seal of Mountains and Rivers. He gazed at Gu Yanying with undisguised admiration.

Even if he used the Seal of Mountains and Rivers, he had no confidence in being able to kill a hundred Corpse Generals in a single stroke. If it were not for her startling speed, if it were not for her all-conquering atmospheric winds, she would have had to face the combined attack of a million-strong army.

Let alone Golden Core cultivators, even cultivators at higher realms would have to weigh their options carefully.

The Seal of Mountains and Rivers flew up and returned to the Marquis of Ruyi, turning back into a tiny stamp. The words "Forever Presiding Over the Mountains and Rivers" appeared on the ground, with two smaller words "Ruyi" in the corner.

They were smaller words, but each was the size of a public square. They were as dignified and majestic as they could be.

Gu Yanying smiled and stowed her folding fan away, walking towards the Gate of Hungry Ghosts. The gate had stopped spewing out zombies. With her hands on her back, she bent over and gazed into the Gate of Hungry Ghosts in a leisurely manner.

Li Qingshan called out, "Be careful," only to discover several other voices had rung out at the same time. One of them came from the Marquis of Ruyi.

The huge, withered hand suddenly extended out of the Gate of Hungry Ghosts like a serpent emerging from the ocean, reaching towards her. It was even swifter and more forceful than when it reached towards Li Qingshan.

Gu Yanying pulled back abruptly, and her hair and clothes drifted forwards. However, the same leisurely expression remained on her face.

The entire arm of the wither hand extended out. As one advanced and one retreated, they were only inches apart.

Corpse qi circulated between the five fingers like a vortex, producing a great suction force.

Gu Yanying halted. She was about to be caught by the hand.

The Seal of Mountains and Rivers descended from above, stamping down violently.

A streak of black emerged from one side like a dragon, stretching over the sky and biting towards the wrist of the withered hand.

With her folding fan in hand, Gu Yanying thrust it forwards and atmospheric winds revolved like a drill.

Boom! The Seal of Mountains and Rivers crushed down heavily on the hand. Han Anguo's figure appeared, and he thrust his spear into the wrist. The atmospheric winds sliced through the corpse qi vortex and into the palm.

The hand suddenly closed, but Gu Yanying had already pulled away, completely unscathed. Together, the three pillars of the Ruyi commandery taught the withered hand a lesson.

Their powers were so great that even the Hungry Ghost realm struggled to keep them suppressed.

The Marquis of Ruyi's Seal of Mountains and Rivers relied on the power of belief. Han Anguo was a powerful cultivator of the body, so he relied on himself, while Gu Yanying's atmospheric winds, just like the underground magnetic field, was an extremely special existence.

Having grabbed nothing, the withered hand was suddenly lifted up into the air, shaking off the Seal of Mountains and Rivers and retreating back into the Gate of Hungry Ghosts. The three of them retreated from the range of the hand. The three of them had only caught the withered hand off-guard, but even their combined attack failed to heavily injure a mere arm of his.

Although they could be regarded as the best of the best among second heavenly tribulation cultivators, they were still lacking a lot if they wanted to properly contest against the Corpse King.

In a triangular formation, they surrounded the Gate of Hungry Ghosts.

Gu Yanying said, "Her highness the Dark Queen will be here shortly!"

The three of them had originally been waiting to receive the Dark Queen in the commandery city of Ruyi. None of them expected this to happen, so they rushed over here immediately. They obviously contacted the Dark Queen too.

"Good!" Han Anjun nodded, and the Marquis of Ruyi eased up too.

Technically speaking, the Dark Queen had reached the peak of the second heavenly tribulation a long time ago, but due to certain reasons, she had never been able to break through, preventing her from reaching the realm of "kings", so why would the three of them place such great trust in her?

It was all because the Umbral Yin sect was known for their ghost control techniques, and they were closely connected to the Hungry Ghost realm. It was said that the sect possessed a controllable Gate of Hungry Ghosts that was specially provided for disciples to train and cultivate in.

There was nothing strange about that. The six realms of saṃsāra had always been omnipresent. Just like how the school of Legalism drew power from the Hell realm to cultivate, allowing them to use techniques like the Hell of Ice, the school of the Military also borrowed strength from the Asura realm that dictated warfare and slaughter.

Gu Yanying could not help but think of an extremely widespread rumor among the upper echelon of the Green province cultivation community.

If the Umbral Yin sect faced a devastating disaster, then they would open the Gate of Hungry Ghosts to the limit regardless of the consequences, such that no one would be able to seal it. They would allow countless Corpse Kings and Ghost Kings to flood the nine provinces, turning the World of the Nine Provinces into a part of the Hungry Ghost realm.

As it seemed, it was very likely for this rumor to be true. And, the Umbral Yin sect had probably spread this rumor intentionally, turning it into the strongest form of deterrence.

After the establishment of Great Xia and the ushering of an age where the "righteous path" prevailed and the "demonic path" diminished, it was not without reason that the Umbral Yin sect that had once been the greatest demonic sect in the Green province could remain and prosper.

Most importantly, this deterrence was not a furious attempt at mutual destruction. According to the cultivation methods of the Umbral Yin sect, even if the Hungry Ghost realm truly descended, the disciples of the Umbral Yin sect would still be able to survive. As for the other cultivators, they would have to die first.

Thinking up to there, Gu Yanying shifted her gaze and looked at Li Qingshan again.

The Dark Queen's visit this time is closely related to this kid. She's even brought an old acquaintance of his with her. So what is all of this for? Don't tell me it's actually connected to that?

Li Qingshan looked back and met her eyes, but Gu Yanying had already shifted her gaze away with a smile. He lowered his head, feeling slightly uneasy inside.

When he heard the two words "Dark Queen" being mentioned from afar, he immediately recalled the endless wind and snow on the Ice Sword cliff, as well as that cat that had somehow become his master.

Don't tell me Xuanyue is going to be here?

### **Chapter 542 - Revival**

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

The mountainous Seal of Mountains and Rivers flew high into the air before falling again loudly.

The ground shook, and the hills collapsed. Wherever it reached, Corpse Soldiers were all crushed or sent flying, leaving behind huge words on the ground.

Having lost the leadership of the Corpse Generals, the million-strong army immediately fell into disunity. In the blink of an eye, most of them had been wiped out.

He fought an army of a million alone. Just saying that was breathtaking, let alone witnessing it in person.

In the presence of a beauty, the Marquis of Ruyi obviously had to properly show off.

If she had been an ordinary woman, then she definitely would have been swept off her feet by such a lofty approach.

Strength had always been the greatest charm of a man.

Gu Yanying watched with a smile and said nothing.

She held a bronze coin in her hands hidden within her sleeves. It constantly rolled and jerked between her ten slender fingers as she tried divining.

She was slightly surprised. According to the divination, the situation was supposed to become even more dangerous for some reason.

At the same time, Li Qingshan also sensed the omen of warning rapidly increasing, gradually reaching the cusp of danger.

That's strength. The million-strong army has been destroyed, and the withered hand has been forced back into the Hungry Ghost realm. It hasn't sent out any more soldiers either. Once the Dark Queen arrives and we seal up this Gate of Hungry Ghosts, wouldn't it all be over? There must be something else!

Gu Yanying looked back, into the distance.

A splendid carriage glided across the horizon.

The four large, fine horses that pulled the carriage were all half-transparent. Their hair drifted about like drizzling rain as they moved lithely and silently. They were fast and agile.

The curtain of the carriage was lifted up, revealing a cold noble face that gazed in the direction of Burial Mound mountain. A cat's head poked out from beside her, also looking with her.

The Dark Queen frowned slightly. She had never thought it would have opened to such a degree already in such a short amount of time. The rate at which the six realms of sa?sāra eroded the worlds was increasing.

Seeing the Marquis of Ruyi's actions, the Dark Queen's expression changed slightly. Oh no.

A million Corpse Soldiers and a hundred Corpse Generals had all died in this hilly region. They had been killed, but the corpse qi in their bodies permeated the surroundings, shrouding it with a layer of thick, black mist.

The land strewn with corpses vaguely resembled the sight of the Hungry Ghost realm that Li Qingshan had witnessed.

The dark clouds and mist in the air suddenly began to withdraw. It gushed into the Gate of Hungry Ghosts even faster than when it erupted out.

Fierce winds surged and the surroundings cleared and brightened up.

Liu Zhangqing and the other cultivators became relieved. As it seemed, the Corpse King was at the end of his wits and chose to give up.

Li Qingshan and Hua Chengzan exchanged a glance, both shocked.

They had personally witnessed how the Gate of Hungry Ghosts had opened, how it first sucked away all the yin qi and corpse qi on Burial Mound mountain.

This was definitely not giving up, but the signs before an even more intense eruption.

"Be careful!"

The ground trembled like a primordial being was awakening from its slumber to destroy this world.

Suddenly, Li Qingshan realised something. Perhaps this was all the Corpse King's plan. The several million Corpse Soldiers and the hundred Corpse Generals were all just sacrifices.

The trembling abruptly stopped, and the Gate of Hungry Ghosts suddenly expanded to ten times its size, but it remained silent, giving off an uncomfortable feeling of disparity.

The surroundings darkened all of a sudden.

Li Qingshan blinked his eyes only to see black mist pour out in all directions like a flood. It had reached fifty kilometers away in the blink of an eye.

A crystal coffin flew high into the air in the centre of the darkness.

The translucent, crystal coffin refracted the sunlight to shine with rainbow colours.

A beautiful woman in violet slept silently. Her eyelashes trembled before her eyes snapped open.

Crack! A fracture appeared on the crystal coffin, rapidly spreading and covering the entire coffin.

Clink!

With the gentle, crisp sound like a glass cup falling to the ground, the crystal coffin scattered as white powder.

“Zi’er!”

Ma Chaoqun climbed out of the pit. Corpse qi had corrupted his entire body. All of his flesh had withered as if he had become an old man. He reached towards the sky as a few droplets of hot tears rolled down his cheeks.

“Ma Chaoqun, I’ve done what I promised you.” A thunderous voice erupted from the pit.

“Yes. Thank you, sir. Are you seeing this, Yu Shukuang? Hahahaha!”

Like a madman, Ma Chaoqun swung his arms about in the air. He staggered and fell backwards into the huge, gaping Gate of Hungry Ghosts. He could feel his soul being drawn away from his body bit by bit.

When the Gate of Hungry Ghosts erupted, he resided in the boundary between the Hungry Ghost realm and the World of the Nine Provinces. Although he was under the intentional protection of the Corpse King, he was far too weak. The aura of death had already invaded his body deeply, sapping away his last shred of life. He had simply clung on with willpower alone.

Now that the will had been fulfilled, he immediately arrived at the end of his life.

Gazing at the sky, the beautiful figure seemed to be cloaked in a halo under the sunlight before gradually blurring.

“Zi’er, I’m sorry!”

Had she really been revived? Was she still her after being revived?

Ma Chaoqun did not think about it. He refused to think about it. Perhaps what he was after in the end with all of his efforts was not to take off as a pair and fall in love again, but to say those two words to her.

Darkness enveloped all.

Zi’er lowered her head and gazed into the Gate of Hungry Ghosts. The figure had already vanished into the darkness. She clutched her heart as it ached slightly.

A shadow loomed overhead. The Seal of Mountains and Rivers crushed down like a mountain.

Gu Yanying frowned. She actually found the female zombie that had just been revived rather dangerous. The jade folding fan opened with a flap and invisible strands of atmospheric winds surged out, slicing through everything.

Han Anguo stood tall and strong, rushing into the air and thrusting his spear towards Zi’er.



When the three of them worked together, even the Corpse King had suffered.

Zi'er raised her head. All that was left in her eyes were the whites. She threw a punch at the Seal of Mountains and Rivers.

Compared to the colossal Seal of Mountains and Rivers, her slender arm was basically a living example of the idiom "a mantis trying to stop a chariot".

The Marquis of Ruyi bellowed out, "Die!"

Boom!

Rings of light rippled into the surroundings, and the Seal of Mountains and Rivers flew back up. Disbelief filled the Marquis of Ruyi's face. His chest suddenly ached as a metallic sweetness filled his mouth.

He summoned the Seal of Mountains and Rivers back into his hand, only to see a small, sunken mark at the bottom of the seal. At a closer glance, it was clearly the imprint of a fist.

The power behind Zi'er's punch had actually been unbelievably great. After throwing the punch, she used the knockback force to fly down before suddenly raising her body, like her body had snapped in half. The atmospheric winds whistled past her ears.

Afterwards, she reached behind and grabbed the spear before turning around and sending Han Anguo flying. She completely avoided the tip of the spear.

Her actions were very stiff, completely ignoring fluidity. They seemed extremely abrupt, but they were extremely clever too.

Li Qingshan noticed that a wisp of black smoke had extended out from Zi'er's back before he knew it, directly leading to the depths of the Gate of Hungry Ghosts. The Corpse King had definitely not revived Ma Chaoqun's lover out of kindness. Instead, he used her as a puppet.

The three of them were basically clashing with the Corpse King now. In terms of pure strength, "Zi'er" did not possess the power to crush any one of them, but the Corpse King was now free from the restraints of the Gate of Hungry Ghosts, allowing him to unleash all of his skills in battle.

"Severe the smoke on her back!"

A noble woman descended from above. She reached out from afar, and a colossal ghost vaguely appeared behind her, extending its huge, phantasmal hand. It whistled over, targeting exactly the black smoke. It vaguely resembled the might of the Corpse King's huge, withered hand.

"That's Xuanyue's master, the Dark Queen! She sure is powerful!" Li Qingshan lamented inside. He discovered that despite all being second heavenly tribulation Golden Core cultivators, their strength still differed drastically. With that attack alone, even ten Wen Zhengmings would not be her opponent.

The moment the Dark Queen appeared, Xiao An became stunned. She walked out of her hiding spot unwittingly and stared at the figure in the sky. Memories surged out like the tide, smashing against the icebound ocean and riddling the frozen surface with cracks. Ever since she had begun practising the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty, she had never responded so violently to anyone apart from Li Qingshan.

She clutched her head and crouched down, experiencing a wave of pain for the first time in quite a long while. Her head felt like it was about to split open.

So familiar. Who is she? I clearly know...

However, Xiao An never gave off any aura in the first place, and the region was shrouded in black mist, so no one noticed her existence.

Zi'er suddenly descended. It seemed less like flying and more like being dragged down, avoiding the huge, phantasmal hand.

"Hmm?" The Dark Queen's heart skipped a beat, and she suddenly turned around, gazing into the distance. Something seemed to be there, but she was unable to make it out through the black mist.

She had no time to check amidst the battle. After being momentarily distracted, she turned around again and looked at Zi'er. Out of everyone present, she knew best that opening a Gate of Hungry Ghosts to the point where Corpse Kings could pass through was anything but easy. That would be something that impinge on the laws of this world, resulting in many limitations.

Among the many demonic sects of the past, there had been many uncontrollable people of absolute lawlessness. However, only the Umbral Yin sect had ever used opening the Gate of Hungry Ghosts as a threat.

As long as "kings" were unable to enter, then they would not be able to shake the foundations of the nine provinces. No matter how many Corpse Soldiers, Corpse Generals, or even Corpse Commanders they sent out, they would struggle to escape the fate of being destroyed.

But if a Corpse King tried squeezing in from the outside, it would block the Gate of Hungry Ghosts, and its subordinate undead would not be able to enter. Defeat would be guaranteed once again if time went on.

The Corpse King had carefully nurtured a corpse as a "puppet" before using a thread of its aura to control it. It gave the undead sufficient space to enter through, and it could lead the undead. It was basically the best of both worlds. If they could not kill this "puppet" as soon as possible, it would become troublesome.

Gu Yanying rushed over with a flash, swinging her fan at the wisp of black smoke.

A hideous, winged corpse beast with pieces of flesh clinging from its bone charged out of the Gate of Hungry Ghosts. Leaving behind a trail of black smoke, it lifted Zi'er onto its back and bit at Gu Yanying viciously.

Corpse Commander! Gu Yanying shivered inside and retreated.

Within the black mist, another man dressed as a mourning son with a white mourning hood and wielding a mourning stick stumbled out from the Gate of Hungry Ghosts. Apart from having a pale complexion, he seemed no different from a living person, but the aura he gave off left everyone present stunned.

TL: The corpse is dressed in a way where it's basically mourning for the death of its parent(s). The Chinese mourning attire in this case looks like this:

And a mourning stick looks like this:

A Corpse Commander had finally appeared.

The man looked around, and his expression suddenly underwent a startling series of changes. His eyebrows drooped down, and his mouth opened slightly, making a human expression of great grief as he began wailing in tears.

“You’ve all died so tragically!”

### **Chapter 543 - The Ease and Difficulty of Living and Dying**

“I can’t stand it anymore!”

A cultivator clutched his head and let out a wail. With a bang, his sea of qi exploded, turning into a ball of bloody mist.

“Retreat! Retreat!” Liu Zhangqing ordered loudly.

A battle on such a level had already become something they could no longer partake in. The aftermath of the battle alone was enough to kill them.

Li Qingshan retreated as well, but he intentionally maintained his distance from the rest of the cultivators. He frowned and gazed at the depths of the black mist.

Why hasn’t Xiao An retreated?

The atmospheric winds whistled, forcing the Corpse Commander in mourning attire to halt with his crying. He bent his knees forward and suddenly leapt up. The mourning stick whistled towards Han Anguo in an overhead swing like the miserable wails of ghosts.

Hearing the sound was already enough to cause splitting pain to the mind and aches to the body for a regular cultivator. However, Han Anguo’s heart was as tough as steel. Completely unfazed, he brandished his spear and received it in a battle. Immediately, sand and stone was thrown into the air as blasts of air rocketed the region.

Just like that, a corpse and a person became entangled. Only an aura of death and murderousness was on a constant rise.

After unleashing the strand of atmospheric winds, Gu Yanying became entangled with the winged corpse beast. The two of them constantly maneuvered and chased after one another in the air. Apart from when they changed directions, it was impossible to make out their figures. Only two different sharp sounds of wind could be made out, constantly climbing higher and entangling together.

The corpse beast was powerful, but Gu Yanying was confident enough to kill it within a few strikes under normal conditions. The powerful talismans in her sumeru ring were sufficient to reduce the corpse beast to pieces.

As they were above the Gate of Hungry Ghosts, she could still use the atmospheric winds freely, but it was unavoidable for other techniques and talismans to be affected. On the contrary, the corpse beast had its might redoubled, growing fiercer as it fought.

However, Gu Yanying's speed was superior, making her almost untouchable. As long as she had some time, the corpse beast would end up dead anyway, but time happened to be tight right now.

The Marquis of Ruyi could no longer worry about whether the Seal of Mountains and Rivers would be damaged anymore. If this continued, he would probably end up losing the entire Commandery of Ruyi. Pointing down, the Seal of Mountains and Rivers rose up and expanded.

Together with it was a strange howl, like thousands of voices murmuring at the same time, merging into a wish that echoed through the heavens.

"Zi'er" gazed at the Dark Queen in the distance vigilantly. She had already clearly sensed she was the most dangerous enemy present. She did not even glance at the Seal of Mountains and Rivers above.

A huge figure brushed past her. It was a one-eyed, one-horned giant, or more accurately, a Daemon Commander transformed from the corpse of a giant. He stood over a hundred meters tall, rippling with muscles. He was colossal and robust, and his legs were short and stocky like two huge pillars.

He lifted his huge hands and pushed upwards.

With a great rumble, the giant Corpse Commander was crushed into the ground. He was pressed down all the way to his waist as his entire body crackled with bone fractures. His corpse qi constantly surged, on the verge of collapse, but he did stop the Seal of Mountains and Rivers forcefully.

"Zi'er" still did not raise her head or glance above. She only stared at the Dark Queen, as well as the colossal figure that faded in and out behind her.

The Gate of Hungry Ghosts spewed out beings furiously. In a short while, another several hundred thousand Corpse Soldiers under the lead of a few Corpse Generals charged out. The Corpse Generals raised their hands and their corpse qi all gushed into the giant Corpse Commander's body.

The giant Corpse Commander riled up in vigour and slowly lifted the Seal of Mountains and Rivers, actually defeating the seal in a trial of strength. This was a feat that even the current Li Qingshan could not achieve.

Over a dozen more streaks of golden light flew over from the horizon. Under the urgent summoning of the Marquis of Ruyi, most of the Golden Core cultivators in the Ruyi commandery had rushed over.

As for the masters and elders of sects, the Marquis of Ruyi could not order them around, but they were all members of the Daemon Suppression alliance. The Sword Collection received the news and immediately ordered them to come and provide support.

The power of the human cultivators swelled drastically.

However, the Dark Queen's heart sank because powerful auras leapt out of the Gate of Hungry Ghosts one by one too. They varied in shape and size such that half of them were not even humanoid, belonging to the various races of the living creatures among the six realms, but all of them had now joined the ranks of the dead. When they were still living, they were separated from one another by their races, but after death, they could instead fight alongside one another. It was quite ironic.

Any single one of them would only be stronger than the reinforcing Golden Cultivators, not weaker. There were no undead produced by the limitless fighting and devouring of the Hungry Ghost realm that were not skilled in battle.

As for the Golden Core cultivators, no matter how capable they were, they would all be limited in this aspect. The fruits of several millennia of peace were obtained upon reaching Golden Core, so even the opportunity to fight against others became very scarce. Only large sects like the three sects of the Green province could use various means to maintain an intense level of struggle to train their disciples.

And, these Corpse Commanders could even gather the power of other Corpse Soldiers and Corpse Generals, which made them terrifyingly powerful.

The Gate of Hungry Ghosts was equivalent to a portal. If one Corpse Commander could pass through, then that meant even more Corpse Commanders could pass through. Golden Core cultivators might have been extremely precious and scarce in the World of the Nine Provinces, but there were countless Corpse Commanders in the Hungry Ghost realm.

The nine provinces might have been vast, but compared to any one realm of the six realms of sa?śāra, it would be like a pond to the ocean.

Once the two were linked, any old ripple from the ocean could completely flood the pond. If they could not seal off the Gate of Hungry Ghosts in time, the consequences would be unfathomable.

A great war was on the verge of breaking out, but to everyone's surprise, it was not between humans and daemons, but the living and the dead.

The Dark Queen hesitated. If all these Golden Core cultivators worked together, she would have some confidence in succeeding if she tried sealing off the Gate of Hungry Ghosts right now.

However, the well-off dared not take even a single risk that would endanger their lives. With her identity, there was no need for her to take this risk at all. The Umbral Yin sect had never been an upright sect that burdened itself over the fate of the world. She had not come to the Clear River prefecture for this either.

As a result, she no longer hesitated anymore. She merely signaled to Gu Yanying, turned around and took off into the distance, expressing she had completely given up on sealing the Gate of Hungry Ghosts.

The other Golden Core cultivators who had just arrived all stopped as well. For a moment, they had no idea what to do.

Gu Yanying let out a gentle sigh, also planning to retreat. Having achieved so much whilst opposing a Corpse King from the Hungry Ghost realm, she had already reached the limit of what she could do. All that was left was her to see how the "kings" of the Green province would respond.

It's not like I own this world.

Their thoughts were exactly the same as Li Qingshan's.

Han Anjun also began to pull back while fighting. On the other hand, the Marquis of Ruyi recalled the Seal of Mountains and Rivers only to discover that the Seal of Mountains and Rivers had dimmed

drastically, and a lot of its power of belief had been consumed. It had sustained many hidden traces of damage from the corrosion of corpse qi, which filled him with anguish.

At the same time, the colossal Corpse Commander corpse beast crouched before the Gate of Hungry Ghosts like a hill.

“Zi’er” stood on its head, gazing ahead proudly like a king overlooking his domain. His Corpse Commander guards had already surpassed ten in the blink of an eye.

Gu Yanying and the others were unable to pose any threat to her anymore, and if the other Golden Core cultivators were bold enough to approach her, all that awaited them would be death.

Beneath her, Corpse Soldiers gushed out like the tide, assembling into various military formations under the directions of Corpse Generals before forming great arrays under the Corpse Commanders’ commands.

In the blink of an eye, another million Corpse Soldiers had gathered again, possessing even sturdier and grander military might.

Her command seemed to possess a transformative power. The million-strong army began to move, changing their formations as corpse qi filled the air. They were like a vicious beast that devoured everything.

The power of the Corpse Soldiers gathered on the Corpse Generals and the power of the Corpse Generals gathered on the Corpse Commanders.

In the end, all of the power gathered on her. As a Corpse King, organising battles like this in the Hungry Ghost realm had already become as common as dirt, and their opponent this time was pitifully weak.

However, he did know that the truly powerful members of this world had yet to take action. Perhaps they were currently on their way, or perhaps they were still observing, but without a doubt, this was his best opportunity.

“Zi’er” unfurled her arms and opened her vermilion lips slightly. She said in a hoarse, dry voice, “All of you better stay behind!”

She lifted her hands into the air, cupping a glaze-like eye with both hands. It did not glow at all, but space began to ripple like water.

“Is that a space-devouring beast’s eye!? Even I’ve only ever heard about it! How can he possess one? No wonder he’s so bold!”

The Dark Queen’s face changed and immediately accelerated. She refused to remain for a second longer.

The other Golden Core cultivators did not react slowly either. Two of them had even taken out Escape talismans that could take them five hundred kilometers away.

However, all of this was already too late.

The speed of the ripples could not be described with words. In comparison, the actions of the cultivators made them seem like they had come to a standstill.

The Gate of Hungry Ghosts twisted and suddenly expanded, like a huge mouth taking a vicious chunk out of the World of the Nine Provinces.

By the time everyone returned to their senses, they discovered the world had already changed.

The sky had completely turned into the deathly grey of the Hungry Ghost realm. The chilly winds whistled as heavy clouds hung gloomily.

The ground had become piled with white bones while the rivers flowed with black blood.

Centred around Burial Mound mountain, a radius of several hundred kilometers had begun to “overlap” with the Hungry Ghost realm. Although it had not been completely “digested” yet, it was only a matter of time.

No matter how powerful the Escape talismans were, they could not directly pierce the boundary between worlds.

“Zi’er” finally could not help but laugh madly. Just like that, even if figures who had undergone the three heavenly tribulations of this world arrived, there was nothing they could do to him.

He shut his eyes again, and her face became filled with great comfort and delight. The ever-present suppression and restraint from the world had completely vanished.

At the same time, all of his actions had gained the recognition of the “will” of the Hungry Ghost realm. He could sense the surging aura of death gather towards him.

The cultivation of his original body that remained in the Hungry Ghost realm became even stronger. If he could completely devour this world and kill all of its living creatures, he would be able to go from a Corpse King to a Corpse Emperor, or to an even higher cultivation realm. None of it was impossible.

Sure enough, he had not wasted the eye of a space-devouring beast that he had only obtained through luck, and the efforts he spent searching for a viable “world” would all pay off.

Now, all he had to do was wait for the Hungry Ghost realm to completely digest this space so that he could use it as a foundation and constantly expand into the surroundings.

Before that, he had to kill these cultivators first. Apart from devouring other worlds, killing powerful members of the living was the greatest offering to the Hungry Ghost realm.

Xiao An!

A black, semi-transparent barrier blocked his way, drawing a clear boundary. One side was life and the other death. Li Qingshan made his way toward the side of death without the slightest hesitation.

“Qingshan!” Hua Chengzan grabbed him firmly. “Dying is easy, but coming back alive is not!”

#### **Chapter 544 - The Flames of the Phoenix**

If the dead wanted to come back alive, it would be extremely difficult.

That was the situation in the space the Hungry Ghost realm devoured.

Li Qingshan smiled and broke free from Hua Chengzan's grasp, leaping into the dark world of death. Looking back, dark mist enshrouded his vision. He could not see Hua Chengzan anymore. He could not even sense the aura of the outside world anymore.

As his air drifted through the air, it turned scarlet. Northmoon appeared and gazed around with his scarlet eyes.

He and Xiao An both possessed spiritual artifacts for communication, which was why they could sense each other's locations. However, under the influence of the Hungry Ghost realm, they were unable to sense anything.

Why didn't Xiao An retreat?

As he pondered that, the black mist before him suddenly surged, and the ground began to tremble slightly.

A Corpse General riding a corpse horse rushed over with almost ten thousand Corpse Soldiers behind him. He was cloaked in corpse qi, making it almost impossible to see him. Only a pair of green eyes shone brilliantly as he raised the war hammer in his hand high into the air with bone-deep hatred for the living.

Corpse qi condensed into a black, colossal war hammer, slamming down heavily.

Earth was thrown into the air and a pit appeared on the ground, but Li Qingshan had already vanished.

The Corpse General was stunned. Suddenly, he raised his head and saw a huge figure descend from above, throwing a punch.

The surging corpse qi condensed into a huge, black shield before him.

Li Qingshan sneered. His fist landed on the shield, and the corpse qi shook and dispersed violently. His punch continued along the way, reducing the Corpse General and his horse to a pulp.

Hmm? Someone else has entered? It's that half-daemon! If this person becomes a zombie, he'll definitely be extremely powerful, but there seems to be some kind of power on him that repels the aura of death.

Zi'er stood in the centre of the land of death and studied the surrounding region of several hundred kilometers. She thought of that before deciding to kill the second heavenly tribulation cultivators first, especially that woman who controlled ghosts.

The Dark Queen's face was sunken. There were no less than five Corpse Commanders in the surroundings who converged around her. If it were just five Corpse Commanders, there was no need for her to be afraid, but behind them was the support of a million Corpse Soldiers. Not only were their attacks extremely powerful, but their corpse qi was endless too.

"Meowster! Meowster!"

Within the mist, a familiar call seemed to ring out.



“Why did she come in?”

The Dark Queen’s expression changed, becoming slightly distracted.

Immediately, the corpse qi around her surged into the air and swept over like a tsunami.

Six Corpse Commanders of varying appearances and races struck together with clouds of corpse qi, sealing off all room she could maneuver about in to take her life.

The Dark Queen raised her hand, and the huge ghost appeared.

.....

A dark green, petite figure called out loudly as she advanced through the thick mist.

“Where did meowster go? She’s not going to be in any danger, right?”

Xuanyue furrowed her brows. Suddenly, her cat ears trembled, and her hair pricked up. She turned around and bared her teeth.

Rumble! Within the thunderous shaking, the pebbles on the ground leapt up and down. A hundred thousand Corpse Soldiers under the lead of seven Corpse Generals swarmed over like an avalanche.

Corpse qi condensed above the army into a lunging, black monster.

Let alone her, a Daemon General, even a Daemon Commander would struggle to withstand the full brunt of that.

With a flash, she vanished from the location, having used Shadow Displacement, but she was only displaced three hundred meters away, unable to escape from the corpse army. In this region, innate abilities were no longer so effective.

She clenched her fist and staggered backwards before immediately turning around and fleeing. She arrived at the edge of the region very soon, raising her foot but unable to step out.

A huge chasm invisible to the naked eye separated the region from the outside world, serving as a boundary between life and death.

Dying was easy, but coming back alive was not!

She turned around, her large eyes filled with anxiety. She murmured to herself.

“No, no, I have to find a way, but what can I do here? Meowster, Xuanyue is going to die for you. Although I’ve always tried to escape, I haven’t exactly let you down. Damned Big Blacko, your master I am also about to die because of you. You’ve let me down tremendously!”

The army rushed towards her like the tide. It was suffocating.

Xuanyue closed her eyes as her last thought flashed through her head, I wonder if I can be revived if I die in a strange place like this.

The pain she imagined did not arrive. She opened her eyes and saw a conspicuous smear of scarlet. It seemed so dazzlingly beautiful in the gloomy, grey world.

A figure stood before him, his body tall and straight and his scarlet hair drifting through the air. He did not seem particularly burly, but he gave off a lofty, unshakeable bearing like a mountain.

He knelt on one knee and struck the ground with both hands lithely and forcefully.

Xuanyue called out, "You idiot, it's already too late to kneel for forgiveness!"

Li Qingshan's expression stiffened and shot an exasperated glance at her.

"How dare you glare at me at a time like this... I..."

Xuanyue shut up. Cracks emanated from his fist.

The steady ground abruptly turned into a raging beast, shaking violently. The thickly-dotted Corpse Soldiers were like lice on the beast's back, thrown into the air viciously.

Several tens of thousand Corpse Soldiers blotted out the sky, directly shaken to death. The military formation collapsed.

The seven leading Corpse Generals reeled right and left as their minds shuddered.

The phoenix wings took off, and Li Qingshan turned into a streak of scarlet light. He struck seven times and killed off all the Corpse Generals, looping around and flying towards Xuanyue.

"Who are you? What are you trying to do?"

Xuanyue felt her body lighten, having been picked up, and they took off. His cool, scarlet hair brushed past her cheeks, which were rather ticklish. Her eyes lit up, and she extended her hand to touch the pair of curved horns on Li Qingshan's head.

Li Qingshan smiled as he allowed her to touch them.

As she gently stroked them, the two words, "north" and "moon", became very distinct.

Xuanyue was gradually filled with disbelief. "You're... Big Blacko!?"

Li Qingshan gazed at the energetic young girl who was no different from before as she stared at him in surprise. He could not help but laugh aloud.

"I haven't let you down at all! Let me repeat myself, you're not my master!"

Xuanyue put up a struggle. "How can Big Blacko be so beautiful and so strong? You must have disguised yourself!"

Li Qingshan said, "If you keep moving about, I'm going to leave you behind!"

Xuanyue glanced down and saw the boundless sea of corpses. She immediately stopped moving about. She blinked her eyes and said in a daze, "You really are Big Blacko."

"And why's that?"

"Because you're bad through and through!"

Li Qingshan held back the urge to drop her. Wind whistled beside him as a white figure flew with them. She waved her hand leisurely and greeted them. "Long time no see, the two of you!"

"Could you keep your distance from us?" Li Qingshan glanced behind. There were three Corpse Commanders tailing in pursuit at the very least, and they were all swift flying corpse beasts. Once they caught up, they would be extremely difficult to shake off.

"Don't be so alienating!" Gu Yanying smiled.

"Who has been alienating you?"

"You are one of my admirers after all! Help me out!"

Gu Yanying even extended a hand over and patted Li Qingshan on the shoulder. Without even waiting for his reply, she suddenly veered away.

Li Qingshan sighed and turned around, flying back in the opposite direction with an arc. He casually tossed Xuanyue in his arms high into the air, approaching the three Corpse Commanders as a pincer attack with Gu Yanying.

A scream from Xuanyue rang out, "Big Blacko, you traitor!"

Gu Yanying brought her right hand backwards, and the delicate, jade folding fan opened with a flap. Sharp atmospheric winds coiled around it, and she swung out with it in front, sending the winds off with a whistle.

Li Qingshan came up with an idea. The phoenix wings on his back ignited fiercely. The wind strengthened the fire, allowing them to spread several dozen meters across while leaving behind a trace of firelight throughout the sky.

"That's!?" Zi'er raised her head.

The three Corpse Commanders had already experienced the power of Gu Yanying's atmospheric winds, so they refused to take them on forcefully. They each dodged, and the atmospheric winds brushed past their bodies. Even with thick layers of corpse qi as protection, the atmospheric winds still sliced through them easily like a hot knife through butter.

Looking back, their faces were all dyed red. The flaming wings smacked against them while blotting out the surroundings.

The three Corpse Commanders ignored it. In this space, there were no abilities or techniques that could threaten their lives apart from attacks like atmospheric winds. Coupled with the million-strong army as support and their protective corpse qi, it made them even more fearless.

With a hiss, the thick corpse qi began to melt like butter.

The phoenix wings slammed against the Corpse Commanders heavily, sending sparks flying.

The indestructible bodies they had cultivated over millennia began to burn, melting away like the corpse qi.

"How is this possible!?" "What is this fire!?" Cries rang out.

The attack was so effective that it left even Li Qingshan rather surprised. Originally, he planned on wearing away their protective corpse qi before engaging them in close combat and creating an opportunity for Gu Yanying to kill them in a single stroke with her atmospheric winds. However, he never thought he could directly set them on fire and burn them until they began howling out.

Neither Li Qingshan nor Gu Yanying let this fantastic opportunity slip by. They turned around and brushed past one another.

In that moment, their noses almost touched as their eyes met. Gu Yanying smiled faintly as if she was thinking of something, while Li Qingshan's heart skipped a beat, like he had returned to that moment when they first met.

Two fierce gusts of wind surged and rubbed against one another, whistling past each other.

With a wave of her fan, the head of a Corpse Commander flew into the air. The flames on his body had not completely extinguished yet.

Li Qingshan directly flew away with a Corpse Commander. His wings of fire closed around him as he left behind a long tail of fire like a meteor. The Corpse Commander let out miserable wails as it was incinerated in the flames.

All of this had been completed during high-speed flight. The two of them turned around at the same time, targeting the remaining Corpse Commander that was shaped like a strange bird.

The strange bird had reacted the fastest. When the phoenix wings slammed against them earlier, only some of the flames had reached it because it was in the centre, which it put out very quickly. By the time it returned to its senses, its companions had already been killed off, becoming the only one left alive.

With a sharp cry, it dove down, fleeing towards the sea of corpses.

Seeing how she could not reach it in time, Gu Yanying stopped while Li Qingshan continued, one at the front and one at the back.

She swung her fan, and the fierce wind pushed Li Qingshan along. He flapped the wings of wind on his back violently as the flames blazed even more intensely.

Suddenly, he accelerated and caught up with the strange bird Corpse Commander immediately. His wings closed around it and burned it to death!

Pulling up, he sailed over the sea of corpses. The firelight illuminated "Zi'er's" face.

### **Chapter 545 - The Black Coffin Locks the Souls**

If the Hungry Ghost realm was the paradise of the dead, then the phoenix would be the symbol of eternal life. It used its constant rebirth in nirvāṇa to defeat death, making it the arch nemesis of all "death".

Li Qingshan flew back, only to see Xuanyue standing furiously in the air with her hands on her hips. "You traitor, ogling up that bird woman!"

Bird woman! Li Qingshan raised an eyebrow with no idea how to respond.

Thump! The folding fan smacked Xuanyue over the head and Gu Yanying said, "I'm right here!"

Xuanyue groaned in pain while clutching her head, baring her teeth at Li Qingshan. Gu Yanying studied the wings behind Li Qingshan and said with some surprise, "Phoenix?"

There was a saying where "all birds paid homage to the phoenix". The phoenix was the sovereign of avians, and it possessed an impressive, dignified bearing of nobility and purity. It was particularly clear to her.

"Am I worthy of you?"

"I'm the one who's unworthy of you."

"It's you, you wretched daemon!"

The Marquis of Ruyi rushed over. Several Corpse Commanders had surrounded him, but he forced his way out when "Zi'er" had been distracted for a moment. The hair ornament on his head had been destroyed such that his hair flew around in a messy manner. He seemed rather disheveled.

He flew into a rage as soon as he saw Northmoon, and when he saw him conversing with Gu Yanying, he noticed a rare hint of gentleness on her face, which gave him even more reason to lose his temper.

Before Li Qingshan could even respond, Xuanyue leapt forward. "Who're you cursing as a wretched daemon?"

"Y- you're..." The Marquis of Ruyi recognised the Dark Queen's infamous cat. "Go away. I'm talking about the wretched daemon behind you. Why don't you hurry up and die?"

Li Qingshan yelled back, "So it's you, you bastard! Your grandfather Northmoon will send you off to the next world right now!"

With a flip of his hand, the Marquis of Ruyi lifted up the Seal of Mountains and Rivers. "Die, wretched daemon!"

Gu Yanying did not try to pacify them. She pointed down. "Look below!"

The two of them could not help but look down, only to see over a dozen Corpse Commanders glaring at them.

Zi'er did not make the Corpse Commanders engage them immediately. If they were not speed-focused Corpse Commanders, they would not even be able to touch them. They would only be killed off instead. Corpse Commanders were different from Corpse Soldiers. Every loss was a huge one.

Most importantly, time stood on Zi'er's side. She only needed to wait and victory would be hers.

Gu Yanying said relaxedly, "I'd say even a Corpse King would not have over a hundred Corpse Commanders under him. However, we'll probably be the ones to run out of strength first before we get through all of them. And, before long, the region will be completely assimilated into the Hungry Ghost realm. By then, we'll be able to see this sir Corpse King's true appearance. He probably won't be prettier than right now!"

"Corpse King!"

The Marquis of Ruyi immediately lost interest in fighting. Once the Corpse King actually took action, death would be certain.

“You sure are very relaxed!” Li Qingshan could not help but admire Gu Yanying’s level of composure. There were many people who did not fear death, but rarely could anyone remain so unfazed.

“Don’t overestimate me. If there’s really a chance for me to die, I probably wouldn’t be able to smile either. If I want to leave right now, I do have a way out, but it’ll be just me at most. There’s nothing I can do about the two of you.”

Gu Yanying said with her soul sense, so her voice directly rang out in their ears. She did indeed possess a way to cross the boundary and leave, but she had to do it before the Hungry Ghost realm completely devoured the region. Otherwise, she would be powerless too.

“Then why don’t you leave?” “It’s far too dangerous here. If you have a way, then please leave first, Yanying!”

Li Qingshan and the Marquis of Ruyi said at the same time. They exchanged glances and killing intent bubbled.

“There are a lot of reasons. Time is tight, so I’m not going to go into detail. When this place is about to completely assimilate with the Hungry Ghost realm, I will leave, but before that, let’s try to do something!”

Gu Yanying was clearcut with everything, so straightforward that it could be displeasing. Unconsciously, she gave off a sense of cold alienation as if she was telling a group of people on the brink of death:

I won’t die. I hope all of you can live. I’ll be working hard towards this as well. If none of you can live, then all I can do is bid you farewell and survive alone.

She could not help but come off as cold and heartless, yet she was also faultless.

Li Qingshan wondered. Perhaps when a person truly became so graceful and unconstrained that nothing tied them down anymore, they would come off as blunt and cold like this!

The Marquis of Ruyi said, “Then what should we do now?”

Gu Yanying said, “First of all, we need to seal the Gate of Hungry Ghosts, which requires her highness the Dark Queen’s power. If she falls in battle, then I’ll probably have to take my leave in advance. Secondly, we need to deliver her highness the Dark Queen to the Gate of Hungry Ghosts. We need to concentrate our strength as much as possible and save her highness the Dark Queen. After that, we need to save the other fellows as quickly as possible and converge for a decisive battle.”

They had said all of that using soul sense, and they had not wasted much time either.

Li Qingshan nodded in agreement. The priority was still to seal off the Hungry Ghost realm and destroy this region. With Xiao An’s ability, she would not be in any danger anyway as long as she hid herself in a pile of bones.

At this very moment, there was a golden flash within the thick, black mist. The light that surged out was like a golden meteor landing, growing brighter and brighter.

Soon afterwards was a great boom and waves of air rushed out.

The Marquis of Ruyi was alarmed. "A Golden Core cultivator has blown up his golden core!"

Gu Yanying's eyes lit up. "That's our opportunity. Let's go!"

Golden cores were a crystallisation of a cultivator's many years of arduous cultivation. The power of the explosion was startling, pushing away the thick, black mist. The landscape on the ground immediately cleared up, which only seemed even more terrifying.

In that moment, Li Qingshan remembered the scene he had witnessed in the Hungry Ghost realm with his soul sense. He had no time to think about it as Gu Yanying had already flown off.

Over fifty kilometers away in the south-eastern direction, an illusionary ghost that stood three hundred meters tall roared and growled. Although it was injured again and again, it managed to hold off the Corpse Commanders.

Li Qingshan was secretly shocked. The Dark Queen was actually so powerful. Not only was the teamwork of the Corpse Commanders perfect, but they were even fighting with the strength of a million Corpse Soldiers and countless Corpse Generals. If that were him, he probably would not be able to last for even a while.

Even if he reverted to his original form, he would only reach the knees of the colossal ghost.

Gu Yanying said with some regret, "It's a pity that her highness the Dark Queen has something holding her back mentally, preventing her from unleashing the strength of this Void-bellied Ghost King. Otherwise, we wouldn't be in so much trouble today."

Under the encirclement of the Corpse Commanders, the Void-bellied Ghost King rapidly dimmed. Suddenly, it opened its huge, pit-like mouth and sucked in hard. The aura of death rushed in, and its figure consolidated again. It threw out a punch and chilling winds whistled. A few Corpse Commanders scattered and dodged it, but it did kill countless Corpse Soldiers and Generals.

Li Qingshan was even more astounded. And you say she hasn't unleashed its full strength!

If she truly could unleash it, then even if she faced a third heavenly tribulation cultivator, she probably would still be able to put up a fight. Controlling Ghost Kings for battle with a Golden Core cultivation was the strength of the Umbral Yin sect. It was no wonder that they stood on equal footing with the Sword Collection palace.

The Umbral Yin sect... The Umbral Yin Ghost Control technique... Xuanyue... Something holding her back... child...

Certain pieces of memories hidden in the depths of his mind abruptly surged out. Li Qingshan shook his head, refusing to think too much about it. He had no time to think about it either.

"Zi'er" no longer watched over the entire situation either, directly leading a few Corpse Commanders over to block them. She said, "I've won."

“Not necessarily!” Li Qingshan studied “Zi’er”. Although she possessed great skill in battle, her personal strength was only at Corpse Commander. She was even slightly weaker than regular Corpse Commanders. She was not undefeatable.

“Zi’er” looked at Li Qingshan and said, “Descendants of the phoenix truly are rare, but your powers are far too weak. Otherwise, all I’d be able to do is retreat.”

Li Qingshan’s reply was burning flames of the phoenix.

“Zi’er” raised her hand and surging corpse qi condensed into a wall. It no longer seemed like qi, but more like pitch, constantly writhing about.

The flames of the phoenix smashed into it and immediately melted away a great chunk, but it was unable to penetrate it. The corpse qi churned and filled in the hole in the blink of an eye.

The flames of the phoenix could overwhelm corpse qi, but if the quality and quantity of corpse qi completely surpassed it, there was nothing it could do.

“The Hungry Ghost realm should reward me with even more if I kill a being with ‘eternal life’! The Black Coffin Locks the Souls!”

“Zi’er” smiled and raised her hand. The black wall suddenly extended.

“Oh no! Let’s go!”

The three of them flew up swiftly, but the Corpse Commanders had been prepared beforehand, lunging out of the walls.

Li Qingshan set a Corpse Commander alight with his wings, and the Corpse Commander immediately retreated into the black wall, extinguishing the flames. Meanwhile, Gu Yanying and the Marquis of Ruyi each repelled a Corpse Commander too, but they were all slowed down.

When they looked around again, the black wall condensed from corpse qi had already filled their vision. It was everywhere, having condensed into a black coffin and locking them inside. Clearly, this move had been prepared beforehand. It could not be breached easily.

Li Qingshan witnessed the terrifying powers of a Corpse King. Even though he only faced a puppet right now, the techniques he used while borrowing the power of his subordinates was still powerful enough.

After locking them up, the black coffin began to constantly shrink. They were locked within the black coffin, but the Corpse Commanders could come and go freely, constantly launching sneak attacks and obstructing their attempts to destroy the coffin.

The Marquis of Ruyi swung the Seal of Mountains and Rivers and stopped a Corpse Commander. He asked frantically, “What do we do?”

“Our plan has failed. Let’s hope her highness the Dark Queen can last a little longer.”

Gu Yanying had absolutely no confidence in that. At the end of the day, how could a plan they had hatched on the spot rival a scheme a Corpse Commander had been plotting for all these years? She was only doing what she could and leaving the rest up to fate. She was close to her limit too!



“Zi’er” turned around and looked at the Dark Queen. She raised her hand again and corpse qi constantly gathered and condensed without firing, just like the prior signs of an attack from the main cannon of a Soaring Dragon ship.

The Dark Queen abruptly looked back. She sensed danger. If she still could dodge earlier, then having fought until now, she had become rather feeble.

A deathly streak of light pierced the Void-bellied Ghost King silently.

The Void-bellied Ghost King roared as its figure constantly dimmed before finally dispersing. It returned to the Dark Queen’s shadow.

The Dark Queen’s forehead was drenched with sweat. She fell to the ground powerlessly as she heaved slightly, but her eyes were as chilly as before.

“Am I actually going to die here today?”

“Zi’er” waved her hand, and the Corpse Commanders swarmed over.

A long, blood-red banner burst out of the layers upon layers of bones, emerging from underground. It wrapped around the Dark Queen like a dragon.

“Hmm?”

#### **Chapter 546 - The Sea of Blood Has No Bounds**

No one answered. Only the long, blood-red banner surged like waves. Gazing into it, it actually felt boundless.

The Dark Queen took out a soybean-sized pill from her sumeru ring and placed it into her mouth, closing her eyes to rest.

Under the many layers of white and corpses, almost-transparent white flames flickered quietly in Xiao An’s eye sockets, clearly reflecting the Dark Queen’s appearance.

The long-forgotten past that she refused to remember forcefully burst out, making it unavoidable.

Her sea of consciousness raged like the ocean. Countless memories were forcefully linked and glued together messily.

She saw the towering, magnificent estate, she saw the great state that gazed at the sea, she saw the deep rift valley, and she saw the Dark Queen!

All of these images reflected a child in the end. These were her memories.

The child was wrapped in a verdant-green waistband, dressed in black, luxurious clothes that were riddled with images of dragons and snakes. She was pretty and had a chilly expression, both unfamiliar and familiar.

Who was she?

Who am I?

.....

“Zi’er” watched as her subordinate Corpse Commanders vanished into the long, blood-red banner, and her expression finally changed. Arcane artifacts and treasures that could generate a space of their own were all extremely powerful. They were not what regular people could possess.

The “power of the domain” it gave off was not as powerful as the space that the Hungry Ghost realm had devoured, but it would be very difficult to break free from without any countermeasures.

“Get out here!”

“Zi’er” brought her hands together in a seal, and with a yell, corpse qi surged out and condensed into a vicious head. It shot off into the air with a long trail of black corpse qi.

It burrowed violently into the land where the long, blood-red banner had erupted from.

With a boom, the ground suddenly bulged as waves of soil were thrown into the surroundings. The bulge erupted soon afterwards, and the terrifying power it unleashed enveloped the Dark Queen.

Countless remains were blasted into the air, falling down like a storm.

Even the Dark Queen had vanished.

“Has she been finished off? The arcane artifact should have been disabled!”

“Zi’er” frowned. She was actually unable to detect their aura.

The group of Corpse Commanders vanished suddenly along with the long, blood-red banner. They were nowhere to be seen.

.....

“Her majesty the Dark Queen’s aura has vanished.”

In the huge, black coffin, Gu Yanying’s expression changed; she let out a glum sigh. She seemed like she had run out of choices.

Li Qingshan asked in surprise, “Really? You can sense it?”

He could not even extend his soul sense out of the black coffin, so he was unable to check on the situation outside. Was the soul sense of Golden Core cultivators stronger? However, when he saw how the Marquis of Ruyi also paled in fright, he realised he had only found out from Gu Yanying too.

Sure enough, she was hiding many different abilities; this made perfect sense. As the only beloved daughter of the Guardian Hawk God, her status was probably greater than most princes and princesses of the Great Xia empire. If it were not for the Hungry Ghost realm restricting and limiting almost everything, she probably could clear out the entire place with her talismans single-handedly.

“But I’m not certain whether she’s dead or alive.” Gu Yanying nodded. A bronze coin appeared in her hand, and she flicked it a few times, but she was unable to reach a conclusion with her divination.

Li Qingshan asked, “Are you going to be leaving?”

“I’m considering it. Why don’t the two of you discuss among yourselves and decide who will blow up their golden core or daemon core to destroy this black coffin and send me off?”

The Marquis of Ruyi’s expression became uglier, while Li Qingshan laughed loudly. “Don’t even think about it!”

“Then forget it. Men sure are unreliable. I can only rely on myself!” Gu Yanying smiled before suddenly becoming stern. “She’s here!”

“Zi’er” turned around and brought her hand over the black coffin. “Let’s deal with these three first!”

She twisted her hand violently, and the black coffin began to shrink abruptly. In the end, it had been reduced to the size of a room. She closed her fingers and said, “Live Burial!”

.....

Within the remains that “Zi’er’s” corpse qi face had blasted into the air, an inconspicuous little skeleton curled up within the huge bones that a corpse beast left behind.

She had stowed the Blood Sea Banner away in her mouth, and the Samādhi Flames of White Bone became extremely dim too. All that was left were two hollow sockets. Her white bones no longer gave off the same shiny lustre anymore either.

She seemed no different from a regular skeleton now.

Who could find a droplet of water in an ocean?

Like what Li Qingshan had said, she only had to lie down casually within a pile of remains, and she would be ridiculously safe.

The Dark Queen opened her eyes again and gazed at the boundless sea of blood below in shock. She saw the Corpse Commanders who had lunged at her earlier currently fend off the constant pounding of the blood sea.

White skeletons wandered about in the sea of blood. They were not powerful, but they seemed endless. They lunged over with each pounding of waves.

Over twenty huge skeletons circled around in the surroundings constantly, spraying white flames at the Corpse Commanders.

However, these Corpse Commanders were all extremely tough. Even without the support of Corpse Soldiers and Generals, they could still rampage through the sea of blood like there was no one else around. Even the Skeleton Demons were unable to stop them.

However, the Dark Queen discovered they wrapped themselves up firmly in corpse qi, refusing to let the sea of fire or sea of blood come into contact with their bodies. This was no longer merely caution, but also a form of fear.

And, their numbers seemed to have decreased by two compared to when they surrounded her earlier.

As the Dark Queen had guessed, the Corpse Commanders were indeed filled with fear. When they had first been trapped here, they completely ignored the blood and fire.

Their bodies were so tough that even if a flying sword was thrust at them, it would not necessarily be able to penetrate their skin.

And, they possessed no weaknesses on their bodies. Even if they were beheaded or torn apart, they would not die. They were even tougher than Golden Core cultivators who had trained their bodies all these years like Han Anguo.

That was until the flames burned their bodies and the blood splashed on them.

A Corpse Commander had directly been incinerated. His indestructible body was like dry firewood in fierce flames, burnt to a crisp in the blink of an eye. And that was not even the most horrifying. The other one had the lower half of its body melted away by the blood, letting out maddening shrieks before the sea of blood swallowed them soon after.

The willpower they had forged like steel in the Hungry Ghost realm immediately crumbled in the sea of blood. Under the constant invasion of despair they had not experienced in a very long time, their minds were thrown into a mess.

The sea of blood had no bounds. Even with repentance, there was no shore of salvation.

TL: It a “corrupted” version of a Chinese buddhist saying, 苦海无边 · 回头是岸, which basically translates to “The sea of bitterness has no bounds. Repent and the shore is at hand”, or as the English saying goes, “Repent and ye shall be saved”. It basically means that no matter what heinous deeds you’ve committed, no matter how far you’ve ventured into the sea of bitterness and suffering, the shore is right there as long as you look back—there is still salvation as long as you repent.

Only an endless sinking into misery awaited them. It was even more terrifying than roaming the Hungry Ghost realm and even more cruel than the punishments of the Hell realm.

The Blood Sea Banner was still very weak, but it still contained the despair of a bodhisattva!

“Where is this? Let’s work together and force our way out of here!”

Following the bewilderment and confusion, the Corpse Commanders gradually calmed down and repelled the Skull Prayer Beads together. They stood with their backs against each other as they observed the surroundings cautiously. They gathered their corpse qi together, condensing into a swelling, black sphere that hovered in the air.

Sure enough, the space began to twist and ripple. They could vaguely make out the familiar aura of the Hungry Ghost realm and the Corpse Commanders all riled up with vigour.

At this moment, the Dark Queen appeared. Having refined the pill, not only did her strength recover, but even her vigour had been revitalised. She felt like she had spent three whole days and nights resting. She bore no resemblance to how she ran out of strength from a bitter battle earlier.

It doesn’t matter who’s helping me, right now is the best opportunity for killing these Corpse Commanders!

The Dark Queen's gaze was chilly, noble, and composed. A black figure extended from her shadow, reaching over three hundred meters tall in the blink of an eye and turning into the Void-bellied Ghost King. It slammed down with its hand.

The sea of blood surged with violent waves as the Corpse Commanders scattered. The black sphere they had condensed after so much difficulty immediately collapsed.

The Dark Queen possessed the strength to contend with this group of Corpse Commanders in the first place, and not only had the Corpse Commanders lost two of their companions, but they had also lost the support of the corpse army.

And, the sea of blood constantly interfered with their actions and influenced them. When the Dark Queen appeared and destroyed the black sphere, the feeling of despair filled their minds immediately. They felt like it was useless no matter how they resisted, where they were better off simply giving up.

Although they managed to suppress this thought very quickly with their great willpower, their reactions still became delayed. And, they had to contend with the feeling of despair constantly, preventing them from unleashing their full strength.

As a result, the tables turned, and the Dark Queen easily gained the upper hand, suppressing the Corpse Commanders firmly. She fought them to the point where they fled for their lives, properly venting her feelings from earlier.

The Void-bellied Ghost King swung its hand at a Corpse Commander. A huge shadow enveloped it!

A sliver of despair appeared in the Corpse Commander's eyes. He thought to himself, Even if I dodge this strike, what then? I'll still end up dead! No, how can I think like that? Oh no!

He was distracted. By the time he returned to his senses, the huge hand had already filled his vision as the gust of wind rushed into his face. Dodging was already too late. He was sent flying viciously, falling into the sea of blood.

The Dark Queen knew this was nowhere near enough to kill a Corpse Commander. Right when she was about to go after him, she saw the region of blood surge violently and heard a horrific howl from the Corpse Commander. She could not help but become slightly taken aback.

She had had a lot of contact with the Hungry Ghost realm. She knew the minds and willpower of these zombies were almost numbingly tough. There was no pain that could faze them. Even when destruction descended upon them, they would not feel fear. As a result, almost all bewitching or enchanting techniques would struggle to be of any effect on them.

Just what terrifying thing can make a Corpse Commander let out a horrific howl like that?

As it turned out, the attack from the Void-bellied Ghost King had not smacked the Corpse Commander to death, but it did disperse his protective true qi. When he fell into the sea of blood, it was like he fell into a vat of sulfuric acid.

If the Corpse Commander had immediately circulated his corpse qi, he would have been able to force away the blood and escape from the sea of blood. However, under the furious corrosion of the blood, a feeling of great horror and great despair filled his heart, throwing his mind into chaos. He was like a

drowning person that did not know how to swim, that only knew to struggle instinctively and desperately, but the more they struggled, the deeper they sank. His body was reduced to blood very soon, becoming a part of the sea of blood. He only left behind a set of bones that floated above the sea.

The Skeleton Demons rushed over and surrounded the bones. With a spray of Samādhī Flames of White Bone, they were melted into a ball of bone fluid very quickly. Before long, another Skeleton Demon leapt out of the flames. The number of Skeleton Demons now reached twenty-six, and Xiao An had reached a new bottleneck.

#### **Chapter 547 - A Farewell, a Great Blaze**

The black coffin exploded loudly and corpse qi gushed out like the tide.

Li Qingshan curled up like an infant as the Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell rose up in layers, blocking the invading corpse qi before being eaten away and penetrated very soon.

His first line of defence shattered. Then he enveloped himself in the burning phoenix wings. Although the flames of the phoenix could suppress corpse qi, it was still very weak after all. It gave way very soon in the violent explosion, and the wings shattered. His second line of defence had been breached too.

But fortunately, after breaching two lines of defence, the power of the explosion had begun to weaken. His Ox Demon Forges its Hide forcefully withstood it, but a great chunk of his daemon qi was expended.

The Marquis of Ruyi was in much worse shape. He clearly did not possess such powerful defensive techniques like Li Qingshan. His luxurious clothes had been reduced to tatters, and even his skin had been dyed black, clearly contaminated with extremely potent corpse poison.

His clothes were official robes that the Great Xia empire specially designed for the governors of commanderies. It had been passed down through the generations. Like the Seal of Mountains and Rivers, not only was it a representation of identity and status, but it also possessed extremely great power.

When he wore it, the serpents on the clothing protected him like an indestructible fortress. Now that it had been forcefully ripped apart beyond repair, he had turned pale. He was filled with pain.

Only Gu Yanying stood with her hands behind her back, just as graceful as before. Her demeanour was completely unaffected. She seemed to be unscathed, but there were traces of corrosion on the hem of her clothes and the cuffs of her sleeves. The moment she emerged, she used a gaze as sharp as a hawk's to search for the Dark Queen's trace, but she found nothing.

"Is the Dark Queen dead?"

Fifty kilometers away, there was another great rumble. A Golden Core cultivator had fallen in battle and detonated their golden core.

The fierce wind ruffled her clothes wildly as her long, black hair drifted through the air.

Gu Yanying calculated quietly. "According to the auras, another Golden Core cultivator has fallen in battle, except they failed to blow up their golden core in time. The remaining cultivators have probably reached their limit too. If this continues, they'll probably fall one after another. The Hungry Ghost realm has almost completely devoured this region."

“Yanying, what should we do?”

For the first time in his life, he had experienced the horror of death. Remembering how the extravagances of his life, the fine wine and beautiful women, the great path of longevity, would all be leaving him, even his teeth began to chatter.

Gu Yanying thought, The Marquis of Ruyi can be considered a talent, but he has been sheltered by his seniors too much. After all, he hasn't undergone trials of life and death before. Normally, he can maintain the bearing of a marquis, but when he faces a major matter regarding his fate, he becomes frantic.

Li Qingshan sneered. “What sh\*tty Marquis of Ruyi? Normally you swagger around on your high horse, but when it matters, you just become a coward!”

The Marquis of Ruyi flew into a rage. “How dare you insult me, wretched daemon!”

Gu Yanying said with surprise, “You sure are very composed.”

Li Qingshan smiled. “If I faced life-threatening danger, I wouldn't necessarily be able to smile either. However, these zombies aren't enough to claim my life!” Afterwards, he said to the Marquis of Ruyi, “How about this? If you give me your sumeru ring, I'll save your life!”

“Don't you even think- You have a way out?”

Li Qingshan laughed aloud. “I do have a way out, but upon further thought, I think it's more satisfying to retrieve it from your corpse!”

.....

In the sea of blood, the Void-bellied Ghost King grabbed the last Corpse Commander and plunged it viciously into the blood. A while later, the sea of blood settled back down.

“May I ask who it is that has provided me with assistance? Please show yourself! The Umbral Yin sect will definitely show many thanks!”

The Dark Queen stowed the Ghost King away and gazed around. With how strange and powerful their methods were, the person must have been extraordinary, and they were actually able to suppress these undead. If she could recruit them for the Umbral Yin sect, they would definitely be of great use.

The landscape around her changed, and the sea of blood vanished. They had returned to the sky above Burial Mound mountain.

“Zi'er” suddenly looked back and frowned. Two figures appeared, one large and one small, one human and one skeleton, facing one another.

They had appeared, while the Corpse Commanders had vanished. Had they already killed the Corpse Commanders?

That was impossible!

The Dark Queen's pupils dilated, reflecting a small skeleton. Its white bones shone with a glossy lustre, radiating with a holy light as its eye sockets burned with white fire.

Twenty-six prayer beads wrapped around its slender, left wrist as it clutched a long, fluttering, blood-red banner in its right hand.

Xiao An also stared at the beautiful woman before her, only inches apart.

“You...” The Dark Queen extended her hand. An indescribable feeling flowed through her heart. There was no reason or evidence, but from the moment she saw it, she knew that important object that she had lost many years ago had appeared before her again.

“Your highness, you’ve come out.” The Marquis of Ruyi was overjoyed.

“Master- Hmm? Li’l Whitey, you’ve grown bigger too!”

Xuanyue, who had been hiding in the sky with “Moon Concealment” the entire time, saw the Dark Queen appear and also showed herself before rushing over.

Li Qingshan saw Xiao An and became relieved. He smiled and wanted to say something, but he quickly thought of something, The Dark Queen... Xiao An... the Umbral Yin Ghost Control technique... South Hub city... Don’t tell me?

His expression suddenly changed. An invisible hand seemed to grip his throat. He was unable to utter a single word.

Gu Yanying glanced at Li Qingshan in astonishment, To think that there are also times when this man who’s unafraid of anything will be afraid. It’s for this little skeleton, so that Xiao An.

As she knew Li Qingshan’s identity, she obviously managed to guess the white skeleton was Xiao An. It was not just Li Qingshan. The Dark Queen’s behaviour was very strange too. Since when had this chilly, proud woman ever exhibited an expression like that?

In this region that the Hungry Ghost realm was about devour, three people completely forgot about their surroundings. They completely forgot about victory and defeat, life and death. All that remained was the people before them.

There was ravishing joy from finding what was previously lost, there was wavering dilemma, and there was the fear of loss.

Li Qingshan retreated and dodged it. The Dark Queen’s hand touched nothing.

Xiao An gazed at the Dark Queen as she constantly backed away. She silently murmured inside, Farewell, queen mother!

The pretty, familiar yet unfamiliar child overlapped with her before separating again. She turned around resolutely and flew towards Li Qingshan, throwing herself into his arms and embracing him firmly.

Li Qingshan was overjoyed. He grinned from ear to ear, smiling like a child. Sensing the emotional turmoil in Xiao An’s heart, he rubbed her head and said, “Let’s go for a great battle!”

Xiao An broke free from Li Qingshan’s embrace and waved her arm. The twenty-six Skull Prayer Beads scattered and landed within the sea of corpses.

Wielding the white bone sword, Xiao An leapt down.



“Stop it!”

“Zi’er” experienced a great sense of danger and ordered loudly. Several dozen Corpse Commanders abandoned their opponents and flew over, charging towards Xiao An.

Li Qingshan lifted his arm, bringing it in front of Gu Yanying who wanted to help out. “Get the Dark Queen to prepare for sealing off the Gate of Hungry Ghosts! We’ll press forward into the enemy’s den!”

What? Gu Yanying was utterly shocked. Was she supposed to fend off several million Corpse Soldiers, as well as so many Corpse Generals and Commanders, alone?

The group of Corpse Commanders arrived with surging corpse qi. With a wave of the Blood Sea Banner, they all vanished into thin air, and their corpse qi dispersed.

She could not kill them all, but keeping them trapped for a while was no problem.

When the Blood Sea Banner had first been refined, it was in its weakest form. Through constant battle and devouring enemies, the Blood Sea Banner had become more and more powerful. After reducing the Corpse Commanders who encircled the Dark Queen to blood, the Blood Sea Banner had never been so powerful before.

These Corpse Commanders had very tough bodies and their corpse qi was powerful. They could even lead Corpse Generals and Corpse Soldiers to strengthen themselves.

However, that was it. They were not capable of anything else. They did not have the powerful innate abilities of daemons, nor did they have the flexible techniques of humans. As a result, breaching the Blood Sea Banner became very difficult.

Xiao An descended from above. The Blood Sea Banner stretched over three hundred meters long, dancing about like a blood dragon as it silently devoured the sea of corpses.

Thousands, tens of thousand, hundreds of thousand!

The Corpse Generals and Corpse Commanders could still fend off the sea of blood, but these Corpse Soldiers clearly lacked the ability. They were reduced to blood as soon as they entered the sea of blood, strengthening the Blood Sea Banner’s powers.

The skeletons they left behind floating in the sea of blood. They were much more powerful than the white bones regular people left behind in the very beginning. Within the sea of blood hid a sea of bones that constantly lunged and mauled at the Corpse Commanders.

The Skeleton Demons that had scattered did not stand around idly either. They opened their huge, vicious, teeth-ridden mouths and spat out gushing flames.

Thousands of Corpse Generals led an army several million strong to surround these Skeleton Demons. They all fell into military formations as corpse qi condensed into vicious monsters in the air. Terrifying weapons were swung at the Skeleton Demons.

The corpse qi on Corpse Soldiers had always been much thinner. The Corpse Generals had mobilised their corpse qi to unleash various attacks, which made the Corpse Soldiers lose their final layer of protection.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Wherever the Samādhi Flames of White Bone went, they were like sparks that landed in a pot of oil. A great blaze rushed into the air and spread rapidly, reaching an unstoppable size in the blink of an eye.

Burning in the Samādhi Flames of White Bone, the Corpse Soldiers became a part of the flames one by one, stoking the fire.

The Samādhi Flames of White Bone turned into great swathes of fire clouds, surging through the air while spitting out thousands of tongues of flames like colossal, constantly-transforming beasts, licking the sea of corpses on the ground.

Having lost their subordinates, the Corpse Generals could only circulate their corpse qi and hold on for dear life in the sea of fire. But at most, they would only last a little longer in the sea of fire.

Under the violent surging of Samādhi Flames of White Bone, their protective corpse qi collapsed and was torn apart very soon, reduced to great torches of fire.

The entire world was burning!

“What a great fire!” Li Qingshan shouted out in admiration.

The others were all speechless. The firelight made their faces flickered.

Gu Yanying frowned firmly. What is this fire? How come I’ve never heard of it? And how is it so powerful? She personally believed she possessed great knowledge and extensive experience, but now she saw a fire even she had never heard of before. Their fortuitous encounter truly had been unfathomable.

“White flames!”

“Zi’er” widened her eyes. The flames caused her a vague sense of fear, which made her suddenly remember an extremely widespread rumor within the Hungry Ghost realm. A long, long time ago, white holy fire had once descended from above and incinerated everything.

Although the fire had been forced out of the Hungry Ghost realm in the end, countless Corpse Kings and Ghost Kings were reduced to ashes in this great calamity of the Hungry Ghost realm. There had even been much more and even stronger existences well beyond his reach that had died in it.

### **Chapter 548 - The Buddha Slaying Sword Embryo**

The Dark Queen suddenly extended her hand over. Her mind was in a mess. Was I mistaken? Are the throbs of my heart just a coincidence? If it’s not her, why did she save me? But if it’s really her, why won’t she recognise me? Why won’t she call me “queen mother”? Does she still hate me?

In the depths of this chilly, noble queen’s eyes, there was a sliver of confusion and a sliver of grief!

Only when the great fire reached the sky did she return to her senses. She saw the white figure flying freely above the sea of corpses, waving the long, blood-red banner. She was invincible!

This was her current power!

The Marquis of Ruyi's mind shuddered. How can I possibly defeat an opponent like that? Even if I mobilise all the cultivators of the Ruyi commandery, could I even succeed?

In truth, the Samādhi Flames of White Bone were only extremely effective against undead. Against cultivators, particularly Golden Core cultivators, it was not necessarily that powerful. However, as the Marquis of Ruyi had faced constant life-threatening danger, his mind was already in a great mess. He had been viciously frightened.

As for the other Golden Core cultivators, they had become completely dumbfounded as they watched this terrifying sight that resembled the end of the world unfold before they could even feel relieved over their survival.

The flames had no concept of friend or foe. They also had to protect themselves with spiritual qi. One of the Golden Core cultivators had already been on their last breath within the encirclement of Corpse Commanders and had almost blown up his Golden Core. When the Samādhi Flames of White Bone reached him, he also erupted into flames with a boom.

"I refuse to accept this! I've planned for so long, only to fail because of an absurd legend!"

"Zi'er" drew in her arms and rushed into the air, heading right towards Xiao An.

The figure of a colossal ghost blocked her way like a mountain. It was the Void-bellied Ghost King that the Dark Queen had summoned. It looked down on "Zi'er" as it swung its huge hand towards "Zi'er" viciously.

Like the sky had collapsed, it actually felt like she was suffocating. "Zi'er" crossed her arms and assumed a defensive stance. She was struck with an unparalleled force, sent flying violently.

Her cultivation was merely equivalent to Corpse Commanders. Now that the corpse army had been destroyed by Xiao An, there was no longer anything she could rely on. She obviously was not the Dark Queen's opponent.

The Void-bellied Ghost King took a step forward, stomping down on "Zi'er".

Boom!

Rock was thrown into the air as the ground cracked, forming a deep pit.

The wisp of smoke on "Zi'er"'s back tugged her, which was why she managed to avoid the attack. Wind and fire assaulted from the left and right as Gu Yanying and Li Qingshan brushed past each other.

"Zi'er" twisted her body violently and fell downwards. Her right hand hissed from the flames of the phoenix, and a bloody gash was left behind on her face.

The wisp of black smoke on her back had suddenly been severed. She blinked her eyes as if she had awoken from a great dream before closing them again. She spread her arms and fell into the Gate of Hungry Ghosts.

By now, the Gate of Hungry Ghosts had already turned into a huge abyss. She vanished in the blink of an eye.

Gu Yanying looked back and smiled. "It's fantastic that your highness is safe and sound."

The Dark Queen nodded. "I've made you worry, my sister." She turned around, and her gaze landed on Li Qingshan.

In that moment, Li Qingshan experienced a false impression that the gaze had pierced right through him. The Void-bellied Ghost King behind the Dark Queen seemed like it could swing its hand at him at any time.

The Dark Queen shifted her gaze away very soon and sighed gently. "Let's seal the Gate of Hungry Ghosts first!" It was not like she planned on stopping if she did not receive a satisfying conclusion.

"Don't you even think about it!"

A hoarse, ear-piercing voice rang out and echoed loudly through the Gate of Hungry Ghosts until it reached the sky.

Boom! A huge, withered hand extended out of the abyss, grabbing the edge of the pit. With a violent tug, a colossal figure leapt out.

Li Qingshan finally saw the Corpse King's appearance. At first glance, he seemed like a dried, human corpse, but he was countless times bigger. Vicious-looking bone spikes protruded from his body while radiating with an unmatched pressure.

Due to the restrictions of the boundary, only the top half of his body extended out from the Gate of Hungry Ghosts, but he was still as tall as a small mountain. The black corpse qi that coiled around his body resembled the mist that lingered among mountains. His eyes akin to small lakes shone with a brutal green light as they stared viciously at the Void-bellied Ghost King. He swung his claws violently.

Four streaks of brutal, black light ripped through the air, targeting Xiao An in the distance. What made him feel threatened the most was not the woman before him who could control the Ghost King, but this tiny skeleton. As long as he could kill it, the several dozen Corpse Commanders under his command would be able to break free.

An even taller mountain blocked the Corpse King. The Void-bellied Ghost King forcefully took on the streaks of black light, staggering a few steps back. A few horrific claw marks appeared on its body. It threw a punch with a furious howl.

On the wasteland, a corpse and a ghost, two colossal beings, stood on the spot without dodging at all as they attacked one another furiously. One was unable to dodge, while the other remained in place to protect the "person" behind it.

This sight also left Li Qingshan shocked. He felt like he had returned to the primordial battlefield between gods and demons. However, he saw the Void-bellied Ghost King rapidly dim after receiving a few strikes.

On the other hand, the Corpse King became braver as he fought. Although he was unable to completely overcome from the powers of the boundary and reach this space from the Hungry Ghost realm, his strength was not something a mindless Ghost King controlled by a second heavenly tribulation cultivator

could rival. As long as he lasted a little longer, the Hungry Ghost realm would completely devour this region, and by then, this would be his world!

“Your highness, I’ve come to assist you!” the Marquis of Ruyi called out. The Seal of Mountains and Rivers expanded to its limit and crushed down towards the Corpse King.

The Corpse King forcefully endured a palm strike from the Void-bellied Ghost King as he landed a punch on the Seal of Mountains and Rivers with the back of his hand. The seal was directly knocked several dozen kilometers away, becoming riddled with cracks and growing dimmer and dimmer.

Blood spurted out of the Marquis of Ruyi’s mouth violently. He wiped it away before mobilising the Seal of Mountains and Rivers again like he was mad, crushing down on the Corpse King.

Li Qingshan and Gu Yanying flew through the air, kicking up streams of wind and fire. Compared to the Corpse King, they seemed like two tiny moths constantly lingering around. Even though the phoenix fire and atmospheric winds possessed great power, they only left behind burns and cuts on the Corpse King’s colossal body.

The other cultivators also understood they had reached the final moment. Whether they survived or not would completely depend on this battle. They all rushed over.

At this very moment, Li Qingshan experienced a warning of extreme danger. He beat his wings furiously and circled around in the air.

.....

The Samādhi Flames of White Bone swept through the entire region, sparing no Corpse Soldiers or Corpse Generals, while Corpse Commanders were all sucked into the Blood Sea Banner. The Blood Sea Banner surged and twisted constantly as if it could rip apart at any time.

Although the Blood Sea Banner had already become even more powerful, it was still a struggle to keep several dozen Corpse Commanders suppressed.

The rolling Samādhi Flames of White Bone swept back, channeling into the skull at the top of the Blood Sea Banner before flowing through the spine, the ribs, and the tailbone from top to bottom. The pole made from bone acquired a completely new look, becoming even more lustrous and smooth, supporting the banner of the blood sea.

When she first forged the Blood Sea Banner, she had only succeeded barely, as there were insufficient remains. She did not even have enough for herself, let alone providing for the Blood Sea Banner.

Yet now, just the Corpse Soldiers she had refined approached ten million.

Before “Zi’er” appeared, the Corpse Soldiers that rushed out of the Gate of Hungry Ghosts had already reached several million. Although they had all been killed or crushed to powder by the Seal of Mountains and Rivers, their remains were still scattered across the ground.

Xiao An accepted them all, letting none go to waste. The issue of insufficient remains no longer existed, so she forged the Blood Sea Banner again, allowing it to reach the peak of its current stage.

Then she controlled the Samādhi Flames of White Bone, making it sweep over and turn into a huge fire tornado, channeling into the top of her head. Her bones absorbed the flames madly like a sponge, sucking up all the flames within a radius of several dozen kilometers. Only then was she satisfied, and she stopped absorbing.

Every bone of hers possessed a lustre akin to the Samādhi Flames of White Bone, a smooth white that was almost transparent. She had finally pushed the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty to the limits of the first layer, but she reached a new bottleneck. In order to break through, not only did she require tremendous amounts of corpses, she also required a deeper comprehension of the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty.

The Skull Prayer Beads were the same. After forging the twenty-six Skull Prayer Beads to their peak, she struggled to forge a twenty-seventh. As it seemed, she needed to reach the second layer of the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty before she could forge it.

Once she reached twenty-seven prayer beads, the overall strength of the Skull Demons would undergo a qualitative breakthrough.

By then, a single Skull Demon would be able to contend against a Golden Core cultivator, and the Skull Demon Formation they assembled would become even more powerful. She would be powerful enough to dominate all opponents of the second heavenly tribulation.

The Blood Sea Banner surged again. The Corpse Commanders were working together to break out. Xiao An tossed the twenty-six Skull Prayer Beads into there, assembling the Skull Demon Formation to temporarily suppress them and buy time.

Xiao An raised the white bone sword in her hand high into the air, pointing it at the sky. She began to chant inside.

The sky full of fire began to revolve violently around the tip of the sword, forming a great vortex. It emanated outwards with each revolution, filling the entire sky.

A stream of fire channeled into the tip of the sword.

The white bone sword that was only a meter in length seemed like a bottomless hole, swallowing the sky of fire like a whale.

Within the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty, the most powerful weapon was neither the Blood Sea Banner nor the Skull Prayer Beads, but the “Buddha Slaying sword”.

Buddhahood—complete enlightenment—was the highest attainment of buddhism. They had leapt out of the six realms, no longer bound by the five elements. They possessed endless power and infinite wisdom.

Even the creator of the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty only dared to proclaim the title of the “White Bone Bodhisattva”, with no right to call himself the “White Bone Buddha”. Yet, to name this sword “Buddha Slaying”, it was both his ambition and evidence of this sword’s power.

The Samādhi Flames of White Bone transformed from millions of Corpse Soldiers and thousands of Corpse Generals all merged into the white bone sword, without a sliver remaining.

The sea of corpses vanished. The flames vanished. However, the surroundings did not clear up or brighten. The sky remained gloomy, enveloped with mist that never dispersed.

The white bone sword did not undergo any alarming changes. It only lengthened slightly, and its overall shape even became slightly cruder than the original white bone sword.

Did the forging process fail?

Xiao An gazed at the sword in her hand as a sliver of joy filled her heart. Although the Buddha Slaying sword was not even close to “basic completion”, she had narrowly formed a sword embryo.

#### **Chapter 549 - Four Golden Cores Into the Belly**

The Corpse King spread his arms. His nails were curved like hawk talons. Ten streaks of black light shot off into the surroundings from the tips of his fingers, which happened to be his fingernails.

Li Qingshan felt like his heart was in his throat as he desperately turned and weaved. If he were struck, then no matter how powerful his life force was, all that awaited him would be death.

The fingernail turned with him like a flying sword. Right when he was unable to dodge it, a sudden gust of strong wind appeared from the side, pushing him along.

The fingernail the size of a stone beam whistled past him as a few strands of his scarlet hair drifted through the air.

Li Qingshan nodded at Gu Yanying. If it were not for Gu Yanying’s fan swing, becoming heavily injured would be unavoidable even if he managed to survive. Afterwards, if he took on another attack or two, he would be in danger.

Gu Yanying was not under attack. Clearly, the Corpse King’s attacks were selective. They targeted those who could not defend or dodge.

If it were not for the spirit turtle’s warning, Li Qingshan probably would have been heavily injured. Gazing down, another two Golden Core cultivators had fallen in battle. Li Qingshan even recognised one of them. They happened to be one of the four grandmasters.

Another three Golden Core cultivators sustained damage of varying degree. Light damage referred to shattered lifebound arcane artifacts and a severed arm, while heavy damage was having the lower half of their body completely crushed. That person had only managed to hold on with the life force of a Golden Core cultivator, but he was still on his last breath.

Before the Golden Core cultivators could even complete the encirclement, they had been frightened out of their wits.

This was the horror of a Corpse King. An entire realm of cultivation separated them. Even though he could not unleash his full strength, he was still not something a group of Golden Core cultivators could treat with scorn. If they wanted to stop him, then they better be prepared to die!

The Dark Queen’s Void-bellied Ghost King forcefully took on three fingernails and was on the cusp of collapsing. It would probably give way with one more attack.

The Dark Queen glanced behind before looking at the Corpse King again and taking in a deep breath.

Fierce wind whistled as rolling yin qi surged into the Void-bellied Ghost King's cavernous mouth. Its body consolidated once more as its belly bulged high into the air.

"You still won't give up!"

The Corpse King pressed his hands against the ground, and his body pulled a little further out of the Gate of Hungry Ghosts. His aura became even more powerful and intense. Rings of corpse qi coiled around his arm as he struck the Void-bellied Corpse King's belly.

The Void-bellied Corpse King leaned forward and skid several kilometers, ploughing two huge trails in the ground. Yin qi gushed out of its mouth as it became extremely haggard.

During that, the Gate of Hungry Ghosts opened even wider. The Corpse King's strength did not wane, instead growing greater and greater. Although he had lost countless subordinates, the entire Hungry Ghost realm was supporting him in expanding its territory.

The Corpse King said, "All of you will die here today!"

And that strange skeleton. While its white flames were terrifying, they were unable to breach his protective corpse qi. Its strength was only around the level of a Corpse Commander. He refused to believe something so weak could destroy the Hungry Ghost realm.

"As long as I can use my full strength, I can kill it in a single palm strike."

The omen of warning in Li Qingshan's heart was growing more intense!

An opponent as powerful as that was well beyond what he could handle with his current cultivation. He would already be fortunate if he were able to escape.

But there was nowhere to escape. He would not escape either!

When facing an undefeatable opponent, some would feel fear and despair, while others would rouse and get their blood pumping. He was the latter.

He glanced at Xiao An from afar. Xiao An had already helped out tremendously by destroying the corpse army and suppressing several dozen Corpse Commanders. It was up to him now.

His fighting spirit began to bubble, and there were no more unnecessary thoughts in his head. He only thought about how he could defeat the opponent.

"Send me off!"

"Alright!" Gu Yanying waved her folding fan, and a tornado-like gust of wind pushed Li Qingshan along with a great and gentle force.

Li Qingshan unfurled his wings, and his entire body blazed. He pushed his speed to the limit, leaving behind a long trail of flames like a burning meteor. He sailed across the sky and descended.

He's just bringing about his own doom, like a moth to a flame! That was what everyone present thought at that moment.



The Corpse King raised his hand, about to crush this overconfident moth.

The fire made a turn, flying over the Corpse King's head and landing five kilometers away.

The Marquis of Ruyi realised what he was doing. He widened his eyes and called out, "The golden cores!"

Li Qingshan would never launch a suicide attack. His target was not the Corpse King, but the golden cores left behind by the two Golden Core cultivators the Corpse King killed in a single strike.

Were there any Golden Core cultivators present that would stop him?

With a scoop, Li Qingshan obtained two golden cores, along with two hundred treasures pouches. He casually shoved the two golden cores into his mouth before turning around. However, he still did not charge toward the Corpse King.

In the battle earlier, a Golden Core cultivator had been killed before he could blow up his golden core, which had fallen to the ground, while another cultivator had been incinerated by the Samādhi Flames of White Bone.

Li Qingshan had locked onto the positions of the two golden cores a long time ago.

Everyone only saw a streak of firelight revolve around the Gate of Hungry Ghosts from afar a few times!

He had obtained another two golden cores.

Li Qingshan directly shoved them into his mouth before flying off into the distance. Four golden cores were in his belly.

Gu Yanying cried out, "Spit it out, quick!"

Every golden core contained the essence of several centuries of cultivation from a Golden Core cultivator. It was true that they contained great energy, but consuming them like that was not cultivation, but suicide.

He had consumed four golden cores together, and their elements were completely different. It was possible to imagine the outcome when four golden cores exploded in the body. No matter how tough his body was, no matter how great his life force was, it would all be torn to shreds. He would be more dead than dead.

Li Qingshan smiled at Gu Yanying, but the smile became vicious very soon. His handsome, flawless face was replaced by the fierce, hideous face of a daemon. His body stretched upwards, three meters, fifteen meters, thirty meters, sixty meters...

Having transformed into his original daemon form, his eyes shone like embers as his hair burned like fire. A huge pair of fire wings raged behind his body, no longer possessing the resplendence of the phoenix, but more unscrupulous and turbulent.

Li Qingshan dropped to his knees loudly. The powers in the four golden cores erupted in his body at the same time, rampaging around furiously.

He used the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression to suppress it desperately while bringing tranquility to his mind and allowing his thoughts to become intricate. He did everything he could to control and lead every portion of the power.

But even with that, his muscles bulged like they were tumours before exploding loudly and turning into balls of fire.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

It was as if countless bombs were buried in Li Qingshan's body, and they were set off consecutively.

In the blink of an eye, there was no longer a single part of him that was complete. It had all turned into fire that blazed vigorously. If he had not reached the first layer of the Phoenix Transformation already, he probably would have been on the verge of death.

Through the flames, it was possible to clearly make out a hideous skeleton standing proudly.

Crack! Crack! Fractures appeared on the bones. Even the sturdy tiger bones were unable to withstand the power of four golden cores exploding simultaneously. They were like cracks that riddled a dam, basically on the cusp of collapsing.

The Marquis of Ruyi had also become dumbfounded by his maddening actions. "H- Has he lost his mind? This wretched daemon!"

The Corpse King laughed wildly. "Is this your ray of hope? I haven't even done anything, and you're already close to death."

He was out of his mind if he thought he could breakthrough by simply swallowing a few golden cores on the spot!

.....

In the sea of blood, the Skeleton Demon Formation was torn apart, returning to Xiao An's wrist. Their colour had even become slightly dim. Only when the Samādhi Flames of White Bone drifted across them did they recover their lustre.

The Blood Sea Banner had finally reached its limit with suppressing several dozen Corpse Commanders. If she tried to continue, she would damage the Blood Sea Banner.

Xiao An glanced at Li Qingshan in worry before settling down and shaking the Blood Sea Banner.

Several dozen Corpse Commanders of various strange shapes and sizes flew out.

The cultivators all changed drastically in expression. The moon demon had forcefully swallowed several golden cores and was on the brink of death. The Corpse King was so ferocious too, and now they also faced a pincer attack from so many Corpse Commanders. Death was basically certain.

These wretched daemons truly were not reliable!

Xiao An lifted the Buddha Slaying sword embryo silently.

The Corpse Commanders had broken free after all this, so they were utterly fuming. They immediately gathered their corpse qi for revenge, only to see there was not a single Corpse Soldier remaining on the ground for them to command. They could not help but be taken aback.

They had only been suppressed in the Blood Sea Banner for a short moment, yet the situation outside had changed so drastically.

Xiao An did not care about what they thought either. She swung the Buddha Slaying sword embryo backwards and leapt up, shooting towards the group of Corpse Commanders like a bolt of lightning. She actually wanted to face off against several dozen Corpse Commanders alone.

Even Gu Yanying began to think her mental capacity was a little lacking. These two basically could not be understood with conventional thinking!

Why would the Corpse Commanders be afraid? They roared as they received her, but they did not lose their calm. Their auras linked together, weaving into a huge, flawless net. They wanted to trap her in the net before ripping her to shreds.

The one that lunged at her was the mourning-stick-wielding Corpse Commander who matched Han Anguo evenly earlier. He let out a sharp wail that could sway the minds of people like an invisible, sharp pick. The mourning stick in his hand turned into hundreds of blurs, yet every single blur was a real attack, raining down on her head like a storm.

The other Corpse Commanders used various attacks too as punches, teeth, claws, and corpse qi all rushed over.

Xiao An brought the Buddha Slaying sword embryo before her calmly and began swinging it skillfully. She was like a master of calligraphy unleashing a wild scribble, free and easy, taking great delight in the process.

She passed through the net the Corpse Commanders weaved. The Corpse Commanders who confronted her directly all became stunned in the air.

The Corpse Commander dressed in mourning attire gazed at the mourning stick in his hand. It suddenly broke into two pieces along the middle, falling to the ground. Then he lowered his head and gazed at himself. Slashes criss-crossed his body, first as black lines before expanding and separating.

His face was filled with disbelief. He used his hands to cover his wounds as black corpse qi flowed out between his fingers.

In that moment, he was carved into pieces, falling out of the sky.

In a single clash, five Corpse Commanders had been cut to pieces.

It was true that the Buddha Slaying sword embryo did not possess any powers yet. It was only especially tough and sharp, so sharp that whether it was the protective corpse qi or the Corpse Commanders' indestructible bodies, none of them seemed to exist before it.

"What sword is that? Even my atmospheric winds aren't that great." Gu Yanying was stunned. Her atmospheric winds were powerful, but collecting and refining them was extremely troublesome. It was nowhere near as convenient as a sword.

Only now did Han Anguo remember his battle with the Corpse Commander in mourning attire earlier, which left him even more speechless. Originally, he thought it was about time to teach the demons a lesson and clean up the matters of the Clear River prefecture, but he no longer possessed that confidence now.

When he looked over at the moon demon, something startling was happening there too!

### **Chapter 550 - The Fifth Layer of the Ox Demon**

Li Qingshan's entire body blazed with fire. Even the surrounding ground had melted into red-hot, flowing lava. With his head lowered, kneeling in the pool of lava, he seemed like a demon god of fire at the end of his path, sunken deeply in mud.

He slowly raised a leg with difficulty, switching to a half-kneeling pose before suddenly raising his head, clenching his fists and spreading his arms, letting out a furious roar at the sky.

The flames surged madly as his scarlet hair drifted, dyeing the sky red.

The ox demon stands with its horns towards the heavens! This was a will to never yield!

Within the flames, his flesh and blood constantly regrew as his strength skyrocketed.

"He actually withstood it!" Gu Yanying was greatly shocked. That was four golden cores after all.

More accurately, it was five. There had also been a golden core from Wen Zhangqing.

The great strength of the ox demon was boundless.

However, that was not enough. It still was not enough!

It was not enough to defeat the Corpse King, and it was not enough to break through to the fifth layer of the ox demon.

Li Qingshan suddenly turned. The flames swept around and changed into the shape of pupils in his eye sockets, gazing at the injured Golden Core cultivator who had half his body destroyed.

With a tiger's roar, he lunged over.

In that moment, everyone saw the flames on him transform into a winged, scarlet tiger, surging with malice and raging killing intent.

"Stop, wretched daemon!"

The Marquis of Ruyi yelled out, but he was unable to stop him in time, nor did he have the power to stop him.

"Wretched daemon, I'll take you down with me!" the cultivator roared crazily. His golden core began to revolve and radiate with resplendent light, about to blow up with terrifying power.

The tiger claws condensed from fire kept it from moving before conjuring the figure of the spirit turtle. The trembling golden core settled down reluctantly.

The Spirit Turtle Suppresses the Seas, suppressing all restlessness.

The fire tiger extended its tongue and swept the golden core into its mouth, nodding slightly as if it was satisfied. It turned its head and glanced past the other cultivators.

The hearts of all cultivators sank completely. They faced internal and external strife. Both the Corpse King and the daemon were extremely terrifying.

Never had they thought this battle would actually end up so horrifying.

“Die, wretched daemon!”

The Seal of Mountains and Rivers smashed down. It was covered in cracks, but it was still tremendously powerful.

The fire tiger had already vanished from there. With a trail of flames, it lunged over and pressed down the other injured Golden Core cultivator, directly swallowing his golden core.

The cultivator was also prepared to blow up his golden core, but if Li Qingshan did not attack him, he obviously would not dig his own grave. Even ants cravenly clung to life, let alone a mighty Golden Core cultivator.

However, by the time Li Qingshan attacked him, all was too late. The spirit turtle could suppress the golden core before it exploded.

There were only two people present who could stop Li Qingshan. One was the Dark Queen, while the other was Gu Yanying, but neither of them had any intentions of stopping him.

The other cultivators were completely worn out from the battle. Even if they wanted to save them, they had to consider whether they had that ability or not.

Although the Marquis of Ruyi constantly tried to smash him with the Seal of Mountains and River, he climbed higher and higher into the air, just hurling constant abuse.

In the blink of an eye, Li Qingshan had killed three Golden Core cultivators, swallowing another three golden cores.

To the cultivators' relief, Li Qingshan's hunt ended with that. He began another round of refinement.

Everything had happened in a split second. From when he roared out to the three pounces, a lot had happened, but it all occurred within a few seconds.

If any mortals were present, they would not have even been able to grasp what had happened, let alone respond.

In total, Li Qingshan had swallowed eight golden cores!

“What's he trying to do that actually requires so many golden cores? Is he trying to break through to Daemon Commander? That's impossible. Once he triggered the heavenly tribulation, even if he survives it narrowly, he'll be on his last legs. He won't be of any assistance to this battle!”

No, I can't let him continue like this. The Corpse King also felt that something was amiss, so he immediately summoned all the Corpse Commanders.

There was no response!

The Buddha Slaying sword embryo blocked their path. It seemed as ordinary as before, without any glow of a “divine artifact”.

Xiao An had basically poured half of the corpses she had refined into this Buddha Slaying sword embryo.

As the fragments of the Corpse Commanders fell down, they turned into Samādhi Flames of White Bone and merged into the Buddha Slaying sword embryo. Only then did the sword become coated in white, half-transparent light that surged about.

A skeleton head arrived beneath Xiao An. She stepped onto it gently and rose as she raised her sword.

“Let’s go! That sword is simply too terrifying!”

“What! This formation again!”

The Corpse Commanders scattered, but they were forced back together by the huge, house-sized skulls.

The skulls cackled, wrapped in white firelight as they constantly revolved.

When Xiao An released them from the Blood Sea Banner, she had also released the twenty-six Skull Prayer Beads that she had reforged, assembling the Skeleton Demon Formation.

Normally, it would only take Corpse Commanders a few seconds to break out of the Skeleton Demon Formation.

The light from the sword passed by in a flash. Xiao An did not pause at all, pushing off a skull and using the force to leap back into the formation. She shuttled back and forth. Soon, it became impossible to make out her figure. Only a streak of white light shot around inside the Skeleton Demon Formation.

The Skeleton Demon Formation constantly shrank before dispersing with a boom in the end. Not a single Corpse Commander remained. Only flaming pieces of corpses were left, which all merged together and channeled into the Buddha Slaying sword embryo. They vaguely formed a skeleton sitting in a lotus position on the hilt of the sword.

She had finally achieved initial success with the Buddha Slaying sword embryo.

It was not only the cultivators. Even the Corpse King had been taken aback as if a bucket of cold water had been poured over him.

Perhaps the legend was true!

I need to kill it, regardless of the cost!

The Corpse King’s eyes shone with cruel, green light. The nails on his ten fingers burst forth like bamboo shoots in spring. He hurled them forwards, all targeting Xiao An.

Ten streaks of black light shot over furiously.

A streak of black light pierced the Void-bellied Ghost King, and it was unable to last any longer, dispersing and revealing the Dark Queen. Her black hair drifted in the air as she suddenly turned back. “Be careful!”

Gu Yanying immediately swung her delicate, jade folding fan to provide support in a hurry. She had already become extremely confident in her guess. When the Golden Core cultivators died to the “moon demon” earlier, the Dark Queen had not even batted an eye, yet she had paled in fright so much over this “other being”. She probably was not even that concerned over her own life.

However, the Corpse King seemed to have anticipated this a long time ago. With a swing of his huge hand, a fierce wind rushed over like a tornado and forced Gu Yanying to slow down. She could no longer provide any assistance in time.

The flames in Xiao An’s eye sockets burned brightly as she stared straight ahead. She wielded the sword with both hands, even relinquishing control over the Blood Sea Banner and Skull Prayer Beads.

All that was left in her heart was sword styles, sword techniques, sword moves, and sword intent. There was her comprehension from the Cursive Sword Calligraphy, as well as her insight from her awakened memories. Afterwards, it all vanished, reduced to nothingness.

A skeleton sat in the lotus position.

Slaying buddhas!

The Buddha Slaying sword emitted a streak of light that was several meters long. With a flash, a fingernail was cut in half, sweeping past her.

Xiao An retreated. The light moved steadily, making a turn back and cutting apart another fingernail.

Sword swing, sword swing, sword swing!

The streak of light danced wildly, cutting through four fingernails in a single breath. The fifth fingernail filled her vision, but she was unable to stop it anymore.

She parried with the Buddha Slaying sword embryo. Xiao An said in an unflinching manner, “This is the limit.”

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Five huge fingernails that resembled stone beams struck Xiao An one after another.

In that instant, her white bones became riddled with cracks as the sound of fractures resonated like thunder. Even the colliding booms were unable to drown them out.

Boom! Dust filled the air.

Xiao An slammed heavily into a hill, and her aura vanished.

No matter how powerful the Buddha Slaying sword embryo was, it had to be wielded with her own strength!

Xiao An had only undergone one heavenly tribulation so far. She was able to kill a group of Corpse Commanders an entire cultivation realm above hers with the Buddha Slaying sword embryo, but her strength was insufficient when she faced the killing strike of a Corpse King.

This was an absolute difference in strength, which could not be made up for with external objects.

Having swept away a several-million-strong Corpse Soldier army, Xiao An who carried everyone's hopes on her shoulders had also reached her limit.

Over half of the Golden Core cultivators had fallen in battle. The Dark Queen had failed. The Marquis of Ruyi's face became filled with despair. "It's over! It's all over!"

Gu Yanying raised her head and looked at the hazy, grey sky. Her eyes narrowed, and her gaze that was as sharp as a hawk's pierced through the region, vaguely making out constantly twinkling, green stars.

They were not stars, but the eyes of countless undead. There were countless existences as powerful as the Corpse King among them, as well as even stronger existences who were well beyond what the current World of the Nine Provinces could handle.

They were like a flock of vultures, circling above the heads of those about to die so that they could swarm over and pick apart their corpses once they collapsed and died.

Compared to the World of the Nine Provinces, this place is already closer to the Hungry Ghost realm. The Hungry Ghost realm is about to descend. Do I leave? No, there's still one more. He hasn't spoken yet.

Moo!

The bellow of an ox rose up, oppressive and drawn-out as if it originated from the depths of the earth.

The ground trembled slightly. The entire region was shaking.

The hills rose and fell together like the turbulent seas.

An iron hoof took a step forward. The ground sank and cracked.

Invisible tremors radiated in all directions.

Hundreds of mountains collapsed in silence.

The curved horns were like the crescent moon that hung high in the sky as their edges shone with a sharp light.

The word "moon" was etched on there.

His scarlet pupils resembled the arrival of a malevolent star. Rumors had it that its appearance would always bring about destruction and war.

He strode over, making his way towards the Corpse King. With every step he took, the ground would shake in an oppressive manner.

Even the Dark Queen moved out of the way. She felt like a huge mountain was pressing forward.

He arrived before the Corpse King, and two streams of air gushed out of his nose. He raised his head and asked, "How dare you harm her!?"

"Harm? No, I killed it! The next one's you!"

The Corpse King lowered his head and looked down from above. He was extremely relaxed.



It was as if he had seen the crack of dawn, and the red sun would soon rise up. Victory would be arriving shortly.

He felt himself grow stronger and stronger. It came from both himself and the reward of the Hungry Ghost realm. No one could repel him at this time, in this place!

Li Qingshan lowered his head, formed a fist, and threw it.

Dense, black cracks dispersed from the fist.

His punch was as heavy as a mountain. At first glance, it seemed sluggish as if it pushed forward inch by inch.

Whenever it pushed forward slightly, the black cracks would layer upon each other. In the very end, it became pitch-black. It was like a black glove that piled up countless tremors.

“You’ve bitten off more than you can chew!”

The Corpse King let out a great laugh. He stood with his arms crossed as he looked down from above. His huge, withered hand clenched into a fist as rolling corpse qi coiled around it. He raised it high into the air, extending it to the limit. The bone spike on his elbows seemed even more vicious.

Like a roaring dragon, it descended from above to destroy everything.

“Die!”