

C16 Second Move, Void Refinement

Exhausted from his last move, Guu Tianyi found himself suspended in midair, directly in the path of the python's tail attack. There was no escape.

With a thud, Guu Tianyi was sent hurtling through the air like a kite with its string cut, flying dozens of feet before slamming into an ancient tree. A searing pain ripped through him, his body feeling as though it was coming apart at the seams. Had he not previously honed his Star Shattering Claw and fortified his body with the Power of Stars, that blow would have spelled his end.

"Tianyi!" Guu Linger cried out. Her face drained of color as she witnessed the scene and dashed toward Guu Tianyi.

"Linger, watch out!" Guu Tianyi's eyes snapped open to see the Black Rock Python, with its massive form, lunging at Guu Linger from behind, its gaping maw ready to strike.

"Vile beast, back off from Linger!" Withstanding his injuries, Guu Tianyi gazed at the sparse stars above, a resolute glint in his eyes.

"Power of Stars, I summon thee!" "Ding dong! Host, you have acquired a substantial amount of the Power of Stars!" Starlight flooded into him, the radiant beams coiling like azure dragons around his hands. In that moment, his Genuine Qi surged, intertwining with the Purple Fire, shaping into the semblance of two dragon

claws.

"Star Shattering Claw!" Merging the last of his Genuine Qi with the abundant Power of Stars, Guu Tianyi unleashed his final technique.

This move would deplete Guu Tianyi's Genuine Qi, leaving him powerless. In the perilous Great Desolate Mountain, teeming with savage Demon Beasts and with assassins in pursuit, this act was tantamount to suicide.

But Guu Tianyi had no choice; to protect Guu Linger, he would spare no effort. "Should we face mortal peril, I'll be the first to fall," he had vowed to Guu Linger before they ventured into the mountains.

The Purple Polar Heavenly Flame Dragon continued its vigil over Guu Linger, its roar challenging the Black Rock Python, a behemoth tenfold its size. Guu Tianyi's resolve was its command.

The Black Rock Python's jaws clamped down, its fangs grinding the dragon into oblivion. The dragon, now reduced to Purple Fire, vanished into the ether.

Guu Linger, her eyes wide with terror, found herself encased within a shield of purple and teal light – the Purple Jade Ice Spirit Bracelet. Yet, how could a Grade One Spirit Treasure withstand a Rank Two Ferocious Beast?

"Vile creature, begone!" Guu Tianyi's roar was tinged with an unexpected note of fear – not for himself, but for the thought of Guu Linger sustaining even the slightest injury.

"Over my dead body!" His eyes blazing with fury, Guu Tianyi's claws, like meteors, streaked toward the Black Rock Python, trailing resplendent light.

"Brother Tianyi!" Guu Linger looked up at the frenzied Guu Tianyi, her eyes now void of fear. A single tear glistened on her cheek, and in that moment, the Black Rock Python's massive form hesitated.

In the blink of an eye, Guu Tianyi's Star Shattering Claw pierced the Black Rock Python's colossal skull. The blistering Genuine Qi and bursting starlight ravaged its insides. With a skyward howl, the beast flung Guu Tianyi aside.

Struck by the snake's tail, Guu Tianyi's martial soul was forcibly shattered, and his Genuine Qi was depleted once again, making his body feel increasingly heavy. Yet, when he saw Guu Linger running toward him unharmed, a sense of contentment washed over him.

In the haze of his pain, a familiar electronic tone rang in Guu Tianyi's ears:

"Detection of a one in ten thousand True Dragon Bloodline presence within the Black Rock Python's lineage. The Black Rock Python's bloodline harbors an abundance of Genuine Qi. Would you like to plunder it?"

"Yes," Guu Tianyi answered without hesitation.

Warmth surged through his body, and his Dantian swelled with renewed energy.

The Black Rock Python, a Rank Two Ferocious Beast, harbored Genuine Qi equivalent to at least fifty Essence Stones. Concurrently, the Purple Polar Heavenly Flame Dragon materialized, its form transforming and its draconic might intensifying.

Time blurred until Guu Tianyi's consciousness slowly surfaced. Opening his eyes, he was greeted by the stunning visage of Guu Linger.

Overcome with relief, Guu Linger flung herself into his embrace, her tears a mix of fear and joy.

"Brother Tianyi, I was so scared... I thought you might never wake up," she murmured through her sobs.

"Silly girl, I couldn't possibly leave you alone in such peril," Guu Tianyi replied, stroking her hair affectionately, his face softening into a tender smile.

Surveying their surroundings, Guu Tianyi noticed the dark, damp stone walls and the lingering scent of Ferocious Beasts.

"Linger, where are we?" he inquired.

Drying her tears, Guu Linger pointed to the Purple Polar Heavenly Flame Dragon circling overhead. "It led me here. A Ferocious Beast used to dwell in this place, but it fled because of the dragon."

The dragon, a manifestation of Guu Tianyi's subconscious, lacked true awareness, but its actions had

them a safe haven. They could stay hidden for a few days until the No-fly Talisman expired. All Guu Tianyi needed was to make it back to Heavenly Fire City before the third round of the Heavenly Fire Competition commenced.

Extracting a Healing Spirit Grass from his Cosmos Bag, Guu Tianyi refined it, and his wounds mended.

For five days, they huddled together in the chilly confines of the cave, subsisting on wild greens. Guu Tianyi's heart ached for Guu Linger, yet she remained joyous, her happiness rooted in their togetherness.

Meanwhile, Guu Tianyi dedicated himself to mastering the Star Shattering Claw and the Purple Polar Dragon Eye. The sliver of True Dragon Bloodline he had seized from the Black Rock Python greatly enhanced his Purple Polar Heavenly Flame Dragon, and the Void Discerning ability of the Purple Polar Dragon Eye evolved on its own accord.

"It seems the slow advancement of the Void Discerning skill isn't due to my abilities but the limitations of my Martial Soul," Guu Tianyi realized. This revelation freed him from his previous fixation on the skill.

Resolved, Guu Tianyi set out to master the Purple Polar Dragon Eye's Second Move, Void Refinement—a lethal technique designed to strike when least expected.

Wherever he could see, he could strike.

Moreover, in the span of five days, Guu Tianyi had mastered the Star Shattering Claw to Great Completion.

Now he could wield the fully-realized Star Shattering Claw from a distance, its power amplified to new heights.

As dusk settled, Guu Tianyi rose to his feet and gently placed his coat over Guu Linger's shoulders.

While smoothing her tousled hair, he spoke, "Linger, tomorrow brings the third round of the Heavenly Fire Competition. I must return and claim the top spot. Only by winning can I coax our father's whereabouts from the Grand Elder."

Guu Linger nodded, the picture of docility.

"Brother Tianyi, now that the No-fly Talisman is gone, can Little Purple take to the skies again?"

Little Purple was the affectionate name Guu Linger had for the Purple Polar Heavenly Flame Dragon.

Guu Tianyi playfully tapped her nose, his smile warm, "Yes, it can fly. But manifesting the Martial Soul drains a lot of Genuine Qi, and I can't sustain it for long. I need to conserve my energy as much as possible, just in case."

"Brother Tianyi, wherever you go, I'll be right behind you. If you take to the air, I'll cling to you tightly. I promise not to be any trouble!"

"Silly girl, I'll be the one holding you!"

With that, Guu Tianyi scooped Guu Linger into his arms and, with a powerful leap, they left the cave behind!

Beneath the moonlit sky, Guu Tianyi sped forward with incredible velocity.

Suddenly, a streak of golden light struck him in the back.

A wave of familiarity washed over him, leaving him both infuriated and at a loss for words.

He cursed inwardly, "Damn it, another No-fly Talisman. That Third Elder is disgustingly wealthy! To think his Desperado carries two of these rare Grade One Spirit Talismans!"

"Guu Tianyi, I warned you your death was certain!" came the voice of Number 10.

Then, from the shadows, six figures emerged.