

Paradise 1561

Chapter 1561: Target Locked

“I’ve learned from many people that according to legend, there are three founders of the inner world. One is a member of the Dragon Tribe, another is a nine-tailed demon fox, and the last is an eminent monk from the Buddhist Tribe. This point I managed to verify later from an underground channel; it isn’t just a mere legend.

“However, these three founders were only active for a little while during the initial stages of founding the inner world. Subsequently, they went quiet very rapidly.

“After the three founders faded into the background, high-level Heavenly Gods sprang up one after another not long after. Most of these were short-lived. This situation only stabilized 3,000 years ago, when six overlords each took over various territories to maintain a system of checks and balances.

“Among these six, two of them were the earliest to emerge—almost within 100 years of the three founders going quiet.

“One of the two is a four-faced individual with four faces, each with a different character. Each character has different divine abilities and techniques.

“The other is three-tailed a snake lady who is an expert in illusory techniques and inherently bewitching.

“As for the most likely candidates who possess information about the castellan’s seal, going by the timeline, it would definitely be these two. It’s even possible that they might have the castellan’s seal fragments with them...”

Lin Huang briefly described the results of his investigations, at the same time using Divine Power to project the pieces of information he had discovered one at a time.

Of course, only the three of them sitting at the table could see these projections, as Virtuoso had set up an illusion barrier around the area where the table was.

Outsiders were only able to see that the three of them were drinking and chatting.

Saber9 only spoke after looking over the information Lin Huang had gathered.

“What I’ve discovered is similar to Lin Xie.

“After finding out about the three founders, I spent a great deal of effort to find out information about them after they went quiet, but to almost no avail. Whatever I found out can’t be verified. There are dozens of versions alone about where the three of them eventually ended up.

“Subsequently, I also changed the focus of my investigation to the six overlords instead. However, I didn’t find anything useful as I was worried about alerting people.”

Lin Huang could not help nodding when he heard that.

“I had the same idea that you did—I originally wanted to get information from their subordinates. However, after careful consideration, I abandoned the idea, as I don’t want to alert anyone.”

“Targeting their subordinates is the right thing to do, but we’ll have to plan it thoroughly first.” Virtuoso nodded as well. “After all, these six are top powerhouses among Heavenly Gods. It would be far too difficult to take them on directly.

“Moreover, even though Lin Xie has narrowed the targets down to two people based on the timeline, there’s no guarantee that this is accurate at all. There’s still a possibility that these two people know nothing about the castellan’s seal, and the secret is held by the remaining four. We need to obtain more accurate information before making our final conclusions.

“We need to find a chance to lock onto our target and succeed on our first try!

“If we fail the first time, the remaining five will definitely be even more on their guard. This will significantly increase our difficulty in retrieving the castellan’s seal.

“I’ve carried out some investigations over the last two days. The information I managed to obtain is basically the same as what both of you have mentioned.

“The castellan’s seal is most likely divided into three fragments, and they’re in the hands of the three inner world founders. As for the disappearance of the three of them, they might have gone into hiding deliberately to prevent people from seizing the castellan’s seal. Perhaps something might have happened to them as well, such as being robbed, or something else.

“If that’s the case, someone among the current six overlords should know about the castellan’s seal.

“The second possibility is that the castellan’s seal fragments are in the possession of one of the six current overlords.

“If that’s true, then this would be the most beneficial to us. This is because as soon as we identify the person with the fragments, all we’ll have to do is to find ways to retrieve the fragments.

“The third possibility is the most problematic one, which is that after the three founders went into hiding, the castellan’s seal fell into the hands of some unknown individual. The emergence of the six overlords has nothing to do with the castellan’s seal, while all six of them have no clue about the castellan’s seal at all.

“If that’s the case, it means that everything we’ve done previously is a waste of time. We’ll have to look for clues again.”

“If it’s the third possibility, I think there’s no need for us to waste any more time in this phantom city. Let’s just go straight to the next one.” The expression on Saber9’s face did not seem as if he was joking; he really did look like he was planning on doing that.

Although what he said was out of pique, it was still considered a logical strategy.

This was because, based on the current situation in this phantom city, searching for new leads all over again might be even more difficult than going to another phantom city to look for the castellan’s seal afresh.

“After all, we’ve only had two days, and the information the three of us obtained is limited. From the limited information we have at present, all three possibilities are plausible. Let’s sort out the details of the information we’ve individually obtained, and then discuss our next move.”

As Virtuoso spoke, they arranged the information they had gathered and sent it to Lin Huang and Saber9 through mental transmission.

Lin Huang and Saber9 shared their information as well.

It did not take the three of them very long to respectively process the integrated information.

Virtuoso glanced at the two of them. “I’ll go first.

“There’s no way we can confirm which of the three possibilities the castellan’s seal falls under. However, the most promising breakthrough currently would be the six local overlords.

“Based on Lin Xie’s analysis, the four-faced individual and the three-tailed snake lady are undoubtedly the most likely candidates among the six. Furthermore, apart from the timeline, there aren’t any more clues to prove that the other four have an even higher chance of possessing information on the castellan’s seal.

“Therefore, I think it’s best to choose these two as our first target.”

Lin Huang nodded slightly at this point.

Beside him, Saber9 nodded as well. “I’ve no comments.”

“Then let’s try our best to obtain more information from the subordinates of these two individuals over the next few days...” Virtuoso continued, “First ascertain a name list of their subordinates and some basic information on these underlings, then take action when they’re alone....

“There’s one thing that we need to take note of—don’t kill them,” Virtuoso suddenly reminded everyone, “These subordinates might have something like a Soul Lamp warning system set up—when a member dies, the corresponding Soul Lamp will be destroyed. We would set off an alert if that happened.”

Lin Huang nodded slightly when he heard this. Saber9, on the other hand, frowned a little.

“If we go our separate ways, even if Lin Xie and I manage to interrogate them, there’s no way for us to erase their memories...”

Lin Huang remained silent when he heard what Saber9 said. He did not explain that he possessed such a technique.

Virtuoso glanced at Saber9. “Stun them, then I’ll deal with it.

“Make contact with any subordinates that we can speak with, no matter what their status. We’ll try our best to obtain more information about the four-faced individual and the three-tailed snake lady. It’s alright if we obtain a lot of repetitive information...”

Virtuoso sketched out the plan briefly. After that, the three of them soon began discussing the exact details of how to carry out the plan.

Chapter 1562: The Gilded Fiend

Painted Face was the first target that Lin Huang focused his attention on.

He had never seen this monster in the monster guide before. However, at first glance, the creature reminded him of ancient Chinese opera characters on Earth.

Apart from resembling a Chinese opera character with a painted face, the second impression Lin Huang had of this monster was that of a paper doll.

Although this monster appeared human, it looked more like the paper dolls on Earth which Chinese people customarily burned as offerings at the graves of their ancestors.

It had a pair of legs, just like a human. However, its feet never touched the ground; it perpetually hovered in the air.

Based on the information Lin Huang managed to dig up, Painted Face was one of three underlings who had followed the four-faced individual the longest. If one were to go by qualifications, it was definitely considered very senior in terms of experience.

However, due to its combat strength staying stagnant at beginner-level, it had slowly been removed from the four-faced individual's core power circle and become an unimportant character.

It had previously wanted to work hard to strengthen its cultivation. However, due to its limited talent, it was unable to break through to fourth-rank heavenly god-level at all. As time went by, it gradually abandoned the struggle.

Lin Huang had chosen Painted Face as his target because, for one, it knew more about the four-faced individual's past. It had witnessed the entire process of the four-faced individual's emergence. For another, compared to the others in the core power circle, it was the easiest to target.

On that day, as per its usual custom, Painted Face arrived on the rooftop of a building.

All along, it had had a unique way of passing time, which was to hum songs while walking on the edge of all sorts of buildings, its arms thrown wide, and imagining it was walking on a tightrope.

From up close, however, one could see its feet were actually one to two centimeters off the ground, never actually touching the ground at all.

However, on this day, right when it had climbed to the rooftop and taken a few steps on the edge, it suddenly noticed a black silhouette blocking its path.

It was a man in a black robe, and the face under his black hood was covered by a black mask.

Painted Face had only just caught sight of the figure; before it could even take a good look at this person, two black gleams of light lit up under the hood.

Painted Face's body froze on the spot immediately.

The man in the black robe was, of course, Lin Huang. He had waited a night and a day just to get the chance to make his move; at least he had managed to wait until Painted Face was completely alone.

Painted Face's combat strength was merely that of a low-level Heavenly God. Among Heavenly Gods of the same combat strength, it was even considered one of the weaker ones. In the face of Lin Huang's sequence power, it had absolutely no ability to resist at all.

The memory retrieval Lin Huang carried out went extraordinarily smoothly with no interference at all.

Within a short two minutes, Lin Huang had completely copied Painted Face's memory.

"That went more smoothly than I anticipated..." Lin Huang shot a glance at Painted Face, who still had not entirely detached itself from the memory retrieval process. He extended a finger and tapped it between Painted Face's brows.

Painted Face's body immediately went limp, and Lin Huang's telekinetic threads tossed it into the God Territory within Lin Huang's body.

After scanning his surroundings with Divine Telekinesis and making sure he had left no traces behind, Lin Huang did not linger. Instead, he departed in a flash.

"The second target is... the Gilded Fiend..."

The Gilded Fiend was an Abyssal creature found in the monster guide.

Monsters of this kind were usually powerful combat cultivators who had been contaminated with Abyssal energy. After they had become Abyssal creatures and been baptized in the Abyssal blood spring, they would transform into such monsters.

They possessed a powerful physical body, with strength that could be compared to Star Titan in the ancient era.

This target that Lin Huang chose had the combat strength of an eighth-rank Heavenly God, but the strength of its physical body might even be at least that of a half-step Lord. Very few individuals below lord-level would be able to break through its defenses.

It was not that Lin Huang wanted to challenge himself by choosing a target like this. Instead, he had done so because although the Gilded Fiend had a near-invincible physical body, its spirit strength was generally low.

Legend said that the Abyssal blood spring was a tributary of the death spring, which also had the effect of eroding one's God's soul.

Practically anyone who transformed into a Gilded Fiend would have a damaged God's soul.

Most Gilded Fiends were either unintelligent and stupid, or insane... Regardless, none of them were normal in their heads. Some would even lose their minds completely during the process of transformation and become perfect material for puppet refinement.

From Lin Huang's point of view, it was no big issue if these monsters were mentally abnormal. As long as they stored information about what they had seen or heard in their minds, that was sufficient.

Furthermore, because of its low intelligence, the Gilded Fiend had always been the four-faced individual's most trusted subordinate—the only one, in fact.

It had even been the four-faced individual's bodyguard at a much earlier point in time. Of course, calling it a bodyguard was just sugar-coating things; in reality, it was merely a shield in human form.

It was only almost one thousand years ago when the four-faced individual's overlord status had been fully secured and stabilized, that the Gilded Fiend's status had been upgraded. The Gilded Fiend was always being given tasks that required violence.

One of the reasons why Lin Huang chose the Gilded Fiend as his target was that it had been in close proximity with the four-faced individual for a long time, and had heard and seen many of this individual's secrets. Another reason was that it was always being given missions that required it to go into the outside world. This made it easier to catch it on its own.

In the black market, the Gilded Fiend's whereabouts were also never a secret.

In reality, the fairly famous warlords under the command of the six overlords had always been the ones that all the major and minor organizations in the inner world paid attention to.

This was because their activities might lead to a change of circumstances in the entire inner world.

By closely observing these people, the organizations would be alerted ahead of time regarding even the slightest stir.

Lin Huang managed to purchase a log of the Gilded Fiend's recent whereabouts without needing to put in much effort at all.

"It seems I'm pretty lucky..." Lin Huang raised his brows slightly after glancing through the information in the log.

According to the black market's records, the Gilded Fiend just happened to leave the headquarters guarded by the four-faced person a day ago. It appeared to be out on some mission.

He glanced at the information provided by the black market, and realized that someone had discovered the Gilded Fiend's coordinates over an hour ago, even taking a photo secretly...

Within less than an hour, Lin Huang arrived at the coordinates mentioned in the black market's log.

This place was a crowded market with people of various sizes and forms coming and going.

On both sides of the streets were all sorts of stalls.

Lin Huang glanced around and noticed they were selling items that were above the level of god relics.

However, he did not have much of a heart look for bargains. Instead, he glanced around and began to search for traces of the Gilded Fiend.

There were cultivators above virtual god-level everywhere in this market. It was a bad idea for him to use his Divine Telekinesis, so he could only release Leech Pods along the way to help with the search.

Under Lin Huang's control, the Leech Pods were not drifting around at random. Instead, they were attaching themselves to various items along the way.

After releasing thousands of Leech Pods, Lin Huang was wondering whether or not the Gilded Fiend might have already left when a Leech Pod suddenly sent an image through.

The image showed a dark-gold monster of tall stature. It stood within the crowd, head and shoulders above everyone else, and was looking around...

"Found you!" Lin Huang's eyes lit up.

Chapter 1563: We Can Talk About It At Leisure

After discovering the Gilded Fiend, Lin Huang did not rashly go up to it. Instead, he passed slowly through the crowd while approaching it and continued to use Leech Pods to observe its behavior.

The Gilded Fiend seemed to be looking for something in the stalls. This made Lin Huang rather uncertain as to why it did not use Divine Telekinesis but was instead checking the stalls carefully one by one.

Theoretically, given its identity, it had absolutely no need to worry about its Divine Telekinesis being sensed by others.

'What exactly is this fellow looking for?' Lin Huang was rather curious about this.

The Gilded Fiend moved ahead slowly, carefully scrutinizing each stall along the way. Although it tried its best to seem indifferent, any outsiders could tell right away that it was very likely searching for something.

In this inner world, practically everybody knew the Gilded Fiend. Upon observing its demeanor, they were secretly speculating about whether or not the four-faced individual might have heard some gossip of late about something valuable hidden in the market. That might be the reason why the Gilded Fiend had been sent to investigate.

Therefore, many people began secretly checking through all stalls in the market, trying to get a head start.

There were even quite a few stall owners who checked their own goods again, seeing if there was anything that they might have missed.

Even Lin Huang could not help secretly speculating, even though his purpose for coming here had nothing to do with buying goods. He even began attentively checking out all the items at the stalls along the way.

After all, anything that the Gilded Fiend—or even the four-faced individual—considered to be important, had to be valuable.

Even if Lin Huang could not use it himself, he could sell it off at a good price.

Lin Huang strolled around the market while quietly making his way closer to the Gilded Fiend.

Over three hours passed by in no time at all, and the Gilded Fiend had walked around the entire market twice, looking through all the goods at every stall. However, it had not bought a single thing.

Lin Huang had also followed the Gilded Fiend around for over three hours and had bought a few small items.

He had actually noticed many excellent items on both sides of the street. Although most of them were not enough to pique his interest, to most ordinary True Gods, many of these goods were of the best quality. For instance, there were medicinal pills that could aid one's combat strength in achieving a breakthrough, top-grade god rule relics, and other assorted items.

Although Phantom City was similar to a virtual game world, the items one obtained from this world were the real deal, even in the outside world. There were even some fantasy items that could not be obtained at all in the outside world.

However, after strolling around twice while following the Gilded Fiend, Lin Huang had not noticed anything special that could pique the Gilded Fiend's interest.

At the stalls, the highest grade items were expert-grade god sequence relics. At the Gilded Fiend's level of ability, these things were nothing to it.

'This fellow has been around the market twice already; there's no telling how much longer it will keep walking around,' Lin Huang could not help muttering in his mind upon noticing that the Gilded Fiend did not seem to have any intention of leaving yet.

Moreover, Lin Huang was not the only one who was intently keeping an eye on the Gilded Fiend.

However, these individuals observing the Gilded Fiend's every movement had no intention of attacking it. Instead, they were curious about what it was looking for and wanted to snatch the item up before it could make a purchase.

After strolling around the market twice, the Gilded Fiend seemed to have thought of something a short while later. It suddenly halted and turned around, heading in Lin Huang's direction.

'Have I been discovered?' Lin Huang was startled.

His first reaction was that the Gilded Fiend had discovered he was tailing it. However, he remained calm.

He glanced through the goods at the stall in front of him and casually picked up something pleasing to the eye, pretending to scrutinize it. He then asked the stall owner for the price.

"How much is this?" Lin Huang was holding an ancient coin. It looked rather rusty, and he did not recognize any of the words engraved on it. There were flowers and birds imprinted on both sides, and the craftsmanship seemed fairly good.

The ancient coin was only a showpiece to admire. There was no energy in it at all.

"10,000 Divine Stones!" The bald owner glanced at Lin Huang and immediately asked for a ridiculous price.

“Why don’t you rob me instead?!” Lin Huang raised his brows when he heard how much the item cost. Even though he usually did not like to bargain when he bought things, he could tell that the stall owner was trying to rip him off. “This piece doesn’t have any energy fluctuations at all; it’s just an ordinary item. You’re asking the price for a top-grade god relic. Boss, this isn’t how you do business.”

“How much are you willing to pay, then?” The owner smiled, not embarrassed in the least. Instead, he redirected the question to Lin Huang.

“One Divine Stone. I’ll take it if you’re willing to sell it for that amount.” Lin Huang immediately went down to 1/10000 of the original asking price.

“You said that I’m not sincere in selling this item to you at my asking price, but you’re clearly not sincere in wanting to purchase it since you’re bargaining like this,” the stall owner grumbled.

“One Divine Stone is almost clean net profit for you. I’m sure you didn’t spend very much to purchase this.” Lin Huang remained adamant.

Before the owner could argue, Lin Huang continued, “There aren’t many people collecting ancient coins after all, and you only have this one single coin at your stall. It proves that you also knew it would depend on luck whether or not you would be able to sell it. Therefore, there’s no way that you would purchase an ancient coin at a high price. You’d suffer a loss if you couldn’t sell it—only a simpleton would do such a thing.”

The stall owner had prepared a retort, but he swallowed his words entirely after hearing what Lin Huang had to say.

He had wanted to say that he had indeed purchased the coin at a high price. However, if he said so, it would be the equivalent of admitting that he was a simpleton.

“In that case, could you raise your asking price a little more?” After some consideration, the stall owner did not persist any further. His expression altered as well; he wanted to curry favor with Lin Huang now.

“Two Divine Stones, then. That’s my last offer.” Lin Huang generously added one more Divine Stone to his asking price.

The stall owner felt rather helpless, but he nodded anyway. “Alright, it’s sold!”

Lin Huang tossed two Divine Stones to the owner and was about to put the ancient coin away into his space storage when a deep, resonant voice suddenly spoke up.

“I want this ancient coin! How much is it?”

The voice caught the attention of many people’s attention as soon as it sounded.

The stall owner was stunned at first, but he immediately said with an apologetic smile, “Sir, the ancient coin has already been sold to this man.”

Lin Huang turned his head to look at the looming figure standing next to him. It was the Gilded Fiend that he had been stalking for over three hours.

‘This fellow is interested in the ancient coin I’m holding?!’

Lin Huang was stunned as well. He had not expected that the item the Gilded Fiend had been searching several hours for would accidentally come into his possession just like that.

He lowered his head to study the ancient coin, then secretly checked it with Divine Telekinesis. However, he still did not notice anything out of the ordinary.

At that moment, the Gilded Fiend turned its head and looked at Lin Huang.

“Friend, could you sell this ancient coin to me?” After making this request, the Gilded Fiend added, “I’m Gildy, Master Four Face’s subordinate.”

A strange gleam flashed through Lin Huang’s eyes. Although he had no idea what exactly the ancient coin was, it was undoubtedly an opportunity to get close to the Gilded Fiend...

“I can sell it to you, but the price... We can talk about it at leisure somewhere less crowded...”

Chapter 1564: The Cautious Four-Faced Individual

In an abandoned building far from the market, the pitch-black color of Lin Huang’s pupils gradually faded.

Noticing that the black in the Gilded Fiend’s eyes was fading as well, he extended his hand and tapped two fingers right in the middle of the Gilded Fiend’s brows.

The next instant, the Gilded Fiend’s body went limp and crumpled to the ground.

Meanwhile, Lin Huang, who had initially been hovering in midair, landed slowly on the ground together with the Gilded Fiend’s massive bulk.

However, once he landed, he did not put the Gilded Fiend into the God Territory within his body right away. Instead, he froze on the spot for a moment.

The reason for this brief stunned instance was because he had retrieved important information he wanted from the Gilded Fiend’s memory.

A moment later, he snapped back to his senses and used telekinetic threads to drag the Gilded Fiend into the God Territory within him. He then bestirred himself and headed toward his third target...

Three days went by in no time; Lin Huang, Virtuoso, and Saber9 gathered once again after that.

“What are the results of your investigations?” Virtuoso asked immediately.

Lin Huang glanced at Saber9. “You go first.”

Saber9 nodded. “I investigated the three-tailed snake lady’s subordinates. One is her previous best friend, two are her lovers, and another two are her trusted underlings.

“However, the interrogation didn’t go well. The five of them don’t seem to know about the castellan’s seal.

“With my technique, there’s not a very high chance of these five concealing anything from me.

Therefore, I feel there are two possibilities. Either the three-tailed snake lady is hiding things very well and hasn’t told anyone around her about the castellan’s seal, or she doesn’t have it at all.”

“Were there any anomalies when she rose to prominence?” Virtuoso could not help inquiring.

“She rose to her position primarily by relying on men, her looks, and her ability to entice. Practically no man can resist her. She’s been sitting in the overlord’s position all these years mainly because among the remaining five overlords, two of them are her lovers. Moreover, she’s used her allure to gather a group of high-level Heavenly Gods to serve her. Her subordinates’ overall combat strength is certainly no lower than the rest of the overlords.”

Virtuoso fell into deep thought for a while after hearing this. “Then let’s rule her out for now. I came across information about her through other channels as well and did some investigation. The conclusion I came to is similar to yours—she most probably doesn’t have the castellan’s seal.”

After they had ruled out the three-tailed snake lady, Virtuoso and Saber9 turned their heads to look at Lin Huang.

“Let me share my investigation results then...” Lin Huang began speaking only after he saw their attention was focused on him.

“I investigated the four-faced individual’s subordinates, Painted Face and the Gilded Fiend, as well as his current mistress... and I definitely discovered a considerable amount of useful information.

“The information Painted Face provided mentioned that the four-faced individual’s ability came out of nowhere. Painted Face had always suspected that his master had obtained some kind of treasure, but Painted Face never knew what it was.

“The information provided by the Gilded Fiend stated that the four-faced individual is unfathomably powerful. The Gilded Fiend personally witnessed him elevating a low-rank Heavenly God’s combat strength to ninth-rank heavenly god-level,” Lin Huang paused at this point in his narrative. He then looked at Virtuoso and Saber9. “This person isn’t exactly unfamiliar to the two of you either...”

Saber9 was momentarily stunned, but Virtuoso reacted immediately. “The three-tailed snake lady?!”

Lin Huang nodded slightly.

Saber9 regained his composure at this point. Although he knew that the four-faced individual was the three-tailed snake lady’s lover, he was not aware of this additional facet of their relationship.

“He forcibly elevated a person’s combat strength several ranks, without any side-effects. Not only that, the whole process took less than half an hour. This alone is enough to prove that he has the castellan’s seal.”

Lin Huang was very certain of this because only individuals who possessed the castellan’s seal could be like a gamemaster, directly modifying a character’s data within Phantom City.

“Apart from that, based on what the Gilded Fiend stated, the four-faced individual seems to have been collecting objects. Previously, he even went out to collect these items personally instead of asking someone to do it for him. It’s only been in recent years that he has let a trusted subordinate aid him in this matter.

“The Gilded Fiend also mentioned that the few collectibles it had seen were all peculiar odds and ends. Some don’t even possess any energy fluctuations at all. They’re just like ordinary objects.

"I suspect the items he's looking for are the remaining fragments of the castellan's seal. However, he doesn't seem to know what forms these seal fragments might take. Every time he instructed the Gilded Fiend to look for objects, his descriptions were always very vague. He would only give a rough outline, then ask the Gilded Fiend to search based on its intuition.

"That's why I speculate that the castellan's seal fragments might exist in any random form."

From his space storage, Lin Huang retrieved the ancient coin that he had recently purchased from the market. "Before this, at the market, the Gilded Fiend was eyeing this ancient coin I was holding. It even offered a high price so that I would sell it to them."

Lin Huang flicked his thumb, and the ancient coin landed squarely in the palm of Virtuoso's hand.

"Take a look at it. What if this is one of the castellan's seal fragments?"

Virtuoso ignored Lin Huang's teasing tone. Instead, they picked up the ancient coin and began scrutinizing it closely.

A while later, they turned their gaze from the ancient coin and shook their head at Lin Huang and Saber9.

"I can't be sure whether or not this is a fragment of the castellan's seal."

"Is there no way of verifying this at all?" Lin Huang could not help asking.

"Of course there are ways. The simplest would be to get another fragment of the castellan's seal. As long as they're within a certain proximity of each other, both fragments should certainly display a reaction.

"The problem is, however, we don't have another fragment with us," Virtuoso commented, spreading their hands out.

"How did the Gilded Fiend decide that this might be the item that the four-faced individual was looking for?" Saber9 asked Lin Huang from where he was standing to one side.

"Based on what it said, it watched me pick up this ancient coin while it was at a distance. It then felt this might be the thing the four-faced individual was looking for, so it asked me to sell the coin to it. It's just pure intuition, there aren't any reliable deciding factors..." Even as he spoke, Lin Huang felt somewhat bereft of words. "From what the Gilded Fiend said, the four-faced individual even encouraged such behavior. Furthermore, he even told it to buy anything that it thought might be valuable."

"Although this is most probably an ordinary coin, let's just keep it anyway," Virtuoso stated and tossed the coin back to Lin Huang. "What if it really is a fragment of the castellan's seal?"

Lin Huang caught the ancient coin and put it away in his space storage before he resumed speaking.

"As far as the four-faced individual's mistress goes, she didn't provide very much useful information. The four-faced individual is more cautious around her and has never mentioned the castellan's seal fragments at all. Furthermore, based on my previous speculations, the seal could very well exist in whatever form. Trying to obtain the castellan's seal fragments from the four-faced individual is an incredibly difficult undertaking!"

“Both of you don’t have to worry about that. All you need to be responsible for is gathering information. The rest, you can leave to me, and I’ll think of a solution!” Virtuoso seemed to have some kind of idea already. “Since we’re now sure that the four-faced individual has the fragments of the castellan’s seal, let’s start with him first!”

Chapter 1565: Virtuoso’s Special Technique

The four-faced individual sat on a black metal throne, toying with a storage ring in his hand. All four of his faces wore thoughtful expressions.

“It’s been a long time since you last had that look on your faces.” A voice suddenly drifted in from the palace door, followed by the crisp, clear clack of high heels against the ground, approaching from a distance.

“Yes...” The four-faced individual’s four faces let out a low sigh almost simultaneously.

“I just saw Gildy going out.” The lady in heels slowly made her way over to the four-faced individual. She was a female succubus. To be precise, even among succubi, her figure and attractiveness were still considered top-notch. “If I’m not mistaken, this has something to do with him, doesn’t it?”

The four-faced individual fell silent for a moment before he turned his gaze to the succubus. “I suspect that he’s lying to me.”

“Gildy?!” The tone of the succubus’ voice raised slightly. “With his intelligence, do you think that’s even possible? Moreover, if I’m not wrong, wasn’t he was one of the first ones to throw his lot in with you?”

“I didn’t think it would be possible as well, but he has indeed lied to me today.” The four-faced individual was very certain of this.

“Why not tell me what exactly happened, and I’ll listen.” The succubus made her way over to the four-faced individual and sat down cross-legged on the ground in front of the throne. Tilting her head up to look at the four-faced individual, she smiled faintly.

The four-faced individual fell silent for a brief moment before slowly beginning to speak.

“I had him look for something for me. I actually left on him some means by which he would sense the object I wanted whenever it showed up in his vicinity, and I would sense it as well on my end.

“Three days ago, I definitely sensed that item showing up somewhere in his surroundings. However, when he returned this time, whatever he passed to me didn’t include that particular object.”

“How did he explain that?” The succubus asked, smiling.

“He said that he was certain he sensed something from a specific item, but someone else bought it before he could get his hands on it. He offered a high price so he could acquire the object, but the original purchaser refused to agree.”

“Isn’t that very normal?” The succubus raised her brows, “Or are you blaming him for not forcibly acquiring the item?”

The four-faced individual did not answer this question, continuing instead, "Given Gildy's character, in the past, he would always do his best to complete the missions I gave him. He would steal, plunder, and kill to obtain the things I wanted. He wouldn't give up just because the other party refused to trade. Something must have happened between Gildy and that person."

"Didn't you ask for any details?"

"No. If he's unwilling to tell me, it makes no sense for me to ask. He might not tell the truth even if I did pursue the matter." The four-faced individual shook his head slightly.

"What are you planning to do then? Dispose of him?" The succubus asked in a seemingly careless fashion.

"I'll get someone to watch him first to see if they can find out anything useful," the four-faced individual said blandly.

"Take a bath and relax; stop always thinking about things that worry you." The succubus rose and approached the four-faced individual. Wave after wave of ripples began emanating from her narrow eyes, and a light fragrance began to waft through the air.

The four-faced individual's breathing grew heavier. All four faces had their eyes closed, allowing the fragrance to drift into their nostrils. He only opened his eyes a while later. "You little imp. Wasn't all that tussling around last night enough for you?"

The succubus said nothing. She merely smiled slightly and extended her hand to investigate the four-faced individual's chest. Her fingers, soft and seemingly boneless, wandered over his body, teasing his desire.

The four-faced individual did not stop her either. He closed his eyes, indulging himself in these intoxicating ministrations.

Before very long, the succubus' ministrations abruptly stopped. The four-faced individual opened his eyes and discovered that, without realizing it, he had arrived at the side of the bathtub with her. Moreover, the succubus was already completely undressed and right in front of him.

For a moment, the four-faced individual could hardly tear his eyes away.

He allowed the succubus to take off his clothes, one item at a time until finally, he was left without a stitch on. Even his storage ring had been taken off by the succubus and set to one side...

Hot steam bubbled up from the bath, and mist roiled.

The two figures—one muscular, another buxom—were gradually swallowed up in the mist...

Almost at the same time, in an abandoned building a considerable distance away, the corners of Virtuoso's lips quirked up slightly.

A full set of clothing gradually coalesced in their hands. This even included shoes, socks, and several accessories like a few rings.

"This is...?" Lin Huang and Saber9's expressions were full of incredulity.

They retreated a few steps, hastily distancing themselves from Virtuoso. This was because the two of them clearly scented the pungent odor of smelly feet.

When they caught a whiff of that odor, their expressions at present were even more peculiar as they glanced at Virtuoso.

Virtuoso frowned as well. Hurriedly, they blocked their sense of smell and explained, "These are the four-faced individual's clothes. Everything he wore today is here."

"How did you manage this?" Lin Huang's face was full of shock. This was the first time he had heard that someone could strip another person naked from a distance.

Such ability was nothing short of incredible!

Even Saber9, standing off to one side, wore an expression of utter incomprehension.

"I managed to subjugate someone close to him and replaced his clothes when he was taking a bath," Virtuoso explained, sounding very pleased with themselves.

"Won't that be discovered?" Lin Huang asked.

"On such short notice, definitely not. First of all, I made a copy of his clothes and left them in their original spot when I made the exchange. Secondly, the person that I made use of is a succubus. He won't be leaving the bathtub any time soon..."

Lin Huang and Saber9 came to a sudden realization when they heard the term 'succubus.'

Monsters like succubi had desires that were far more powerful than most species and could maintain an intense mating period for a long time. As long as they wanted to, they could even have intercourse continuously for a few months at a time

Many people were aware that, in reality, succubi had no definite gender. They could be male, female, and could even transform into other species. (They would have an initial gender when they were born, but they could change their forms and genders at will.)

Many monsters with strong desires would be willing to date lovers like the succubi.

This was not just because succubi could transform into members of the same tribe species; for a great many more, it was because every day they could experience something new and fresh.

Even an ambitious and ruthless man like the four-faced individual was unable to reject a succubus who completely conformed to his aesthetic.

Furthermore, since Virtuoso had managed to subjugate the succubus, this meant that if nothing went wrong, whatever time the four-faced individual got out of the bathtub depended entirely on when Virtuoso wanted to let him out of the bath.

"The four-faced individual would never place something like the castellan's seal very far from his person. It's either in his storage equipment or somewhere very close to himself." As Virtuoso spoke, they held up the clothes in their hands.

"What if he refined it and integrated it into his body?" Lin Huang asked at once.

Before Virtuoso could reply, Saber9—who was beside them—answered the question.

“The castellan’s seal can’t be refined if it’s in a fragmented state. There’s only one legitimate authority in every phantom city, and only one will is acknowledged and accepted, so only the fully whole castellan’s seal can be refined. Although one can make use of the power of the castellan’s seal with just a single fragment to build and modify a phantom city, they only have control of the phantom city, not ownership of it. One can only legitimately have ownership of a phantom city if they have refined the castellan’s seal in its fully whole state.”

Something suddenly occurred to Saber9 after he finished his explanation.

“However, if the four-faced individual placed the castellan’s seal in the God Territory within his body, it would mean that whatever we’ve done so far is wasted effort.”

Virtuoso ignored the conversation between the two and began checking through the clothes carefully.

The castellan’s seal could elude being sensed by Divine Telekinesis, so using one’s eyes to search was much more reliable in times like this.

Lin Huang and Saber9 hurried forward immediately and helped examine the clothes...

Chapter 1566: Pure Blind Luck

“We haven’t found any unusual items. Right now, the only things we haven’t checked are what’s in the storage rings.” Saber9 looked at the last two storage rings after a meticulous search.

“Even if we haven’t discovered anything, it doesn’t mean nothing unusual is present.” Virtuoso’s gaze fell upon the two storage rings. “After all, we have no idea what the fragments of the castellan’s seal for this Phantom City look like.”

“Is there any way of accessing these two storage rings?” Lin Huang went straight to the point.

Virtuoso extended his hand and picked up the two storage rings, “These two storage rings belong to an older style of secret key rings. One must adjust their Divine Telekinesis to a specific frequency to be able to unlock them; that’s the only way to gain access. Having the rings is useless if you don’t have the secret key.

“However... I just so happen to know the secret keys for both these storage rings...” As they spoke, Virtuoso had already adjusted their Divine Telekinesis to a specific frequency. They glanced at the two storage rings in quick succession.

Even without Virtuoso saying anything further, Lin Huang and Saber9 knew that they must have read the memory of one of the four-faced individual’s close associates. Furthermore, this person just happened to have the information about the two secret keys in their memory.

Virtuoso searched both the storage rings for a long time before finally retrieving one single item.

“I used my Divine Telekinesis to scan every item in these two storage rings three times, but I couldn’t find anything out of the ordinary...” Virtuoso suddenly turned their head to look at Lin Huang when they finished speaking. “However, I found this.”

They opened up their palm. In the middle of it was an ancient silver coin.

Lin Huang could not help frowning when he saw the ancient coin. Before he could open his mouth, Virtuoso spoke first.

“Does this ancient coin look like the one you bought at the market a few days back?”

“Not at all.” Lin Huang shook his head, “Yours looks like a silver coin. The one I bought looks more like a bronze coin. Not only are the colors different, but the size, thickness, and carvings also aren’t the same at all. Your silver coin is at least one size smaller than my bronze coin.

“Why? Do you suspect that this silver coin might be a fragment of the castellan’s seal?” Lin Huang asked, raising his brows.

“If you bring out your ancient coin, we’ll find out whether or not this is a fragment of the castellan’s seal.” Virtuoso had hitherto always been calm, but right now, his tone carried a sense of urgency.

The castellan’s seal fragments could sense each other. If the ancient coin in Virtuoso’s hand was able to sense the one that Lin Huang had purchased, they could basically confirm that the two ancient coins were fragments of the castellan’s seal.

Lin Huang felt that Virtuoso was indulging in wild fantasies. The ancient coin that he himself had purchased at the market was considered a commemorative coin. For whatever reason, however, Virtuoso had somehow linked both these entirely different objects together through some wild feat of imagination. Not only did they believe that the two coins were related, they even believed that both were fragments of the castellan’s seal.

However, Lin Huang did not bother arguing with Virtuoso over the subject. He retrieved the ancient coin—which had cost him two Divine Stones to purchase at the market—from his space storage.

The way he saw it, as long as the ancient coin that he took out showed no reaction, it would be sufficient to prove right away that Virtuoso’s baseless speculation was wrong. There was no need for Lin Huang to waste his breath arguing with them.

However, as soon as he took out the ‘bronze coin’, the ‘silver coin’ in Virtuoso’s palm began to vibrate intensely. At the same time, Lin Huang could clearly sense the ‘bronze coin’ between his fingers vibrating just as intensely also.

The feeling one got was that of a dog wagging its tail maniacally in excitement when its owner got home from work.

Without waiting for Lin Huang to inquire further, Virtuoso had already pulled his palm away from the ancient coin. Seeing this, Lin Huang let go of his own coin as well, allowing the ancient coins to hover on their own in midair.

Both coins were different in terms of color, size, thickness, and even patterns. However, the current scenario was proof enough that the two objects were being drawn to each other.

After Lin Huang and Virtuoso released their hold, the two ancient coins soon transformed into two dazzling beams of light—one gold, one silver—that intersected in midair like a vortex. They were whirling rapidly, like Gemini’s twin stars drifting in the galaxy.

As the vortex swirled, the distance between both beams of light became shorter and shorter, and the rays that they released grew increasingly more dazzling to the eye.

Very soon, the two resplendent beams had reached their brightest, to the point where both silver and gold colors could not be distinguished from each other. Even Lin Huang and the others were unable to look through the light beams to observe what transformations were happening within.

Meanwhile, Virtuoso had made preparations much earlier and shielded the area. If not for this, the dazzling rays of light—brilliant enough to illuminate the entire sky—would attract unwanted trouble.

A good while later, the blinding rays gradually faded away. The initial two ancient coins had disappeared, replaced instead by a golden coin that looked rather old.

“The two ancient coins really are the castellan’s seal fragments?!” Lin Huang’s face was full of shock. He had not expected that something he had bought so casually at the market would turn out to be a fragment of the castellan’s seal.

“We’re pretty lucky.” Virtuoso smiled.

“How did you figure this out?” Lin Huang was still a little confused.

“The castellan’s seal fragments can take the form of anything at all. However, the different fragments of the seal have a definite connection to each other,” Virtuoso explained, smiling, “Let me give you an example. If one of the fragments is a key, then the other fragment might be a key of another shape—or it could be a lock, even a door.

“When I saw this silver coin and scanned it, my Divine Telekinesis picked up nothing out of the ordinary. To be honest, this is rather rare in the inner world. Therefore, I immediately thought of the bronze coin you bought at the market. There aren’t any energy waves on it at all, as if two coins from the surface world had somehow drifted into this place.

“Of course, we can’t entirely rule out that someone brought common coins from the surface world into the inner world. Therefore, I wasn’t completely sure if the two ancient coins were fragments of the castellan’s seal. I would only be able to ascertain this through the two fragments sensing each other...

“You both know what happened next,” Virtuoso did admit that figuring this matter out had involved a great deal more guesswork on his part.

Lin Huang had nothing much to say about Virtuoso’s less-than-scientific-rigorous logical approach. All that could be said was that the three of them had been very fortunate—it was pure blind luck.

“Wait for me a moment. Let me return these things,” Virtuoso explained, then hurriedly transported the clothing and items back immediately.

“Are you sure the swap won’t be discovered?” Lin Huang could not help asking as he waited for Virtuoso to finish transporting the items back.

However, Virtuoso’s answer was completely unexpected. “Of course it’s going to be discovered!

“As soon as the four-faced individual checks through the items in his storage ring with Divine Telekinesis, he’ll definitely find out that the castellan’s seal fragment is missing. Not only that, he’ll soon discover that outsiders have arrived in this Phantom City.

“Therefore, we need to find the last fragment of the castellan’s seal as soon as we can. The best would be before the four-faced individual finds out that his own fragment has been stolen.”

“Absolutely. If he discovers that the castellan’s seal fragment has been stolen, he’ll most certainly send people en masse to hunt for the outsiders. That would inconvenience our subsequent movements greatly.” Lin Huang nodded slightly as well.

“The longer we drag this out, the more difficult it will be for us to extricate ourselves,” Saber9 said, looking serious.

Chapter 1567: An Inside Man

In the inner world, in a suburb far from the city, was a flaking, dilapidated low villa almost completely overrun by plants.

This phenomenon was not merely confined to the outer walls—even the inner walls and the floor were covered with vines of various colors.

It was in this deserted, uninhabited place that a figure suddenly emerged.

In appearance, this figure looked rather like a tall, burly human. A pure black robe was draped over its body, concealing its form entirely.

The figure slowly walked over to the side of a low-rise building, then turned to face the vine-infested wall before taking off the hood of its robe.

The face that was revealed—more precisely, the four faces revealed—belonged to one of the six overlords of the inner world, the four-faced individual.

Almost at the same time that he removed his hood, one of the vines on the overgrown wall began to squirm. In practically the blink of an eye, it had formed itself into the shape of a giant face.

“Four Face, I’m extremely surprised that you requested we meet alone this time,” the giant face formed by the vine spoke first. “Tell me. What exactly happened to make you insist on conferring with me, despite the risk that I might kill you?”

“Someone stole my fragment of the castellan’s seal,” the four-faced individual stated right away, without even a word of greeting.

“It’s been stolen?! Do you know who did it?” Upon hearing this, the giant face on the wall took on a startled expression; its tone also full of astonishment.

“I don’t know who it is exactly, but I feel that there’s a ninety percent chance of it being outsiders.” The four-faced individual appeared to be very sure of this.

“How did you lose it? Why don’t you explain a little further in detail?” The giant face asked.

"I placed the fragment in this storage ring, the one I wear most often," the four-faced individual said and pulled up his sleeve, revealing the storage ring he wore on his left middle finger. "Every time I take something from it or put items away, I instinctively do a scan with Divine Telekinesis. However, when I was retrieving something yesterday, I suddenly discovered that the fragment was gone."

"How did you lose something inside a ring you're always wearing?" The giant face was rather confused. "Did you remove the ring?"

"I definitely did when I took a bath two days ago. What's more, I put a batch of items into the ring three days ago. I used Divine Telekinesis to scan through the space storage back then, and the fragment was still there." The four-faced individual nodded. "So I'm sure that the castellan's seal fragment went missing between both those times I scanned the space storage with Divine Telekinesis. Moreover, I happened to take off the storage ring during that period. Someone must have seized the chance to covertly pull some monkey business."

"To know when you removed the storage ring—to be able to access it, then stealthily return the ring to its place..." The giant face formed from the vine gave a faintly mocking smile. "There just might be an inside man among your subordinates then. Someone who can unlock your storage ring ought to be someone very close to you."

"That's what I thought too." At this point, the four-faced individual's expression turned gloomy.

"The inside man escaped?" The giant face asked with a smile, noticing the four-faced individual's expression.

"I killed her." The four-faced individual's face turned grim when he said this.

As soon as he discovered that the fragment of the castellan's seal had disappeared without a trace, he had immediately gone to find the succubus.

After interrogating her and unsuccessfully trying to extract a confession, he had killed the succubus himself.

"You didn't manage to find out anything?" The giant face continued its questioning.

"No." The four-faced individual shook his head. "She must have been controlled by some form of hypnosis. She knew nothing at all about the castellan's seal fragment. I forcibly read her memory, and I still wasn't able to find out anything about the mastermind behind this."

"Not even a clue?" The giant face also found this rather peculiar.

"No." The four-faced individual shook his head. "That's why I said it was probably stolen by outsiders."

"You've lost your fragment of the castellan's seal, so why are you here to see me? Are you asking me to help you look for it?" The giant face asked, smiling. In reality, it had more or less guessed the other party's true intentions.

"Since these outsiders are obviously here for the castellan's seal fragments, they'll come looking for you sooner or later," the four-faced individual said bluntly without beating around the bush. "I want to join forces with you to kill these people!"

The giant face fell silent for a moment when it heard what the four-faced individual said. It only spoke again after some time.

“Why should I trust you? You might have concocted a story, while your real objective is to get hold of the fragment that I have.”

“If you want me to prove I have an item, that’s very easy—I can just bring it out and show you. However, if you want me to prove that I don’t have something, I can’t do it. There’s no way for me to prove that my fragment of the castellan’s seal is missing.” The four-faced individual shook his head. “All I can say is that I’ve come here this time in good faith. My target is that group of outsiders; I have no designs on that fragment in your possession.

“Whether you believe it or not, that’s up to you. If you’re willing to work together with me, then we’ll join forces. If you’re not willing to do that, I won’t force the issue either. I’ll think of other ways to take revenge on them.

“However, I must still remind you that it’s only a matter of time before they find out you have a fragment of the castellan’s seal. Sooner or later, they’ll come looking for you...”

The giant face fell silent once again. It had known the four-faced individual for years and was aware that he was a cunning, treacherous old fox. However, this time it did not seem as if he were setting a trap. If he was, then his acting skill was truly beyond words.

“Let’s assume that everything you’ve said is the truth. If so, why are you helping me?”

“These outsiders are here for the castellan’s seal. If they really do manage to gather all of the fragments, what do you think will happen next?” The four-faced individual did not answer the giant face’s question. Instead, he posed yet another question.

“If the outsiders get hold of the castellan’s seal...” The giant face on the wall sported a rather peculiar expression now. “They might... wipe out everything that exists currently, and rebuild Phantom City...”

Only now, when the words had unthinkingly slipped out of its mouth, did the giant face seem to realize the true seriousness of the issue.

Earlier, this aspect of things had never occurred to it. It had merely thought that the four-faced individual losing the fragment of the castellan’s seal was rather amusing. However, now that it was considering the matter, it felt extremely fearful.

“It’s not ‘might wipe out everything’, they absolutely will wipe out everything!” The four-faced individual corrected, “Think about it. If you’re an outsider who has obtained the fully restored castellan’s seal, would you leave the original Phantom City as it is and not change anything at all? On the contrary, if it were me, I’d demolish everything in the original set-up, and rebuild a Phantom City that I could call my own!”

“We’ll be erased...” The giant face brought up the point that mattered to it most of all.

The four-faced individual said nothing more. Patiently, he stared at the giant face on the wall, waiting for it to give him an answer.

It only took a moment for the giant face to make a decision. It spoke again, “How do you want to join forces?”

Chapter 1568: On The Brink Of Change

After obtaining the two fragments of the castellan’s seal, Lin Huang and the other two were not idle. They spent the next few days searching for information on the last fragment.

After ruling out the four-faced individual, as well as the three-tailed snake lady whom they had investigated before, they took stock of the remaining four overlords out of the original six, one after the other.

Finally, they set their sights on the Nine Gloom Vine.

The Nine Gloom Vine was a monster with the body of a vine. It consumed the negative emotions of various monsters as food.

According to the various pieces of information Lin Huang and the rest obtained, the Nine Gloom Vine in the inner world was known to everyone as the monster who had lived there the longest—there was no other. In terms of seniority, he ranked higher than even the four-faced individual and the rest.

However, his actual rise to prominence as an overlord of the inner world came much later compared to the four-faced individual and the three-tailed snake lady.

Among the six overlords, he was ranked second last.

According to Lin Huang, Saber9, and Virtuoso’s investigations, there was a high possibility that his rise as an overlord had something to do with the castellan’s seal fragment.

“Of the four remaining overlords, the Nine Gloom Vine is the biggest suspect. The last fragment is most probably with him,” Virtuoso concluded the results of their investigation over the last few days.

“For now, let’s not think about what happens if he doesn’t have the fragment of the castellan’s seal. Let’s assume that he does have it, and we’re now devising a plan of attack,” Lin Huang quickly listed out the points that he had thought of.

“After all, it’s been three days since we obtained the castellan’s seal fragment from the four-faced individual. We have to consider the worst-case scenario, which is that the four-faced individual knows the Nine Gloom Vine has the fragment of the castellan’s seal, and he has already informed the Nine Gloom Vine about the loss of his own fragment.

“If that’s the case, there’s a high chance that they might join forces. They might even have set up a trap and are waiting for us to fall into it.”

What Lin Huang said made Saber9 frown from where he was off to the side.

Although Virtuoso’s expression could not be seen through the mask, they had fallen silent as well.

“What’s the success rate of using your previous technique—switching the item out with a fake after stealing it—if we were to use it on the Nine Gloom Vine?” Noticing that the other two were not saying anything, Lin Huang turned his head toward Virtuoso and inquired.

“If the situation is as you said, then the success rate is practically zero,” Virtuoso answered with barely any hesitation, “It succeeded with the four-faced individual because he didn’t see it coming. However, if both of them have communicated, the Nine Gloom Vine will be fully on his guard.

“That’s not the biggest obstacle either. The four-faced individual’s item was hidden in his storage ring, and the people closest to him were aware of that. Meanwhile, the Nine Gloom Vine has no trusted aides. Although he has many plant monsters under his command, no one can approach the area where he lives, let alone know where he’s hiding the castellan’s seal fragment.”

“If stealing the item and leaving a replacement doesn’t work, we can’t take it by storm either, right?” Saber9 frowned hard.

The three of them fell silent, as they knew that such a tactic would be even worse.

Even if the Nine Gloom Vine were alone, the three of them still might not have the advantage. Being an overlord in the inner world meant that the Nine Gloom Vine’s ability could not be compared to that of ordinary ninth-rank heavenly gods. Even if he had yet to achieve half-step lord-level, he might not be far from it.

Opponents of such ability were beyond the trio’s capacity to handle, more so when taking into consideration that the other overlord—the four-faced individual—might already be collaborating with the Nine Gloom Vine.

The three of them fell silent for a long time.

“Actually, there might still be a way,” Lin Huang spoke up after some thought, “Apart from the four-faced individual, the Nine Gloom Vine and ourselves, there are many others who have their eyes on the castellan’s seal fragment. At the very least, the other four overlords are most certainly interested in it...”

Lin Huang explained his plan in detail very quickly, and Virtuoso and Saber9 nodded repeatedly after they heard what he had to say. The two of them also swiftly came up with ideas to perfect the various details of the plan.

That afternoon, a shocking piece of news spread throughout the entire inner world.

Almost all the organizations in the inner world, no matter how big or small, were discussing the same topic.

“Did you hear? There’s news of the castellan’s seal fragments! One of them is said to be with the Nine Gloom Vine!”

“I knew one of the six overlords would definitely have a fragment of the castellan’s seal!”

“I always thought the so-called castellan’s seal fragment was just a legend. I can’t believe it’s actually real!”

...

A man clad in a suit of silver battle armor sat high on a throne in the inner sanctum of a grand building.

“How true is the news about the castellan’s seal fragment?” His voice was like a low, electronically synthesized sound.

“It’s probably true that the Nine Gloom Vine has the fragment. However, I can’t be sure how many of the other details are true.”

“Have you found the source of this piece of news?” The man in battle armor inquired further.

“No. The information this time was disseminated suddenly from multiple sources at once. I found a few of these individuals after some investigation. However, they can’t recall where exactly they heard the news from; it’s as if a portion of their memories has been erased.”

“Keep a close eye on any further news, and inform me as soon as anything comes up!”

...

The next day.

A giant purplish-red sarcoma occupied almost half of a massive building that looked like a stadium.

The sarcoma was covered in capillary-like veins and even had countless tentacles of various sizes and thicknesses growing out of it.

Not too far from the stadium entrance stood a tall, slender figure.

“New information came in early this morning. It alleges that the four-faced individual has a castellan’s seal fragment too. Not only that, he seems to have formed an alliance with the Nine Gloom Vine and is secretly plotting something...”

“The four-faced individual, huh? That’s not surprising at all!” The sarcoma’s voice came from some part of its body and sounded abnormally gravelly and hoarse.

“For the time being, we can’t verify how true this news is yet. However, some of our spies have already reported that the four-faced individual is definitely not in his foothold,” the slender figure put forward the facts of the investigative results.

“Continue to investigate and see if the four-faced individual has really made an alliance with the Nine Gloom Vine.”

...

The third day.

In the pitch-black underground, a crimson light suddenly flared up.

From afar, it looked like a huge, red-hot soldering iron. However, through the halo of light surrounding it, one could see it was a giant eyeball.

It did not look like a mammal’s eyeball. Instead, it bore more resemblance to a bug’s compound eye that was made of countless tiny eyes.

As the eyeball lit up, a black figure slowly materialized at the mouth of the cave.

“New information has just come to light. The four-faced individual has formed an alliance with the Nine Gloom Vine, and both of them are working together to search for the last fragment of the castellan’s seal!

“However, not long after this news surfaced, both of them made an appearance to dismiss the rumors. Both of them denied that they possessed any castellan’s seal fragments, and also denied any alliance between them. They also said that the news currently being disseminated is all rumors and that someone is secretly trying to stir up trouble...”

The crimson eye listened to all of this. In an extraordinarily calm tone, it commented, “The veracity of the news is no longer important. What’s important is that this inner world is poised on the brink of change.”

Chapter 1569: Let’s Fight Then!

The Nine Gloom Vine and the four-faced individual were not expecting that they would face a counterattack before their prey had fallen into the trap they had set.

Day after day, more news was made public. Some of the news was real, and some were fake, but they were all fabricated very well and in great detail.

It did not matter how many people truly believed the news. In any case, the misleading effects saw definite results.

For the last few days, an increasing number of powerhouses had been gathering outside the dense forest where the Nine Gloom Vine was hiding.

In the inner world, anyone who had any sort of ability at all had opinions about the castellan’s seal.

Now that news had spread about the Nine Gloom Vine and the four-faced individual each possessing a castellan’s seal fragment, it was only natural that this would draw the covetous gaze of countless organizations, large or small.

After all, a ferocious tiger could not defeat a pack of wolves. Moreover, everyone knew that while the two overlords—the ferocious tigers—were powerful, there were still four more overlords on the side of the masses, hovering and waiting.

The masses were not powerful enough to fight against these two overlord powerhouses, but what if there was a chance of the masses benefiting from a clash between all six overlords?

Within the foothold, the Nine Gloom Vine’s giant face materialized in midair, brow furrowed tightly.

“Trouble’s come knocking on our door now!”

On the sidelines, the expressions on the four faces of the four-faced individual all looked extremely unpleasant.

“I originally thought these rumors would only persist for a few days before dying down and that Silver Armor and the rest wouldn’t take them seriously... I didn’t expect that the four of them would all gather here today!”

The reason for the four-faced individual saying this was because he had sensed that the other four overlords—the two of them excluded— were gathered outside the dense forest. They had clearly formed a line of battle.

“Let’s not talk about whether or not the news is true. If it were you, would you give up the perfect opportunity for eradicating your opponents?”

Upon hearing that, the four-faced individual’s four faces looked even grimmer.

He knew that he would not give up such an opportunity.

At present, there were six overlords in the inner world, which meant the entire world’s resources had to be divided into six portions. If there could be two people less, that would be exactly what the remaining four overlords wanted. This was because the ones left would definitely be able to divide up more resources.

Therefore, whether or not the news about the castellan’s seal fragments was true, it was a rare opportunity to join forces in order to get rid of the four-faced individual and the Nine Gloom Vine. The remaining four overlords would certainly not let this chance pass by.

What disappointed the four-faced individual most of all was that the three-tailed snake lady was clearly on the opposing side.

Although their relationship was only that of lovers, generally taking whatever they needed from each other to fulfill their physiological and business needs, they were not very emotionally attached. However, it made the four-faced individual rather uncomfortable that she had turned against him without hesitation.

...

The outside of the dense forest was closely surrounded by hundreds of organizations.

The last few days had been a sea of chaos.

No one was willing to attack first, nor was there anyone who could subdue the entire crowd to reach a unanimous consensus.

The four-faced individual and the Nine Gloom Vine did not bother with the organizations that had gathered out there. For one, these people were nothing to them. For another, there were serious internal conflicts among these people, which caused them all to be in a complete state of disunity. Therefore, they were nothing to be afraid of.

Today, however, the squabbles that had been going on for the past few days suddenly stopped.

Within five seconds, the thousands of people on the scene fell silent because all of them sensed the impending arrival of four domineering auras.

Everyone present automatically shut their mouths, lifting their heads and looking up at the sky in the same direction.

Under the gaze of thousands of people, four figures descended!

The one on the far left was a flirtatious beauty with three snake tails.

From the waist down, she was covered in blueish-purple snake scales, three snake tails—each ten meters or more—extending from her lower body. From the waist up, her form was that of a human lady wearing a gold crown.

If one were only to look at her upper body, it could be said that her face and figure were the very pinnacles of beauty. The word 'pretty' was insufficient to describe how lovely she was, as the term could not adequately describe a work of art.

Her appearance, body, charisma, and allure were not only charming to males, but also attracted the attention of many females.

Next to her stood a humanoid monster in silver armor.

He was tall and well-built, fully three or more meters tall. His entire body was enveloped in silver armor, with only the eye holes on the helmet revealing a crimson glow.

Of the four overlords, the aura that exuded from his being was the most compelling and overbearing.

On the armored man's right was a gigantic purplish-red sarcoma in the shape of a sphere.

The sarcoma had clearly shrunk his size down a great deal if one were to compare his present form with his actual size. Currently, he maintained a body that was merely three meters or more in diameter.

There seemed to be parasites continuously squirming on the surface of the sarcoma. Even more terrifying were the countless tentacles of various sizes and lengths that extended from its surface.

On the far right was a huge eye hovering in midair.

It did not really look like a mammal's eyeball; it bore more resemblance to the eye of a gigantic fly.

The entire eye was densely covered with countless tiny eyes. Each tiny eye seemed to be alive and could see at different angles.

If a person with tryphobia saw this giant eye, they might immediately get goosebumps all over their body.

Everybody present identified the four newcomers immediately.

They were the three-tailed snake lady, Silver Armor, Giant Sarcoma, and Crimson Eye.

Excluding the four four-faced individual and the Nine Gloom Vine, they were very clearly the remaining four overlords out of the six.

Although everyone had speculated that one of the four overlords would certainly come, no one had expected all four of them to show up. Not only that, they had all arrived at the same time.

As to what this meant, all those present could immediately guess.

These four individuals had secretly come to some kind of agreement for sure.

As expected, the four of them released their auras as soon as they showed up, not bothering to hide their arrivals at all.

In the presence of four overbearing, close to half-step lord-level auras released without concealment, more than half of the thousands present fell to the ground.

At such proximity, the only ones who could remain standing were basically high-level Heavenly Gods.

Even so, most of the high-level Heavenly Gods were finding it hard to stand their ground.

Fortunately, the four overlords did not maintain their auras for too long and began shouting right away.

An electronic synthesizer-like voice filled the air like muffled thunder, deep and low.

“Four Face, Nine Gloom, hand over the items, and this matter can be entirely settled peacefully.”

As soon as Silver Armor spoke, a response immediately came from the dense forest.

“We’ve already said that those were rumors spread by outsiders. What do you want us to hand over? We don’t have the castellan’s seal fragments at all!” The four-faced individual was the one who responded; he sounded as if he felt somewhat wronged. The reality was that he genuinely did not have the castellan’s seal fragment in his possession.

“Whether you have the fragments or not, come out, both of you, and let us verify it. Then we’ll know.” it was Giant Sarcoma who spoke this time. His voice sounded like it had been squeezed out of continuously squirming flesh.

“Nonsense!” The Nine Gloom Vine’s voice came right away, rejecting this suggestion.

“If both of you are recalcitrant, then there won’t be any friendly way to resolve this matter.” At this point, the three-tailed snake lady finally spoke up. From far away, her gaze cut through the distance as she looked in the direction of the four-faced individual, “Please listen to me. Stop being stubborn; let’s settle this peaceably.”

The four-faced individual locked eyes with her from far away as well. No matter what, he could not hate this woman. However, although she was the one who spoke, she could not change his stand.

“Since there’s no friendly way to resolve this, let’s fight then!”

Chapter 1570: Chaotic Battle Among Overlords

As soon as the four-faced individual spoke, the entire dense forest within a radius of thousands of kilometers seemed to come alive. Countless vines sprouted from the branches of the trees, wildly lashing at the people surrounding the forest.

The Nine Gloom Vine’s attack came with practically no warning. The heavens were suddenly full of vines that blotted out the sun and covered the earth, spreading everywhere.

The hundreds of high-level Heavenly Gods who were initially still able to stand upright had absolutely no time to react. Some immediately had their bodies impaled by countless vines, instantly turning into human sieves. Others were strangled by the vines and crushed into pulp...

Within less than half a second, the surrounding army of thousands had been completely wiped out.

In that vine-covered world, only four figures remained unaffected. They had not even moved so much as half a step.

The Nine Gloom Vine's attack was as yet insufficient to disturb the four individuals, who were also overlord powerhouses like himself.

"Nine Gloom, this attack of yours might be successful at frightening juniors, but to use it against us—don't you think you might be underestimating us?" Giant Sarcoma's squirming flesh-like voice faintly drifted forth. He seemed to treat his opponent's attack as if it were nothing at all.

At that moment, Crimson Eye, who was off to one side, barked a sudden warning.

"Watch out!"

Before he had even finished speaking, they saw a thick vine twisted together from hundreds of vines erupt suddenly from under the earth. It transformed into a giant net that enveloped the three-tailed snake lady.

Before the rest could attempt a rescue, the giant web contracted immediately, dragging the three-tailed snake lady underground.

A scarlet flash flickered in Silver Armor's eyes. Just as he was about to charge into the depths of the dense forest, he saw the thousands of Heavenly Gods—who had earlier fallen onto the ground—standing up one after the other.

This was the Nine Gloom Vine's technique—Demon Sowing.

He could implant demonic seeds in corpses and turn them into his puppets.

Bodies implanted with demonic seeds not only inherited most of the abilities they possessed when they were still alive but were also equipped with many of the Nine Gloom Vine's abilities. They would be much more powerful than when they had been alive and were practically the Nine Gloom Vine's clones.

Moreover, as long as the demonic seeds were not destroyed, the puppets would never die.

They would get up to fight over and over again.

Silver Armor smashed the puppets one by one with his fists. However, he soon realized that the corpses—which had practically turned into pools of blood—were regenerating at a speed visible to the naked eye, and swiftly returning to the battlefield.

On the sidelines, Giant Sarcoma and Crimson Eye became aware of this issue very quickly as well.

No matter how many times they killed these puppets, they would recover immediately and join the battlefield again.

Among the three, the most helpless was Crimson Eye. Using spiritual attacks, he crushed the puppets' souls over and over again, but their souls would always regenerate.

After the battle had continued for about ten minutes or so, Silver Armor was unable to take it anymore and finally used his weapon.

Usually, he would not bother using his actual abilities when dealing with such insignificant underlings. However, this never-ending skirmishing had made him genuinely angry. He took out his weapon—the Black Dragon Spear!

The grade of Silver Armor's Black Dragon Spear had far surpassed that of common god sequence relics to the point where it could even be considered a Pseudo-Dao Weapon.

One could say that Silver Armor could only be considered complete when he wielded the Black Dragon Spear.

With just a casual sweep of his weapon, he completely obliterated a puppet that was charging at him into utter nothingness.

After this attack, the puppet finally did not revive.

Silver Armor had discovered the way to kill this group of puppets at last. Immediately, he communicated to the remaining two overlords through voice transmission.

"I know what the problem is now. We must completely destroy their physical bodies. Not a single drop of flesh or blood can remain!"

Indeed, Silver Armor had found the key to solving the problem. To combat Nine Gloom's Puppetry technique, they had to destroy the demonic seeds implanted in the puppets.

Furthermore, the demonic seeds that Nine Gloom implanted had strong survival instincts. They would hide in a safe place automatically whenever they were attacked.

Even if only a drop of blood or a piece of flesh remained, the demonic seeds could hide within and survive. They would then regenerate.

This was also why the puppets could be revived even if they were smashed into a pulp.

The only way to destroy the demonic seed within the puppet was to completely obliterate the puppet's physical body and soul, causing it to lose its host. Without a host, the demonic seeds Nine Gloom implanted would be extremely weak. Any high-level Heavenly God could destroy them.

After getting the solution from Silver Armor, Giant Sarcoma and Crimson Eye soon went into killing mode.

"Since that's the case, this will be easy!"

Giant Sarcoma's tentacles extended wildly. These tentacles—capable of obliterating sequences—impaled the puppets' bodies one by one.

The Heavenly God puppets' bodies swiftly faded, then rapidly transformed into nothingness at a speed that was visible to the naked eye.

On the other side, Crimson Eye's countless tiny eyes lit up, and black rays shot out one after the other, enveloping the puppets one by one.

The deadly black rays, with their ability to destroy sequences, turned the puppets to ashes within a blink of an eye.

...

While the outside world was in intense combat, in the depth of the dense forest, the three-tailed snake lady had already escaped from the clutches of the giant net.

Meanwhile, two powerful enemies stood before her—the four-faced individual and the Nine Gloom Vine.

"Three Tail, I don't want to fight you. I'm giving you two options right now. You either join us to fight those three fellows out there, or you turn around to leave and swear that you'll never participate in the fight for the castellan's seal fragment!" The four-faced individual did not attack right away.

"What if I chose neither?" The three-tailed snake lady smiled coldly.

"Then you'll die here!" The Nine Gloom Vine did not have the patience to waste time with her. He had already sensed that the puppets out there were dying rapidly, and would not be able to hold off Silver Armor and the other two for much longer.

Without waiting for the four-faced individual to say anything more, the Nine Gloom Vine attacked with no hesitation.

Vines surged toward the three-tailed snake lady like a tsunami, so dense they practically blotted out the sky.

Nine Gloom had captured the three-tailed snake lady first because she was the weakest among the six overlords. After she had been taken hostage, he had never expected the four-faced individual to take into account their relationship, instead of working together to kill her.

Fortunately, the four-faced individual did not stop the Nine Gloom Vine when he saw him attacking.

A trace of hesitation flashed across his eyes briefly, but it immediately turned into determination.

The next instant, when the Nine Gloom Vine attacked, the four-faced individual attacked as well.

A giant beast with twelve arms coalesced in the air above his head, battling the sky full of vines with heavy punches...

The three-tailed snake lady's eyes turned scarlet immediately, and her form immediately split into three clones.

One clone summoned black water that filled the air. Another opened its mouth and spat out never-ending purple fog, while yet another turned into a gigantic black boa constrictor. Its huge tail charged at the giant arms.

Countless vines decayed and were destroyed wherever the vast body of black water passed through.

The giant snake's tail collided loudly with the giant arms' fists, stirring up an endless storm.

However, the black water's consuming properties were not enough to defeat the regenerating abilities of the vines. Gradually, the vines completely covered the black water.

On the other side, the giant snake's tail had been crushed under continuous heavy punching.

The three-tailed snake lady was already the weakest of the six overlords in terms of ability. She was more likely to lose than win when fighting any of the five overlords, what more now that she was fighting two of them at once.

As expected, she was already looking at defeat less than five minutes into the battle.

Truth to tell, she was very much aware of her weaknesses. Therefore, the minute she saw that she was at a slight disadvantage, she chose to abandon resistance completely. She dispersed her two clones and escaped into the purple fog to hide...