

Ancient 221

Chapter 221 - 112 The Stormy Night

Gu Jianlin also looked up at the sky, staring at the oppressive clouds sprawling across the heavens.

"I don't even know how I feel."

He said softly: "Just disappointed, but also somewhat relieved."

Jing Ci made a sound in acknowledgment and smiled slightly: "Is that so? Back in Black Cloud City, you encountered Mu Feng and his daughter, as well as the people in the refuge. Why did you choose to help them back then? Was it because they saved your friends, because of their tragedy or kindness? Or was it because of your father? Or your arrogance?"

Gu Jianlin stayed silent.

"You met good people in Black Cloud City, but what kind of people did you encounter in West Port? You casually helped someone, yet what you got in return was betrayal, bringing forth a swarm of insatiable individuals begging for your charity, none of whom cared at all about your life."

Jing Ci continued: "Your assistance to the Zhong family father and daughter was unintentional; it was just a means for you to blend into the Forbidden Zone and carry out your assassination of the Yan family. But indeed, they showed kindness toward you—the meal you shared back then, and... don't you understand why they refused to tell you about what happened just now?"

Gu Jianlin asked earnestly: "Why?"

"Because of the self-esteem of the weak."

Jing Ci swirled the golden liquor in his bottle and suddenly said: "Take a look at the news. Below the reports of donations from philanthropic tycoons, many people offer gratitude, but some also say... isn't it just because they have money? If I had as much money as them, I could donate too. I might even donate more than they do."

Gu Jianlin was taken aback.

"Some people will think you're genuinely kind; others will believe you're hypocritical. That depends on whether their world appears dark or light, good or evil."

At this point, Jing Ci's gaze shifted slightly: "But the true reason you help others, the reason you choose to stand up—it's because you have a fallback, Gu Jianlin."

Gu Jianlin's pupils trembled slightly upon hearing this.

Jing Ci fixed his eyes on him: "You are arrogant because you believe you can achieve those things, so if you don't do them, you consider yourself cowardly. You have a fallback because you have plenty of cards to play. The Joker incident—that was because you uncovered the association's scheme and were confident you wouldn't get hurt, wasn't it?"

Gu Jianlin said nothing. In truth, his greatest confidence came from the power of the Qilin Venerable.

"During the Black Cloud City incident, you had already mastered Ancient God Transformation, killing one severely injured Captain Level and two wounded Deputy Captains. That wasn't difficult for you. As for opponents of the same level, they don't pose much threat to you. Later, you knew we'd come to help you because you had already sensed our presence."

Jing Ci looked toward the world between sea and sky and said: "But what if one day you lose those cards? What if one day your cards aren't enough? Neither your mentor nor I can stay by your side forever. Your mentor doesn't have many years left. Just earlier, he even made a trip to Northern Europe."

On the wheelchair, Huai Yin lightly tapped the wooden armrest, his breath carrying a faint trace of agitation.

A subtle scent of blood lingered.

"It's nothing major. In the polar night of Northern Europe, a Primordial attempted to awaken but was suppressed by your mentor, that's all. This world is far from peaceful; sacrifices occur every moment."

Jing Ci said: "Your mentor will die; I might die too. Then what will you do? Suppose both of us are gone, and the Ghost Car Ancestor stands before you—what would you do?"

Gu Jianlin remained silent.

"Do you know? From start to finish, your mentor has never said a single word to you, nor has he declared publicly that you are his disciple. He has left you an escape route. If you became his disciple and carried his name, the pressure you'd face in the future would be far greater than now."

Jing Ci sighed: "Because you're still missing one thing."

Gu Jianlin didn't hesitate and asked: "What is it?"

"This will be your second lesson—the name of this lesson is courage."

Jing Ci raised a finger: "The courage to face life and death."

Gu Jianlin sank into deep thought.

"The Breathing Technique isn't just a tool to help accumulate spirituality or passively replenish energy during combat. It's something that can match the Ancient Divine Language—it's humanity's greatest treasure. If you truly want to master it, then show courage."

Jing Ci turned his back to him: "Do you know? In this world, only true strength earns respect. What is strength? It has nothing to do with the measure of power. Those warriors who defend the Human World with their lives—they are strong. Parents who protect their children with their lives—they are strong. Mu Feng is strong, Vulture is strong, and your father is strong too."

He paused: "—And what your mentor hopes for is that you are no longer just Gu Ci'an's son, not merely the student of the King of Qing, not simply my junior disciple. You must be yourself—your unique self."

When the words fell, the elderly man on the wheelchair opened his eyes, a faint smile flickering in his gaze.

Boom!

The silent world was shattered by the sound of thunder. The rumble of waves roared like thunder, sweeping in from afar.

The sea wind surged upward, sweeping toward the sky, and a single drop of rain descended from the heavens.

The smell of the sea tide permeated the space between heaven and earth.

Amid the din of the human world, torrential rain poured down.

No one noticed their departure.

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No one noticed their arrival.

"The courage to put life and death aside?"

Gu Jianlin mulled over those words carefully.

Time crawled by. His breathing gradually steadied, rising and falling in tune with the roaring sound of the waves.

Right now, he still had ten vials of Fallen Angel Blood on him.

It was the finest Spiritual Secret Medicine crafted by the top-tier Pharmacists at the Extraordinary Level.

Well, nothing better to do anyway.

Gu Jianlin didn't bother holding back and directly poured them down his throat.

Boundless spirituality surged into his body like a breached dam. The slumbering Black Qilin suddenly stirred in frenzy, letting out a ravenous roar. Its abyss-like maw swallowed everything whole.

In an instant, half of the spirituality erupted within him, nourishing the soul of his Divine self.

Meanwhile, a red Maserati sped out from the port. Zhang Miao, flanked by a group of bodyguards, swaggered out of the car and headed straight to a luxurious cruise ship docked at the harbor.

"Hurry up, hurry up! The client's ship needs to be ready by tomorrow. This is a major deal—Third Master Liu personally instructed us. If anything goes wrong, you're all going to feed the fish in the sea!"

Zhang Miao grumbled coldly, puffing on a cigar.

The crowd surrounded him as they left.

Gu Jianlin opened his black case and withdrew a black metal umbrella, unfurling it over his head as he walked.

He took out a Golden Card from his pocket and said, "Hello, do you need fighters?"

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Late at night, torrential rain poured.

Explosions shook the sky, flames towering high and illuminating the night around the coastal villa. Ordinary people had been rendered unconscious through the Ascenders who had mastered hypnosis and evacuated ahead of time.

Roaring blasts echoed through the night.

Chen Bojun stood atop the rooftop terrace, draped in a raincoat as the storm drenched him. He spoke gravely, "Attention all teams, at any given time and place, the safety of the populace outweighs everything else! We are the warriors sworn to defend humanity's lands. With our lives and souls as kindling, we ignite flames and illuminate the endless night with light!"

He raised a clenched fist and placed it against his chest. "May the night perish, and dawn arrive!"

Countless voices echoed simultaneously through the comms channel.

"May the night perish, and dawn arrive!"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Heavy footsteps echoed along the long street. Groups of warriors clad in metallic armor moved through the urban roads. Their bodies, seemingly forged of steel and cables, were as solid and fluid as muscled frames. Red lights gleamed ominously from their helmets.

Helicopters hovered in low flight, their beaming searchlights cutting through the rain and illuminating the city below.

"Southern District of East Sea Road, search complete."

"North City District of Yu Hang Road, search complete."

"North City District of Zijing Road, remnants of the Yan family spotted, requesting backup!"

Boom!

Suddenly, the ground split open. A severely deformed man crawled out, and an enormous centipede dripping with mucus burst from his body, roaring skyward.

Warriors of the Dawn Combat Sequence swarmed forward, unleashing an intense barrage of firepower.

Simultaneously, several giant insect cocoons erupted from the ground across coastal streets.

Some even latched onto skyscrapers, absorbing nutrients from countless corpses.

"Ghost Slayer Team, prepare the Time-Space Gap immediately!"

The night shattered like glass. Gruesome intersecting rifts pierced through the insect cocoons.

Time-space collapsed violently, engulfing the cocoons into the Void and erasing them without a trace.

Boom!

A gas station crumbled in an instant, unleashing swarming hordes of insects that blotted out the sky.

"Heavenly Master Squad, assemble now!"

Someone shouted through the comms channel.

Helicopters converged over the gas station, and more than twenty warriors descended from the skies.

Simultaneously, a colossal tornado of flames erupted, igniting the stormy night as it tore towards the heavens.

"Emergency notification from Peak City: According to the Meteorological Office, an eight-grade typhoon accompanied by heavy rain, lightning, and violent storms is forecast for the southern region tonight from 8 p.m. April 15th till 3 p.m. the following day. Citizens are urged to avoid going outdoors and to take precautions against natural disasters."

On the mall's screens, the voice of a female broadcaster pierced through the storm.

Every household's computers, televisions, or mobile phones also received the emergency alert.

Enormous explosions echoed in the distance, sending citizens fleeing in panic.

"Quick! Fold the laundry and shut the doors!"

An elderly man shouted, "Is that a factory? Did lightning strike it and explode?!"

"Even the gas station caught fire! This is terrifying!"

"Is this Thanos or something?"

Boom!

The wind toppled a roadside tree, followed by an explosion in a building that sent thick smoke swirling.

Men ran with umbrellas in hand, women screamed in terror, and those unable to make it home sought refuge in subway stations.

Even though the Ether Association had taken measures beforehand, they still couldn't entirely shield civilians from the chaos.

This was the horror borne by Gu Masters!

This was the reason Gu Masters had to die!

A helicopter rapidly sped toward the southern harbor.

"Damn it! The Yan family managed to flee into West Port. Chase them! Pursue them at all costs!"

Nie, the Deacon, sat in the aircraft cabin, roaring angrily, "These bastards! It's bad enough they tried to assassinate the Omega Sequence Seed, now they dare collude with Gu Masters?! Outrageous!"

This operation was spearheaded by the Dawn Combat Sequence.

Naturally, the Judgement Court, as the supervisory body of the Ether Association, had to be involved.

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At this moment, the tablet in his hands was displaying the battle situation in the Southern District.

A marker, blinking with a red dot, vanished entirely after entering West Port.

Evidently, it had left the surveillance range.

Councilman Zhang, seated next to him, had a cold, expressionless face. He spoke indifferently, "Nie, the Deacon, calm yourself. The Yan Family won't stir up any storm worth worrying about, as long as that Gu Master doesn't successfully refine the Blood Demon Gu. If possible, the Saint would prefer we take action against the You Ying Group."

Nie, the Deacon, was momentarily stunned. "The You Ying Group from the Dark World? We've avoided crossing paths with them all these years; won't moving against them suddenly spark a conflict? After all, they're not easy prey."

Councilman Zhang replied coldly, "The Saint's opinion is, this is a rare opportunity to showcase our strength. Even Minister Lu has personally stepped in, and Director Chen is involved too."

He paused briefly, "The Omega Sequence is also assembling. Isn't that sufficient?"

"Indeed, on paper, the strength should be enough."

Nie, the Deacon, let out a sigh. "Let's just hope Minister Lu can capture the Nightmare Master soon."

Below, in the burning villa district, a terrifying spiritual aura enveloped a thousand meters' radius. It was an intensely chaotic spiritual fluctuation, nearly at Holy Land Level, where Earth, Wind, Water, and Fire converged into violent currents.

Not long ago, Minister Chen had teleported directly to the Yanshan Road Villa District using an Escape Technique.

Coincidentally, the Nightmare Master hadn't escaped in time, and she caught him on the spot.

As suspected, the Nightmare Master had indeed survived, and moreover, advanced to the Sixth Rank.

He had become an exceptionally dangerous high-level Gu Master.

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Boom!

A black Land Rover barreled into West Port, the accelerator seemingly pressed to its limit as it hurtled ahead like a beast. It brutally knocked two pedestrians aside and sped straight toward the port dock.

Meanwhile, a snow-white Lamborghini tore through the storm, racing up to follow.

"Young Master, calm down! We're going too fast!"

Chen Qing's face was pale, her voice urgent as she pleaded, "Slow down! We've already lost contact with our teammates!"

Lu Zicheng's face was blank, his gaze frozen over, but his bloodshot eyes revealed a hidden fury surging beneath.

"None of you understand the Nightmare Master, but I do. I was his student once. If the Nightmare Master intentionally collided with my sister, it means that his focus isn't on himself. Therefore, I won't pin all my hopes on my sister."

"Although my rank isn't high enough to kill the Gu Master, I'll destroy everything he desires—at any cost."

His voice was calm, yet it carried the weight of a brewing storm.

Chen Qing could feel the violent Qi raging within him, like a volcano about to erupt.

She knew that no matter how much she tried to talk sense, this man wouldn't listen.

It was rare to see this man lose his composure.

Ever since that disaster eight years ago, Lu Zicheng had become a completely different person — apathetic and disheveled.

Only when a certain name was mentioned would he sharpen his claws once more, becoming dangerous.

That name belonged to the Nightmare Master.

Eight years ago, on that fateful rainy night, Lu Zicheng lost everything.

His mentor, his teammates, his one true love.

And it was all because of the Nightmare Master.

Before defecting, the Nightmare Master had been this man's team leader.

Under the tempest of today's storm, Lu Zicheng seemed to have returned to his former sharp-edged self.

That look in his eyes.

Fierce, ruthless.

As if burning.

"Shishi..."

Lu Zicheng murmured softly, "I'll avenge you."

Chapter 224 - 113 Assassination!

The villa district on Yanshan Road had already become a sea of fire and rubble.

Wild winds swept embers into the air, extinguished intermittently by the torrential rain, accompanied by the explosive splatter of Gu Worm fluid—like a dark and somber painting, a frenzy in full display.

A pale middle-aged man was impaled by countless sharp spikes rising abruptly from the ground. Blood gushed out like a fountain, spraying in all directions, leaving his body to rapidly decay into lifelessness.

Yet, from the cracks in the wall, another Gu Worm, the size of a palm, crawled out, licking at the blood and fluid spilling across the ground. Its body swelled grotesquely and quickly transformed into a colossal and horrifying beast.

With a squelching sound, the shell on the worm's back split open, revealing the upper half of a pale, naked man. His face twisted into an uncanny smile as he spoke, "Give it up, Zijin. I'm now a Sixth Rank Gu Master myself. I'm no longer the deadweight I used to be in our squad back in the day, always relying on you and Old Gu for protection."

Thunderous elemental turbulence in the heavens was his only reply.

Lu Zijin hovered amidst the torrential rain, yet not a single drop touched her. Her childishly innocent face remained expressionless, yet emanated a profound aura. "So you do remember, huh? I thought you, a traitorous snake with a heart of stone, had forgotten everything."

A mocking smile tugged at the corner of her lips. "You're alive? Truly unexpected. I thought you'd long perished in the dimensional crevices. When I first saw the Death Spirit Gu, I should have guessed."

The ground collapsed with a deafening roar as countless Gu Worms crawled up from the depths, teeming and swarming like a surging tide.

"How could I forget? Lu Zijin, Gu Ci'an, Meng Hebo—back then, weren't we the brightest team in the Peak City District? What a pity... Captain Zhou and Vice Captain Ye both died in Buzhou Mountain, and Old Gu's gone as well."

The Nightmare Master smiled faintly, his lips blood-red, his face sickly pale.

"Don't mention them."

Lu Zijin gazed down at him from above, enunciating coldly, "You're not worthy."

The Nightmare Master sighed. "It's been eight years. You still hate me, don't you? I've never quite understood. Even frogs at the bottom of a well dare to peek at the sky; how much more so humans? What have we Gu Masters done wrong? Why must I watch you and Old Gu ascend to Sixth Rank and approach the threshold of the Holy Land while I remain forever bound by baseless rules, stuck in Third Rank, unable to advance?"

He paused. "One of you became a branch director of the Peak City District, and the other joined the Night Watchers. Meanwhile, I was left trapped because of those absurd rules."

A powerful mental field enveloped the ruins as Lu Zijin said coldly, "Our advancement does not come at the expense of sacrificing innocent lives. The abilities of the Gu Master path are excessively dangerous. For people like you, once you develop a taste for blood sacrifice, you'll never stop."

The Nightmare Master retorted, "So what? This world is inherently survival of the fittest. Only the strong survive—either be the butcher or the lamb. Since ancient times, why do humans tirelessly pursue the power of Ancient Gods? How many have lost themselves on this path of evolution, becoming Fallen?"

"Why does the Qilin Immortal Palace even exist? Even an Emperor, after reaching the Demigod Domain, schemed for immortality, eternal life. Xu Fu, too, could not resist the allure of eternal life and bowed at the feet of the Supreme."

"The only reason you can stand on the moral high ground and look down on me is because your inheritance path isn't that of a Gu Master. If both of us were in the same position, you might be even more ruthless than I am."

He chuckled. "Speaking of which, did you know? Xu Fu started on the Heavenly Master Path at Third Rank, then switched to the Divine Path while pursuing the legacy of the Chu people. Chu culture worships the Fire God—though in reality, they venerate the Vermilion Bird and Qilin, the two Supremes, who exist as light and shadow, complementing one another."

"The Chu people's customs honor Feng Shangchi, venerate fire and the sun, and connect intimately with shamans and ghosts."

His eyes shimmered with an eerie depth as he murmured, "Within the legacy of the two Supremes, there lies the true Mystery of Immortality! And if I'm not mistaken, someone might have already succeeded over the past two millennia!"

Lu Zijin knew this man too well. At this point, he was spouting nonsense solely to distract her.

She replied coldly, "Stop wasting time. Since your main body isn't here, this fight is meaningless. I'll ask you only one thing: Do you have any connection to the Blood Moon Slaughter Incident?"

The Nightmare Master blinked and continued smiling. "Gu Ci'an's story makes things pretty interesting, doesn't it? But why should I tell you? Honestly, I thought you came here for something concerning your brother."

Killing intent surged in Lu Zijin's beautiful eyes as she said icily, "Back then, when you committed those atrocities for the secrets of the Immortal Palace, Zicheng naturally had every reason to settle scores with you. Now, while you drag me here, aren't I keeping you stuck too? If you plan to refine the Blood Demon Gu, today you're destined to fail."

With a sigh, countless Gu Worms began writhing fervently.

"Zijin, we haven't seen each other in eight years, yet you suddenly don't understand me anymore?"

The Nightmare Master smirked darkly. "I always keep a backup plan."

Lu Zijin narrowed her striking eyes.

"You thought I was merely advancing, didn't you? Wrong."

The Nightmare Master sneered. "I'm seeking a substitute for Ancient God's Blood to mass-produce my own Divine Servants."

Thunder boomed as elemental turbulence erupted in violence.

Murderous intent roared in Lu Zijin's eyes.

"It's already too late."

The Nightmare Master's smile remained fixed. "Just sit back and enjoy the show."

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The torrential rain poured as the coastal tides surged violently, rocking a yacht in the waters.

Rain battered the yacht's deck relentlessly as Zhang Miao eyed the golden card before him and the youth sitting opposite him. He smiled and said, "Gu Ting, good. So you're sure you're a free man? You're aware of the Dark World's rules, aren't you? If you're secretly boxing for another boss, I won't be able to sign you."

Bodyguards stood behind him, heavily armed and ready for action.

"Yes, a free man."

Gu Jianlin smiled mildly. "Because I lack the resources to advance, I'm seeking Boss Zhang's sponsorship."

Zhang Miao's eyes lit up as he laughed heartily, "Great! Excellent! I'll have my people draft a contract right away. From today onward, you're under my wing. Money, resources, women—whatever you want! As long as you win boxing matches for me and earn a spot in the Immortal Palace, you can have it all!"

Gu Jianlin nodded and said, "Thank you, Boss Zhang."

At that moment, Zhang Miao glanced back at a secretary and discreetly mouthed instructions, "Go, draft the contract. And get me a Mo Ni Tequila, heavily spiked with the deadliest poison available. I need to keep this guy under control. Got it?"

The secretary nodded understandingly and left.

Gu Jianlin feigned ignorance, fiddling with the golden card in his hand.

Meanwhile, he silently counted the seconds in his mind.

Suddenly, bright headlights cut through the storm, and a Land Rover roared into the harbor.

Heavily armed mercenaries swarmed out, quickly locking down the port.

The rear door of the Land Rover slammed open, and a middle-aged man in a white suit stepped out, clutching a briefcase. His hair was disheveled, his eyes bloodshot, his demeanor tense and wary.

A well-dressed woman followed him, opening an elegant umbrella.

Her disdainful gaze swept over the surroundings, as though the chaotic and grimy environment was utterly beneath her.

The driver lowered his head as he exited the car.

Yan Hao got out from the passenger seat and trailed closely behind.

"I'm Yan Wu, buying a boat off Mr. Liu."

A sharp voice cut through the storm, "Who's handling the handover?"

On the deck, Zhang Miao smiled faintly under his umbrella. "Business calls. My young friend, excuse me for a moment."

With that, he led his bodyguards off the yacht, smiling as he said, "Mr. Yan! You've kept me waiting! The boat is ready. As long as you clear the payment, you can set sail immediately!"

Gu Jianlin rose and silently followed behind, remaining mute.

Yan Wu and Mrs. Yan visibly relaxed. It seemed this West Port Forbidden Zone was still reliable—at least the boat was ready. With the payment made, they could depart immediately.

But at that instant, Yan Hao stepped forward and called out, "Brother."

Yan Wu frowned and turned around. "What is it?"

At that very moment, Yan Hao's face twisted into an insane grin. His right hand clenched a poisoned dagger and plunged toward Yan Wu's spleen.

With a wet squelch, blood spurted out.

True to his status as a Fifth Rank World King, Yan Wu reacted in the nick of time, swiftly twisting his body to evade half a step. The poisoned dagger missed its mark, driving into his kidney instead!

Boom!

In an instant, Yan Wu countered with a blow, his Qi Force exploding violently.

Yan Hao's skull shattered under the impact.

A Second Rank against a Fifth Rank could only seize one fleeting opportunity; otherwise, the reprisal was instant death!

Mrs. Yan let out a piercing scream.

A syringe containing an unknown substance was suddenly lodged in her neck.

The driver, who was none other than the Scholar in disguise, raised his head and bolted.

Yan Wu and Mrs. Yan were filled with shock and fury as they realized two Lao Liu had been lurking right by their side!

Suddenly, a white Lamborghini roared through the storm and slammed into Yan Wu's chest!

"Ambush! Quick—"

Zhang Miao bellowed, noticing the attack.

A sudden squelch sounded.

The sharp tip of a black umbrella pierced his chest.

Gu Jianlin covered his mouth gently and whispered, "Shh."

Chapter 225 - 114: The Will of the Supreme! (5800)

The white Lamborghini plowed through countless mercenaries along the way, barreling through the puddles, its tires gripping the ground tightly, while torrents of rainwater splashed outward and crashed down with a roar.

With a dull thud, Yan Wu and Mrs. Yan were struck by the snowy white Lamborghini and sent flying like cannonballs into the stacks of containers at the harbor, the deafening boom resounding like thunder in the storm.

The Lamborghini screeched to a halt in the rain, its tires grinding against the ground with a nerve-racking screeching sound.

In an instant, a flash of lightning split the dark clouds above, illuminating the coral-like clouds as if they were a mother nest nurturing a disaster, also lighting up the sharp, blade-like gaze inside the sports car.

The rain poured down even harder, as if a sea tide was about to engulf the entire world.

The sound of the waves and the rain intermingled, echoing across the heavens and the earth.

The car door was kicked open, and a cold, fierce young man stepped out of the car.

He wore a black long coat, a massive sword bag strapped to his back, his waist tied with secret medicine vials encased in metal tubes, and above his head circled a bald parrot.

Tonight, Lu Zicheng was fully armed.

"Young master, the other captains haven't arrived yet, they must be held up by Gu worms on the road."

Chen Qing stepped out from the passenger seat, holding an alchemy rocket launcher, and softly said, "I can sense that the Blood Demon Gu should be on Yan Wu, but I don't know where the Nightmare Master's true body is."

Lu Zicheng bit into a cigarette after a long absence, lit it with a lighter, and softly said, "Chen Qing, you should go. Go join the other captains; the upcoming battle is my own affair."

Chen Qing acted as if she hadn't heard, hefting the alchemy rocket launcher and fired it with a roar!

Boom!

A blaze of fire landed on a distant container, accompanied by the explosion of flames, a mushroom cloud shot up into the sky.

"I can take care of myself."

Chen Qing said expressionlessly, "Let's go, let's get revenge for Shishi together. She's not just your fiancée, she's also my best friend, my teammate. Though I'm just support, stop looking down on me."

Lu Zicheng was silent for a moment, a slight smile tugging at his lips, and calmly said, "It's a pity, this time I might not be able to watch that child clear Professor Gu's name. But he has gained the King of Qing's recognition, probably won't need us anymore, right? With that personality of his, I doubt anyone can bully him either."

"I'm not afraid of him being bullied, just afraid he'll act recklessly."

Chen Qing also smiled slightly, casually pulling a metal rod from the car and sticking it into the ground.

With a boom, a powerful electromagnetic pulse poured into the ground and spread with a roar.

Just like back in Black Cloud City, forcibly restoring communication within the Forbidden Zone.

Lu Zicheng took a deep breath, stepping through the rain forward, and spoke in a deep voice, "Let's go."

Boom!

A burst of overwhelming Qi force erupted, he sliced through the storm like a sharp arrow, charging forward.

"Shishi, it's been eight years."

He softly said, "I can finally get revenge for you with my own hands..."

From the sword bag flew two Tang blades, their stark cold gleam cutting through the rain.

He gripped the hilts with both hands, powerfully throwing them forward.

Bam!

The Qi force exploded, inches upon inches of ripples violently shook the rain curtain, bursting with a piercing sound of air being split!

From within the burning container, a man, like a demon, slowly rose, facing the charging Tang blades with mocking and disdainful laughter, an invisible Qi Realm rapidly expanded!

Ancient Martial Path, Fifth-Order Realm King!

At this stage, the Ancient Martial Path can expand one's Qi into a Barrier; as long as one remains within the realm, all attacks will be nullified by the Qi, and any time is vulnerable to an attack from the Qi.

Moreover, a Fifth-Order Realm King can also trigger the Qi Realm, causing massive area destruction!

"Damned fool!"

That was Yan Wu's roar: "Do you not know the height of the sky and the depth of the earth, are you seeking death?"

Heh.

Madness flickered in Lu Zicheng's eyes, enveloped in raging Qi, he brazenly charged into the opponent's domain, letting out a lion's angry roar!

Boom!

Two forces of Qi collided and exploded, the torrential rain blasted and recoiled.

In the distance, Chen Qing pulled out a large weapons case from the car, kneeled supporting the rocket launcher, aiming.

Fire!

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On the yacht's deck, fell an eerie dead silence.

"Hush."

Gu Jianlin drew out his black umbrella, and softly said.

With a squelch, a blood hole opened on Zhang Miao's chest, blood gushing out.

At the same time, a hand burning with pale ghost fire pressed on his head, incinerating his life.

Zhang Miao's rank was not high, his pupils flickering with a crimson glow, clearly using hypnotic abilities.

Though wearing a suit, in the boy's eyes he looked like a magician.

A First-Order Magician, too weak.

"Not infected? A pity."

Gu Jianlin gently set down the man in his arms, casually tossing him aside, faintly said, "I know you still have a breath left, don't wonder why I killed you. I heard you wanted to poison me, control me."

With a thud, Zhang Miao toppled to the ground.

The bodyguards and mercenaries were stunned at this scene, their minds unable to process what had happened.

First, the deal got interrupted by an ambush.

Then the customer got sent flying by a Lamborghini.

Now Boss Zhang got straight-up stabbed through the heart.

They looked at the scene in shock, surrounding the boy from all sides, but did not make a move.

Chapter 226 - 114: The Supreme's Decree! (5800)_2

The reason was simple: the boss was dead, and they didn't know what to do.

Gu Jianlin paid them no attention, merely casting his gaze toward the distant explosion amidst the clusters of containers, frowning slightly.

His Life Perception had picked up three life rhythms inside the vehicle.

Lu Zicheng, Chen Qing, and a parrot.

"Something's off. According to the Ether Association's operational protocols, tasks involving targets as critical as the Yan family should never be carried out by just one captain and one deputy captain. At the very least, there should be a considerable number of captain-level operatives, along with one or two at Fifth Rank. What in the world is going on?" Gu Jianlin's pupils contracted as a thought struck him.

The likelihood was high—the Ether Association's other combat forces were preoccupied elsewhere.

Only Lu Zicheng and Chen Qing had managed to pursue them here.

And with the blatant recklessness of ramming the car just moments ago, it probably meant their emotions had taken over!

At that moment, his phone regained communication, and several messages streamed in through the Deep Space Network.

The audio began to play automatically:

"Xiao Gu, it's me, Lu Zicheng."

"By the time you hear this message, I should already be on my way to carry out a mission. This might be our farewell—or perhaps our final goodbye. I'm sorry. I once made a promise at Professor Gu's grave to

take care of you on his behalf, to protect you as you grew up, to help you lift the curse, and to clear your father's name."

"Now, I'm afraid there's no longer a chance for that. After all, you've earned the recognition of the King of Qing, and you no longer need me. My sister and your father were teammates, so even if I'm no longer here, she'll help watch over you for me. Although she initially didn't want you to join the Association, it was actually to spare you from the Judgement Court's disdain."

"My sister may seem unreliable, but you can trust her. After Professor Gu passed away, she's been silently keeping an eye on you, and if not for her cover, your father's students wouldn't have escaped unharmed."

"There are many bad people in this world, but there are many more good ones. An extra me makes no difference, and one less me won't matter. So I've decided to do something I've always wanted to do, but never could."

"Eight years ago, my mentor, Meng Hebo, codenamed Nightmare Master, betrayed the Association during the first localization of Qilin Immortal Palace. As the leader of that operation, Nightmare Master trapped five hundred twenty-four people at the bottom of the sea, using the Immortal Palace's power to slaughter them, thereby achieving his promotion."

"It was an exceedingly cruel blood sacrifice, with only three survivors. One of them was very important to me."

"Her name was Mu Shishi—the eldest daughter of Uncle Mu, and my fiancée. When we found her, she was already undergoing deformation. Left with no alternatives, Uncle Mu and I had to kill her with our own hands."

"Nightmare Master, while being hunted down, fell into a dimensional rift. Uncle Mu, your father, and members of the Night Watchers all tracked him, but to no avail. We thought he was dead, but eight years later, he resurfaced."

"For the past eight years, I've been haunted by the same nightmare, night and day: I killed the girl I loved most with my own hands, and I wailed on the shore while holding her lifeless body. She was my fiancée—she was killed, and I couldn't even avenge her."

"But today, no matter what, I need to end this nightmare. If I can kill Nightmare Master, I'll be able to face Shishi. And if I fail, at least I can go see her."

"If there's one person in this world who would understand my decision, I think that person must be you. Because you've felt the same pain—the loss of the most important person in your life."

"A person feels too lonely. Perhaps dying with her wouldn't be so bad."

"Xiao Gu, your talent surpasses mine, even your father's back in his prime. Though the road ahead will be fraught with difficulties, I believe you'll overcome them step by step. Crush those bastards—don't let them twist right and wrong."

"Good luck. I'll always be watching over you."

The recording abruptly ended, cut off by the deafening roar of thunder.

Gu Jianlin silently stared at the now-dark screen of his phone, the captain's voice seeming to linger in the solemn stillness.

Although he was currently surrounded by a group of people.

His mind flashed with a fleeting spark of inspiration.

Eight years ago.

The initial survey of Qilin Immortal Palace.

Nightmare Master's betrayal, the promotion through a blood sacrifice, the fall into the dimensional rift.

Uncle Mu's abrupt descent and inexplicable amnesia during the mission.

Fu Qingxuan, serving as a Night Watcher, being afflicted by the Soul Loss Gu during the operation.

Finally, the craving Nightmare Master displayed for the Qilin Wedge after the Blood Moon Slaughter Incident.

Everything was connected!

——Nightmare Master!

"Captain..."

Gu Jianlin's gaze drifted far off to the battlefield, his eyes shimmering with ghost fire that spread and burned.

"Don't move. Raise your hands and lower your weapon!"

A mercenary said in a tense voice, "You have the Golden Card. We won't kill you, but you'll have to come with us to meet Mr. Liu for questioning."

The former secretary stepped forward, her face turning ashen upon seeing the boss's corpse. "The boss is dead... This is bad, really bad. Kill him—hurry up and kill him! Then go support the clients immediately! If this deal falls apart, the company is going to suffer huge losses!"

The bodyguards instantly raised their weapons, aiming at the young man before them.

In that instant, a pale ghost fire ignited abruptly on Gu Jianlin's forehead. His sclera was swallowed by pitch-black darkness, as deep and hollow as a black hole—eerie and terrifying.

Chapter 227 - 114: The Supreme's Decree! (5800)_3

In that fleeting moment, ethereal silver-white chains crisscrossed and soared, forming a barrier.

A black bell suddenly tolled with a shattering sound!

Boom!

At this moment, everyone was shaken by the resounding bell, feeling as though a black halo hovered above them, like a vortex threatening to devour their very souls!

Pale ghost fire ignited across the deck, consuming their life force.

"Apologies, everyone. Time is of the essence."

Gu Jianlin gripped a black umbrella in his left hand, while his right hand snatched up a chair, plunging into the enemies' ranks!

Slash!

The heart of a mercenary was pierced by the black umbrella.

Bam!

A bodyguard's head exploded under the chair's strike, bursting open like a watermelon.

With a thunderous roar, boundless darkness erupted, reducing three enemies to dust and shattering the deck.

The deck splintered, and everyone started plummeting downward.

At this moment, the black umbrella burst with fierce bolts of lightning, electrocuting the enemies until their bodies twitched uncontrollably.

With the Lock of Nonexistence isolating the battlefield, and the Soul Comforting Bell serving as crowd control, paired with the Heavenly Evil Spirit and the chair.

This was a one-sided massacre.

"Die."

Gu Jianlin raised a single finger, his body covered in sinister black spell markings.

A sickening sound rang out as everyone bled from their seven orifices, struck as if by a heavy blow.

Pale ghost fire continued to burn away at their life force.

Streams of chaotic, void-like life force flowed into the boy's body.

Ultimately condensing near his heart into a single drop of Ancient God's Blood!

Gu Jianlin reversed his grip and thrust the black umbrella into the eye socket of the last dying mercenary, sending a gush of blood spraying out.

Hoo.

All the enemies were dealt with.

He exhaled deeply, his mind utterly drained of spirituality.

"Next, Captain... in the face of sworn enemies, how can one fight alone?"

Gu Jianlin tilted his head back and downed a bottle of Blue Blood, standing amidst the pouring rain with his eyes closed.

In his mind, he began to visualize the Qilin Immortal Palace hovering in the firmament above.

The world fractured, and from countless rifts poured scarlet light that engulfed him!

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In the burning ruins, Yan Wu's blood-red eyes gleamed with madness as he upheld a seemingly unbreakable Qi Realm, his face twisted in fury and savagery, growling, "Captain Lu! It's actually you ambushing me here!"

Boom!

Terrifying Qi Force exploded outward, accompanied by his tiger-like roar.

The raging Qi surged forth like an unstoppable tide.

Amid this dreadful din, however, came the sharp humming of a Tang Blade!

It was a blade swift to the utmost, tearing through the howling storm and even slicing through the Qi Domain itself, advancing with unstoppable force and carrying a courage that transcended life and death!

Lu Zicheng lunged forward, charging across the burning ground like a black streak of lightning!

The blade hummed with ecstatic delight!

At this moment, he demonstrated his mastery of sword skills. Even with his body bloodied from injuries within the Qi Realm, he forcibly slashed open a breach, then tore it wide.

Focus on one point, unleash every ounce of strength!

A flash of cold light was seen, followed by an ear-splitting boom!

Lu Zicheng struck with his blade, only for it to be clamped between the enemy's abruptly clasped hands, emitting a sound like booming bells and great drums!

"Foolishness!"

Yan Wu's blood-red eyes locked onto him, full of mockery.

In that moment, Lu Zicheng, expressionless, let go of the blade and drew two more Tang Blades from his sword bag.

Left slash, right slice!

Killer intent marked his steps, carving a grim arc through the rain, twisting his waist as the blade plunged fiercely!

Clang!

At the critical moment, Yan Wu reversed his grip on his own Tang Blade, deflecting the blow!

Blade clash versus blade clash, the Qi Force between the two erupted violently!

Boom!

Lu Zicheng was blasted away by a massive Qi shockwave, spitting a mouthful of fresh blood.

Seeing the opportunity, Yan Wu prepared to capitalize on his advantage, only to be struck by another rocket descending from the sky, crashing into him!

The ensuing explosion sent flames soaring upward into the sky.

Yan Wu endured the rocket's impact within his Qi Realm, but his domain started to waver.

Suddenly, Lu Zicheng steadied himself with one hand pressed to the ground, punched through the rain, and charged forward again. His two blades sliced the night with chilling arcs of light, like the gleam of shattered stars—ancient Blade Technique Extreme Intent unleashed!

Though at a disadvantage in rank, his martial arts expertise was superior!

At this moment, Yan Wu's eyes trembled violently as he forcibly solidified his Qi Realm and punched out!

His blood-stained fist shook the storm, as if the entirety of the domain surged forward with relentless force!

Boom!

A bullet whistled through the air, piercing a gap right through his domain.

The sniper rifle's explosive report rolled across the heavens and earth.

The moment Yan Wu's advancing Qi Realm stalled, black venom spread through his left kidney, seeping outward in that instant, causing him to let out a muffled grunt!

Lu Zicheng seized the moment, his twin blades roaring like dragons as they struck simultaneously with an electrifying flash of light!

Slash!

Lu Zicheng finally heard the sound he had so desperately desired—the clean tear of blade through flesh, amidst the roaring storm, a sound so exquisite it brought him visceral satisfaction.

Yan Wu's chest was suddenly pierced by both Tang Blades, blood spilling forth like delicate butterfly wings.

His entire form froze, his expression shifting to one of utter disbelief.

Madness! This Captain Lu was utterly insane!

This was just an association mission—why fight so desperately?

He staggered back step by step, trying to wrench the two blades from his body.

This wound wouldn't be enough to kill a Fifth Rank World King.

But those blades had been coated with poison!

Lu Zicheng loosened his grip on the handles, panting as he stared at his adversary: "Sorry, but the one I'm truly after isn't you."

Chapter 228 - 114: The Supreme's Decree! (5800)_4

"Nightmare Master."

He softly said, "Chen Qing has already discovered you. Come out."

In Yan Wu's blood-red eyes, a pale middle-aged man was eerily reflected.

"Zicheng, long time no see. You've done well."

He spoke calmly, "But it's still not enough!"

The moment Lu Zicheng saw him, his gaze turned murderous, sharp and cold as a blade.

At that instant, Yan Wu's body began to expand inch by inch, his flesh seemingly proliferating madly.

Muscles bulged, bones emitted cracking sounds, and his entire form turned a shade of iron blue.

From his back, insect-like jointed limbs burst forth, his body gradually hardening!

"Night... Nightmare Master!"

Yan Wu exclaimed angrily and fearfully, "What have you done!"

From within his body came an eerie laughter:

"Don't be so shocked. I merely hid the Blood Demon Gu inside your body when you took the secret medicine."

Yan Wu was horrified, his pupils contracted violently, but were gradually invaded by an ominous black hue.

His body began losing control.

His mind seemed to descend into darkness.

As a mutated Divine Servant, he had been temporarily overtaken!

At that moment, a bald parrot suddenly flew by, releasing a piercing cry!

Boom!

A horrifying sonic wave exploded forth.

The overwhelming shockwave erupted like a tsunami, causing Yan Wu's mutated body to burst apart, spraying foul, viscous fluids everywhere!

Lu Zicheng stared at his opponent, took a deep breath, and injected all the secret medicine into himself, turning his eyes blood red. He drew out a Tang Blade once more.

At the same moment, he glanced back.

Near the Lamborghini in the distance, Chen Qing watched him silently.

The wind carried away her tightly-coiled hair, making her appear tragically beautiful like a delicate poppy flower swaying.

"Let's go."

Lu Zicheng softly said.

He understood this was his last chance. In that instant, countless images seemed to flash through his mind, memories surging like a storm, finally freezing on that night of relentless tide and waves.

The one he loved most had died before his very eyes.

Grief. Despair.

The Tang Blade roared.

Qi boiled, running wild.

Lu Zicheng suddenly transformed into a streak of black lightning, diving forth. The blade hummed fiercely, its icy glint cruel and fleeting.

Boom!

Yan Wu roared skyward once more, and the crumbling domain around him unexpectedly solidified again, becoming as immovable as a mountain, blocking the way ahead, impassable!

The blade edge vibrated furiously, but was firmly obstructed by this Qi Realm.

Pouring in his full strength, he couldn't move an inch forward.

Something's wrong.

--If Yan Wu's body really contained the Blood Demon Gu, then the toxin should've worked moments ago. Why is this happening?

Lu Zicheng roared in fury, his Qi surging violently outward, unleashing every ounce into one final strike. A glimmering flash of cold light suddenly descended!

A crisp sound rang out!

The Qi Realm was forcibly torn apart, the blade trembling wildly.

The Nightmare Master stood motionless, seemingly about to be beheaded by the blade's glow.

In the final instant, the Tang Blade couldn't withstand the pressure of the Qi Realm and shattered with a resounding crack!

"Zicheng, you've indeed grown, but you underestimated me."

The Nightmare Master chuckled softly, "Who told you I ever intended to use the Blood Demon Gu?"

Boom!

Though unwilling, Lu Zicheng was still swept away by a violent surge of Qi, like a blood-soaked hawk falling in the midst of a tempest!

At that moment, a shattering sound echoed from within his body.

He seemed to be carried by the wind, drenched in the storm, his pupils reflecting the pouring rain, as if he would be completely submerged by it.

A muffled thud rang aloud.

Suddenly, someone dove down, catching him steadily with a broad and sturdy chest!

"Hey, still able to fight? Don't give up, brother of the association!"

A strong, unpretentious voice resounded, tinged with admiration: "Boss, kill that bastard!"

Clang!

A Guqin unleashed an explosive thunder, shattering the Void itself!

A petite, graceful girl appeared amidst the storm, seemingly out of nowhere, plucking the strings of a black Guqin!

Meanwhile, from a corner emerged a monstrous figure with horns atop its head and scales like a serpent covering its body.

Its eerie vertical pupils were filled with madness.

"--Obey the Supreme's decree!"

Chapter 229 - 115: Competing Fathers!

Lu Zicheng opened his eyes to a vision of blood-red chaos.

A burly man stood imposing in front of him, towering at two meters tall. His muscles were like knotted iron, his rugged frame trembling with suppressed might. Turning his head, he grinned ferociously, "Brother, I saw the entire fight just now. I don't know why you had to go all out against him, but your sword skills are impressive—damn cool! Leave the rest to us!"

His eyes brimmed with murderous intent and madness on the verge of losing control.

With a resolute thumbs-up, he whirled around and charged headfirst into the expanding Qi Realm!

"Boss!"

The Butcher roared, stamping the ground with a force that sent him soaring skyward!

The Qi Realm of a Fifth-Order World King—nearly indestructible to low-level Ascenders.

However, the Ghost Slayer Path was an exception!

The core ability of the Ghost Slayer Path was the Power of Space-Time!

When enough temporal-spatial havoc was wrought upon this Void, the entire space would crumble and collapse. Everything within would shatter—no exceptions!

On a nearby shipping container, a girl wearing a cat-faced mask strummed her guzheng, her pale fingers plucking the strings. Waves of sound, cascading like an oncoming tide, blasted forth and shook the Void!

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The Void fractured like a mirror, its crisscrossing fissures spreading wildly. Space itself shattered!

The rapidly expanding Qi Realm collapsed along with it!

The Butcher seized the fleeting opportunity, diving forward like a maddened beast. The Qi within him boiled like molten lava, blending seamlessly with his unbridled strength as he unleashed a cannonball of a punch!

At the same time, the Scholar from behind summoned a tempest of Elemental Turbulence—hail and firestorms intermingling amidst flying debris and howling winds, infused with an oppressive mental force!

The three joined forces, their focus locked on the mutated monstrosity among the ruins!

BOOM!

Yan Wu, midway through his grotesque transformation, was sent hurtling through the air by the combined assault of Elemental Turbulence and mental might. His hard carapace shattered, revealing charred flesh streaked with blood, and his internal organs spilled grotesquely from his abdomen.

At the threshold of Quasi-Divine Servant Transformation, the Scholar's combat prowess bordered on the Fourth Rank!

The guzheng's melodies suddenly accelerated, resembling the explosive burst of shattering silver vessels!

Under the storm's chaotic fissures, countless deep, jagged wounds appeared on Yan Wu's body. His throat was torn nearly open, falling just short of a complete beheading!

The Butcher delivered the final blow—a punch unleashed with earth-shattering might, reversing the rain as his force rippled through the damp air!

CRASH!

Yan Wu was sent flying by the Butcher's crushing strike. The terrifying Qi Force penetrated his body, caving in the massive shipping container behind him as blood burst outward like crimson mist, painting the rainstorm in gore!

"Finish him, now!"

The Moon Princess hesitated not an instant. She swiftly stowed away her guzheng, her petite frame becoming a fleeting phantom, darting through the rainstorm like a ghostly shadow. In the blink of an eye, she crossed a hundred meters distance.

Most who trod the Ghost Slayer Path were melee combatants. She, however, wielded her peculiar guzheng to perform ranged attacks, avoiding close encounters unless absolutely necessary—especially against a Fifth-Order World King.

But now that the guzheng's spirituality had been depleted, she had no choice but to gamble on closing the gap!

"Boss, I've got your back!"

The Butcher bellowed, "Stay behind me!"

Like a raging bull, he charged forward, smashing through countless containers on his way to the target!

At that moment, he caught sight of a monstrous figure—half-human, half-snake—racing alongside him.

"You?!"

He exclaimed in shock, "Scholar?!"

The Scholar rasped, "Orders from the Supreme. Now finish that thing!"

In mere moments, the three closed in on the collapsed container!

And yet, in that split second, the unexpected occurred!

A roar, inhuman and filled with fury, erupted from Yan Wu's throat. His spine, splitting skin and flesh, extended outward like a dragon's, as blood-soaked exoskeletons burst forth from his body. Crimson dragon horns sprouted grotesquely from his head!

Dragon Transformation!

Thunderous dragon roars drowned out the storm, his pupils morphing into eerie, scarlet slits!

"No!"

As a Quasi-Divine Servant, the Scholar could feel the magnitude of this power—but it was too late!

BOOM!

His Rank was simply too low. Even with his enhancements elevating him to the Fourth Rank, he was overwhelmed by a surging wave of wild Qi Force. Blasted into the tumultuous sea, he vanished amidst towering waves.

The Moon Princess skidded to a halt, her sparkling eyes trembling violently. She drew a dagger from her sleeve and slashed at the Void.

Fierce rifts flared briefly, tearing into the oncoming Qi Realm.

But it wasn't enough!

Though the rifts created small openings in the Qi Realm, it continued surging forward unimpeded.

Then, the Butcher, roaring, barreled into the fray, hurling the girl aside with brute force!

CRASH!

The Butcher bore the full brunt of the impenetrable Qi Realm. He crumpled under its crushing weight, the sound of his bones shattering echoing like thunder. His organs seemed to rupture as he spat a mouthful of thick, metallic blood.

With a wet thud, he crashed into a container and slumped like a battered ragdoll, his body drenched in blood.

"Well, looks like this is how it ends for me."

He muttered hoarsely, "Good thing I had insurance."

The Butcher's head lolled to the side, as if death had claimed him.

"Butcher!"

From afar, the Moon Princess clutched her guzheng, barely holding her ground, her eyes brimming with murderous intent.

Amidst the crashing waves, the Scholar watched in abject horror.

Even Lu Zicheng, kneeling in a blood-soaked daze, was stunned as he raised his gaze to witness the scene.

Because Yan Wu... was no longer Yan Wu.

Or rather, Yan Wu had ceased to exist entirely.

Consumed wholly by the lust for slaughter, his consciousness was obliterated. Crimson slit eyes glinted atop a face marred with grotesque bone protrusions, his mouth split wide with razor-sharp teeth drenched in blood. His body was covered in crimson scales, and a spiked dragon tail lashed wildly behind him!

Divine Servant Transformation!

Dragon Transformation!

"See this? This is my ultimate masterpiece—the Ancient God Gu! By merging the shedded remains of an Ancient God with active bone and blood tissues, I've cultivated a new species. It serves as a substitute for the Ancient God's Blood, granting true evolution... while erasing the host's consciousness and implanting my will instead."

The Nightmare Master spoke softly, smiling. "Yan Wu was a fool. He never suspected my plan. By the time he realized, the Ancient God Gu had already devoured him entirely."

Silence.

The Moon Princess stared coldly at him, clutching her guzheng warily.

The Scholar crawled out from the sea, his eyes filled with terror yet unwilling to retreat.

Finally, Lu Zicheng, dragging his Tang Blade, staggered to his feet and rasped, "So this was your real goal? Nightmare Master, you want to mass-produce... your own Divine Servants?"

"Technically, not exactly Divine Servants," the Nightmare Master replied coolly. "After all, I'm already a Divine Servant. I merely shared my evolution with Yan Wu while eradicating his self-awareness. That's all. Yes, you could call it soul usurpation. The difference is, I can usurp anyone and become everyone!"

The Nightmare Master smiled faintly. "I never intended to use the Blood Demon Gu to ascend. Even reaching the Holy Land Level wouldn't make me stronger than the association or Dusk's Holy Land elites. But today, I'll implant the Ancient God Gu into all of you, and this is just the beginning. You'll all become my slaves, walking together on the Evolution Path."

"My body will continue to evolve, spawning more Ancient God Gu to assimilate everyone else."

"Your allies are intriguing—they caught me off-guard. If not for the Ancient God Gu perfectly merging with Yan Wu, you might've actually stopped me. And what's even more fascinating is that there's a Quasi-Divine Servant among you."

His slit pupils gleamed with greedy intent. "But alas, incomplete evolution. Moreover, a bonded Divine Servant and an unbonded one are worlds apart."

For an instant, dread gripped all their hearts.

"Because with that great being's power behind me..."

The Nightmare Master raised a finger to his lips. "What comes next is Ancient Divine Language!"

BOOM!

The world seemed to shatter.

The Moon Princess collapsed onto both knees, clutching her ears in agony as if her mind were unraveling.

Lu Zicheng's Tang Blade trembled violently in his grip as he propped himself up with great difficulty, blood seeping from his orifices while his consciousness spiraled downward.

The Scholar, in his Quasi-Divine Servant state, resisted slightly better due to his elevated lifeform tier.

But his entire body trembled uncontrollably, verging on collapse.

The world plunged into silence—a descent into Hell. All was fading into irreversible ruin.

No one noticed as the seemingly lifeless Butcher stirred amidst the carnage. With unimaginable effort, he forced his blood-red eyes open. His vision appeared fissured, as if the world itself was fracturing before him. Crimson light poured through the cracks.

From a distant realm, a voice of boundless authority echoed faintly.

"Butcher, rise."

On the edge of death, the Butcher seemed to fall into hallucination.

He envisioned kneeling within a pitch-black tomb, an abyss of shadows. A golden sarcophagus burned with apocalyptic flames, and a godly presence peered down upon him, its radiant golden slit pupils scorching like the Sun.

"—Welcome your rebirth."

With an earth-shattering roar, the world crumbled apart.

Yet the Butcher felt as though... he was being reborn!

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As the Nightmare Master uttered that cataclysmic syllable, the entire port disintegrated into dust. The containers disintegrated into powder, the ground withered into dust, and the monstrous waves fragmented and dissipated.

Everything dissolved into nothingness.

The Scholar's body erupted in blood, his Quasi-Divine Servant power fading rapidly. The incomplete nature of his evolution meant he couldn't fully endure the Ancient God's Blood nor ascend into a higher lifeform.

Lu Zicheng was certain this was his end. His body emitted tortured wails under the immense strain, blood gushing from every pore as he collapsed backward in despair, supported only by his blade.

The Moon Princess, teetering on the brink of death, held no fear in her gaze. Her eyes seethed with murderous resolve fixed on the Dragon-Transformed figure, committing his appearance to memory.

But then, in the heart of silent destruction, a corpse stirred back to life.

For a brief moment, everyone froze.

Even the Nightmare Master's slit pupils flickered with apparent surprise.

It was a towering and hulking figure.

Yet, it could no longer be called human.

Crimson Qilin horns jutted from his head, and his dark golden slit pupils gleamed with savagery and bloodlust. His face was masked by a carapace of crimson bone, his body covered in scarlet dragon scales, with a spiked dragon tail swaying menacingly behind him.

Part Dragon, part something else!

This was... a Qilin!

This was the Butcher!

In a single moment, he had evolved!

What's more, under the ruinous command of the Ancient Divine Language, the Butcher endured unscathed—even standing!

"This... this is true evolution!"

The Butcher bared his fangs in a deranged grin, dripping with malevolence. "You're a Divine Servant? So am I. Your Rank may be higher than mine, but clearly... the being you serve is weaker than the one I serve!"

For an instant, an ethereal shadow of divine majesty reflected in his dark golden slit pupils.

It was an ancient and imposing Black Qilin, roaring toward the heavens, its kingly wrath surging forth!

The Butcher erupted into laughter, unbridled and manic: "Now it's my turn... Ancient Divine Language!"

BOOM!

Chapter 230 - 116: How Can the Candle Dragon Shine if the Sun Doesn't Rise?

For a fleeting moment, the Butcher's dark golden eyes seemed to ignite with golden flames, burning away the darkness of the storm like the radiance of the sun, as if it were the junction of dusk and night.

A black Qilin's spectral form surged heavenward and roared in defiance!

Ancient, majestic syllables echoed like a thunderclap!

Silence was torn apart, as the divine wrath burned fiercely in the stormy night. A king-like furious roar engulfed everything like a domain, plunging the world into a trembling abyss of endless descent.

This was supreme divine power, the ultimate dominion of the Supreme, containing the creation and annihilation of universes. When that apocalyptic syllable was fully enunciated, it would herald the day of divine punishment.

The command issued by Him was death!

From this moment onward, the human world plummets into hell!

Boom!

The Nightmare Master's guttural syllable was abruptly cut off, swallowed by the resonance of silence.

The Ancient Divine Language he uttered to conjure his domain crumbled like a fortress of sand swept away by the wind, shattered into fragments!

Because what he faced was none other than the Ancient Divine Language.

And it was a higher-tier form of the Ancient Divine Language, the divine punishment of an Ancient Supreme!

When two forms of Ancient Divine Language clash, the stronger reigns supreme while the weaker is obliterated!

Amidst the cascading sound of shattering, the dragon horn atop the Nightmare Master's head fractured on cue, scales exploded one by one, his dragon tail burst into a mist of blood, and his body crumbled like a corpse weathered by millennia, decayed into ruin.

Finally, from those dragon-transformed slit pupils, thick, rancid blood began to flow.

"W-what is this power... This is the authority of the Supreme! This is... the Supreme's rage!"

The Nightmare Master frantically uttered a hysterical scream: "A miracle! A miracle indeed!"

From his blood-soaked slit pupils, an endless flood of blood-red color spread outward. At the heart of the darkness, a massive crimson one-legged dragon coiled and roared in infuriated chaos.

"Qilin!"

A giant sigh resonated amidst the storm.

The pitch-black Qilin's spectral form made no reply, merely gazing downward from its towering height. Its blazing golden slit pupils burned like twin suns in the storm, steeped in majesty and fury.

Even the Ancient God behind the Nightmare Master dared not meet the gaze of those majestic golden eyes brimming with anger!

Defeat!

Whether in strength, authority, or the essence of existence itself.

A complete and utter defeat!

The symphony of destruction reached its zenith, as the ancient, solemn murmurs disintegrated amidst the heavens and the earth!

That crimson dragon let out a skyward roar in the darkness, its blood-colored slit pupils spilling molten lava-like tears. Its feral aura was obliterated into emptiness, vanishing entirely.

The Nightmare Master's consciousness dwindled within his deteriorating body, extinguished.

The world fell into profound silence.

Yet, from the depths of an unknown darkness—deep and silent as a tomb—an anguished roar erupted.

The darkness quivered as though teetering on the edge of collapse.

"He still lives! He has awakened!"

Amid furious dragon roars, a vast and imposing voice emerged.

At this instant, the Nightmare Master lay naked amidst a tide of countless Gu Worms, vomiting a mouthful of blood as his pallid body took on a deathly gray pallor.

Even though the Ancient God managed to extract him from the battlefield in time.

The Supreme's law of death still extended over him.

The Nightmare Master unleashed a terrified scream, for he could distinctly feel his spirit disintegrating inch by inch, his spirituality dissipating to ash. His soul rank plummeted violently, leaving him in a state of extreme frailty.

Sixth Rank, Fifth Rank, Fourth Rank, Third Rank, Second Rank, First Order!

The blessings bestowed by the Ancient God Clan rapidly decayed and faded, ultimately vanishing entirely!

Eight years of effort, countless trials to climb ranks, all undone in one devastating fall!

This was the punishment delivered by a Supreme!

"No, no—"

In the silence, a wrenching, piercing wail resounded, saturated with unbearable agony.

The Nightmare Master's roaring cry was laced with despair.

This was a fate a thousandfold more torturous than mere death.

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In the deepest tomb of the Qilin Immortal Palace, the golden flames within Gu Jianlin's eyes gradually subsided.

The majesty of divine wrath dissipated into nothingness, the king-like fury extinguished, and all returned to dead silence.

Finished!

"Thank you for teaching me how to use Divine Servants."

He murmured softly, "Otherwise, I really wouldn't have known how to utilize the Ancient Divine Language this way."

Only now did he understand the true significance of Divine Servants: they serve to unleash the true power of Ancient Gods who cannot exert their full strength within the mortal realm.

Divine Servants act as mediators for Ancient Gods to wield authority.

Although the power unleashed through a Divine Servant pales in comparison to the Ancient Gods themselves.

The advantage lies in not having to pay the price of violating worldly rules or suffer repercussions.

What was more surprising was the Butcher's remarkable talent.

This seemingly simple-minded brute, reckless to the core, managed to fully endure the baptism of Ancient God's Blood. Just a single drop was enough to accomplish true Divine Servant Transformation.

Moreover, it revealed a form resembling a Qilin.

In contrast, the Scholar's evolution appeared to be a failure, manifesting merely in the likeness of a snake.

The Nightmare Master also achieved Divine Servant Transformation.

But therein lay the problem.

Behind the Nightmare Master stood an Ancient God—that being Kui!

However, Kui wasn't a Supreme, but a lower-tier existence.

A Primordial Ancestor.

And there was no doubt that it was severely weakened.

Gu Jianlin reflected on the law of karmic cycles. His intervention during the blood sacrifice at the periphery of Qilin Immortal Palace brought about this victory!

In this battle, Gu Jianlin had won.

Or rather, the Qilin Venerable had triumphed.

You are weakened, so am I.

You transformed into a Divine Servant, as did I.

Your Divine Servant may be of a higher rank, but it doesn't matter.

As long as my authority rank surpasses yours, I will prevail!

According to Ether Association's official records, the gap between Supremes and other Ancient Gods was like an unbridgeable chasm—not something the difference between Fourth and Fifth Ranks could ever hope to surmount.

"That was clearly an incarnation of the Candle Dragon Clan's heritage. If my guess is correct, what Mr. Liu and the others referred to as the Candle Dragon's legacy must be guarded by Kui. What exactly is it?"

Gu Jianlin narrowed his eyes, murmuring as he contemplated.

If trapped, and knowing that another Ancient God lurked within the Immortal Palace, he would be deeply fearful.

But now, with the ability to leave at any time, it was a different story.

Conversely, he even began coveting that Ancient God's possessions.

Who knows what treasures the Candle Dragon Venerable might have left behind?

Surely, it must be something extraordinary!

Suddenly, the pitch-black chains binding him quivered violently, resembling countless black dragons coiled around him. Thunderous dragon roars echoed through the silence, as the world seemed to plunge into the Netherworld!

Boom!

The darkness seemed to boil; heaven and earth began to collapse.

A splitting headache, soul trembling.

Amid the sensation of a soul being torn apart, a dim light ignited within the shadows.

Gu Jianlin felt as if he had fallen into a bottomless abyss, witnessing a towering black stone pillar leaning and breaking amidst the flashes of lightning and thunder. The firmament shattered, pouring molten lava down in torrents.

The earth was engulfed by endless black rivers filled with skeletons and corpses, swallowing the entire world.

Blood rained from the fractured heavens, while two terrifying rifts burning with endless spectral light glared down upon the earth.

No.

Those weren't rifts.

They were eyes!

Eyes infused with thunder and lightning, divine slit pupils!

Boom!

The sound of annihilation.

The sky wasn't merely the heavens—it was a colossal black dragon shrouding the firmament.

Its eyes flashed with electric light, its breath emitted thunder, and its body coiled amidst storm clouds.

"Qilin, after two millennia, you still live."

Ancient whispers echoed through the Netherworld.

Yet, it was unmistakably a woman's voice, drifting across the firmament like the wind, mingling with the roar of ravaging tides and the wrathful thunder, boundlessly majestic.

A figure in red stood atop the towering stone pillar amidst the crimson rain, her silhouette graceful and ethereal. She resembled a scarlet flower blossoming from the Nine Netherworld, gazing down upon the earth with unrivaled beauty, radiating a seductive bloom.

She stood between heaven and earth, as though observing the raging Nether River.

The inky black dragon coiled beside her, roaring skyward.

"The Vermilion Bird has returned, Bai Ze is waking—surely, you won't be absent either."

Her voice rang like wind chimes, resonating across the cosmos: "I've taken the step forward. What about you?"

A searing bolt of lightning flashed past, illuminating the black dragon horn atop her head, her snow-white flawless profile, her long jet-black hair flowing in the wind, and her blood-crimson gown.

The air was filled with dragon roars.

Gu Jianlin's heart pounded fiercely, as if countless souls screamed within his being.

An overwhelming terror detonated deep within his heart.

A terror that shattered his spirit!

In the Northwest Heaven lies the Netherworld Country, lit by the Candle-Bearer Dragon's light!

Gu Jianlin saw the Netherworld—a vision identical to the one portrayed in the painting he had previously encountered!

Jiuyin!

Candle Dragon!

The woman before him was none other than... the Candle Dragon Venerable!

This was a power beyond compare, the true strength of an Ancient Supreme, capable of transcending time and forcing her will upon his space. Even the Qilin Immortal Palace itself was being assimilated!

The wind howled.

Blood rain swirled across the skies.

That stunning figure in scarlet appeared to turn around, lightning intertwined and thunder rumbled.

Fog-like Candle Breath enveloped the area.

Her crimson gown seemed to transcend time itself, drifting closer.

Gu Jianlin felt as though an entirely new world was about to descend!

From the darkness, a pair of enchanting blood-colored slit pupils ignited, like the twilight cloaking the heavens.

The mere glance of those slit pupils was breathtaking.

With the space fracturing around him, she drew nearer!

A misty haze birthed a pair of ice-like, snow-white hands whose nails gleamed blood-red.

From the shadows sprouted clusters of blood-red flowers, resembling an ocean of coagulated blood.

Seductive, dangerous.

Gulp.

Gu Jianlin swallowed hard. Even he, with his insane disposition, felt no desire to fight.

Not to mention that even the genuine Qilin Venerable would tread cautiously here.

Let alone Gu Jianlin, the Second Generation Qilin Venerable!

Yet, under the immense pressure of his crumbling will, he suddenly chuckled softly.

"Candle Dragon, long time no see."

Feigning nonchalance, he greeted, while his mind envisioned the great Qilin Island hovering above the skies, which suddenly vanished into thin air.

Silence engulfed the darkness.

Ultimately, those ethereal, haunting hands grasped at nothing.

"Hmm?"

A pair of mesmerizingly demonic blood-red slit pupils lit up within the void, revealing a hint of astonishment.