

Ancient 26

Chapter 26 - 12 The So-Called Inheritance Path

Gu Jianlin remained silent for a long time before suddenly breaking into a laugh.

"What are you laughing at?"

Lu Zicheng asked curiously.

Gu Jianlin said softly, "For the longest time, everyone thought I had lost my mind, that something was wrong with my brain. They said I was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, convinced that everything I saw was fake."

Lu Zicheng patted him on the shoulder, comforting him: "Falling flowers cannot return to the branch, and a broken mirror cannot be made whole. Once someone awakens, they can never fully return to the mundane world. You've been chosen by another world, so it's natural that ordinary people won't understand you. This is both a gift and a curse—both a stroke of luck and a tragedy."

Gu Jianlin, however, felt lucky. If he hadn't been exposed to the transcendent world, learned about the Ancient Gods and Ascenders, and uncovered the secrets of another dimensional plane, he might never have known how his father had died.

Some things just pass ambiguously, unresolved.

Perhaps he would never again encounter that terrifying creature on the highway.

Nor could he seek justice from anyone for it.

He hesitated for a long time before finally asking the question he had long wanted to ask.

"So, my father's death wasn't just a car accident."

He looked up, his gaze reflecting the faint daylight, an emptiness in his eyes: "He was murdered."

The hand Lu Zicheng used to hold his cigarette paused momentarily, then he slowly nodded.

"Yes."

After a long silence.

Gu Jianlin silently clenched his fists, fixing his gaze on the other man's eyes: "Can you tell me the exact reason?"

This time, Lu Zicheng uncharacteristically avoided his gaze.

"Although every child has the right to know the cause of their parents' death, I'm sorry, I can't tell you. This matter involves a highly classified secret, and I can't violate the Ether Association's confidentiality regulations."

He hesitated and then said, "Besides, the truth might not be something you can accept."

Gu Jianlin said impassively, "Whether I can accept it or not is my business. If possible, I'd like to know what qualifications I need to be told the truth about this matter. Would joining the Ether Association work?"

The other man had said before that he was a rare Independent Awakened, invaluable among seven billion people.

Lu Zicheng took a deep drag on his cigarette, scratching his head: "You're quite smart. I was indeed planning to invite you to join the Ether Association. For a genius like you, the Ether Association wouldn't let you wander alone out there."

"But as for your father's situation, I can't guarantee you'll get an answer anytime soon. I need to consult my superiors, and you'll also need to complete some assessments and tests to officially become part of the Ether Association."

He paused: "Of course, if you're strong enough, you can cut through all the red tape."

Gu Jianlin was momentarily stunned.

"What's so surprising? This world has always adhered to the law of the jungle. If you were a Ninth Rank Ascender now, having crossed the Wall of Cognition to become a Demigod, you'd be above all the rules of this world. No one would dare tell you no—not even those old geezers in the Ether Association."

Lu Zicheng shrugged, joking: "Because you could always bash their heads in. The rules they set would be nothing but nonsense to you. But don't worry, they wouldn't offend you. Knowing them, they'd line up to greet you, bowing down in succession, groveling at your feet. You'd become the Emperor among Ascenders..."

Gu Jianlin mused for a moment: "That does sound pretty satisfying."

"Of course it is."

Lu Zicheng chuckled: "Just like when you play games and those useless teammates start realizing who the real MVP is. They'd give you all the creeps, minions, and kills. It's the same in the world of Ascenders."

Gu Jianlin asked: "Are there really such people?"

Lu Zicheng said with a sly grin: "Interested? I can only tell you that historically, yes, there have been a few. The most famous one, you've probably read about in your middle school history textbooks—currently at the northern foot of Lishan Mountain in Lintong District, Chang'an City."

Gu Jianlin was taken aback: "That Emperor?"

"Uh-huh. And there are a few alive today as well."

Lu Zicheng gave him a sidelong glance: "But you haven't even chosen your Inheritance Path yet."

Gu Jianlin felt puzzled and couldn't help but say: "The problem is, no one has asked me to choose."

Lu Zicheng scoffed: "Tsk, you're a noble Independent Awakened, not like us mediocrities who need the Ether Association's Ascension Ritual to choose an Inheritance Path for us. Once you fully grasp the reality of this world, you'll naturally choose your own Inheritance Path."

Gu Jianlin stroked his chin, deep in thought.

The term "Inheritance Path" was something he had heard numerous times already.

If he guessed correctly, it was like career classifications in online games, where Ascenders chose different Inheritance Paths to change roles, with distinct abilities and traits.

So far, he knew of four Inheritance Paths.

Alchemist, Magician, Witch, and Ancient Martial.

Each Inheritance Path, in his mental profiling, had extremely apparent occupational characteristics—easy to distinguish at a glance.

Perhaps because he had been to the Qilin Immortal Palace, his profiling could even analyze the Inheritance Paths of others, which was even more outrageous than his previous personality profiling ability.

No one would believe him if he said it out loud.

He wondered if his father's profile abilities would have allowed him to see the same images.

Alchemists, as the name suggested, were likely healers.

He'd already faced Magicians—rookies who could only use illusion techniques, ineffective against him.

Witches were a support class; their specific abilities were still unclear.

And Ancient Martial? That was just brutal.

The massive, burly shadow of an ancient warrior exuded a godlike oppressive aura. That terrifying dominance and cold, ruthless killing intent swept in like a storm, insurmountable. Even two hours later, the memory of it lingered vividly.

Gu Jianlin almost had a heart attack just looking at it.

"The one you fought was a Magician. At the beginner stage, other than hypnosis, they have no special abilities. They're universally considered the weakest early-stage class, to the point where even ordinary people with strong willpower could handle them. And Chen Qing is of the Witch Path, mainly focused on perception and support, like mental purification and psychological counseling."

Lu Zicheng gave a quick introduction: "I'm Ancient Martial, as the name suggests, the most combat-ready class. We wield the power of Qi. Earlier, when I snapped my fingers and blew up that guy's head, that was an advanced application of Qi."

He continued enthusiastically: "As for the other Inheritance Paths, there are many, such as the Western Priests, Eastern Sword Sect, the enigmatic Ghost Slayers, and the Holy Knights perfect for tanking..."

Truly a dazzling array of options.

"The essence of Inheritance Paths, you can think of them as game classes—each with unique abilities," Lu Zicheng reminded. "Of course, different classes vary in strength. The more ancient the lineage, the deeper the heritage, the more refined the development, and the more formidable the abilities."

Gu Jianlin pondered: "What about Magicians?"

"Right," Lu Zicheng nodded. "Inheritance Paths like Magicians appeared quite late, and their heritage is too thin. In fact, most Western Inheritance Paths can't compare to their Eastern counterparts in antiquity."

Gu Jianlin asked: "How did Inheritance Paths originate?"

Lu Zicheng admitted frankly: "We don't know."

Gu Jianlin was startled.

"No one knows the specifics, but the path of advancement in an Inheritance Path symbolizes the process by which humans harness divine power. Some say it's humanity's gift from the Gods."

Lu Zicheng glanced at him and paused: "In Greek mythology, Prometheus stole fire from the gods for humanity, and from then on, humans learned to make fire."

"The majority of Ascenders achieve their Inheritance Paths after witnessing that world and performing complex occult rituals guided by the lingering will of their predecessors, drawing power from another dimension. This is also why wild Ascenders struggle to survive."

"Because they can't acquire an Inheritance Path. Even if they're lucky enough to become Ascenders, they have no way to advance or resources to utilize. In that other world, which may hold perils, they lack protection."

Gu Jianlin roughly understood now that the resources for Ascenders in this world were essentially controlled by specific organizations.

In gamer terms, the pioneering stage was long over.

"Every Ascender who perishes leaves behind residual consciousness that returns to the other world. Over time, this coalesces into Inheritance Paths."

Lu Zicheng grinned: "The earliest batch of Ascenders were just like you—exceptionally gifted, capable of awakening independently. In simpler terms, you guys can discover power that resonates with you in the other world entirely on your own, without guidance."

"Think of it like this: you've been camping in a forest for two months and discarding scraps of food every day. Then, one day, a mouse happens to eat one of those scraps and becomes the strongest in its pack."

"Of course, Ascenders aren't mice. Humanity indeed has the potential to evolve. The theories behind this phenomenon or why it happens, though, remain mysteries."

Gu Jianlin remarked: "Sounds like that world is filled with treasures."

"It is, but only if you have the talent to perceive the treasures from the other world."

Lu Zicheng's tone became slightly more serious: "And that world is also fraught with endless dangers."

Gu Jianlin was all too familiar with this.

He asked: "Are Independent Awakened considered the most gifted?"

Lu Zicheng scratched his temple and explained: "Not really. Above you, there are those directly chosen by Gods—the Divine Servants. And above the Divine Servants, there's another level."

Gu Jianlin waited for him to continue.

"That would be the Ancient Gods, of course."

Lu Zicheng spread his hands: "But you don't need to worry about that. Independent Awakened are certainly more gifted than ordinary Ascenders, but they're still human. As for Divine Servants and Ancient Gods, their essence differs from ours. You could say they're still carbon-based life forms, but in reality, they're an entirely different kind of entity..."

Unbidden, Gu Jianlin recalled the Qilin in his mind, though he cautiously refrained from mentioning it.

Because he had a hunch.

Saying that out loud would have dire consequences.

"What Inheritance Path will I take?"

He asked.

"There's no rush. You'll find out tonight."

Lu Zicheng said sternly: "For now, you need to deal with your family..."

"Family?"

Gu Jianlin was stunned and turned to look out the window.

Outside stood a familiar girl in a white casual outfit, her hair tied up in a bun, a face mask on her face, hands on her hips, and wearing slippers.

Su Youzhu.

Gu Jianlin pulled out his phone and saw his screen displaying dozens of missed calls.