

Ancient 261

Chapter 261 - 136: Wicked Disciple!

In the courtyard stood a cherry tree, with countless petals falling like pink tides, drifting in the wind. Sparkling under the sunlight, they landed on the artificial mountain and pond, causing gentle ripples in the water.

Amid the sound of the waterwheel's movement, golden koi swam joyfully in the pond.

Yet, from somewhere unknown, blood began to flow slowly into the pond, the sinister scarlet hue spreading eerily.

"I went to headquarters this morning, only to learn that you've stepped out."

Huai Yin sat on the tatami, picked up the steaming tea cup from the wooden table, took a small sip, and commented lightly, "This heart-cleansing tea from Ying Province is quite good. I never tire of drinking it."

Opposite him sat an imposing and indifferent woman. She wore a golden phoenix crown, her frost-white hair neatly tied into an elegant bun, accompanied by a dark gold luxurious ceremonial robe that made her look like a beauty from ancient times.

Her aura was cold and commanding. Despite her almond-shaped eyes being seductive in shape, they displayed no trace of allure. A faint crimson eye shadow accentuated a murderous intent, while her sharp, regal eyebrows exuded icy dignity. Her facial contours were steely and unyielding.

However, her gaze carried the weariness of centuries, making her seem genuinely aged.

This outfit wasn't a mere attempt at dressing up.

She had worn this for hundreds of years.

As for someone addressed as "Your Grace" by the King of Qing, there was only one in this world.

The President of the Ether Association.

Codename: Taihua.

"The current Susano isn't behaving himself, so I decided to teach him a lesson."

Taihua remarked indifferently, "Just killed a few of his sons, that's all."

Huai Yin glanced at several corpses lying in the courtyard outside and chuckled, "You mean you killed all his sons, right?"

"Once and for all."

"Aren't you worried they'll rebel?"

"With you still alive, they aren't worth worrying about."

"Even so, killing all of them may not have been necessary. Some of them were quite respectful to me."

Taihua responded coldly, "Years ago, your teacher taught you this: when cutting weeds, you must remove the roots. Susano, that filthy old dog, is nearing his end. All his scheming is for his sons. Killing them completely ends his hope."

"So you cut off his lineage."

Huai Yin chuckled, "Still, I can understand. People nearing death always hope to leave something behind."

Taihua asked, "Which is why you've taken on a disciple?"

Huai Yin, still holding the teacup, feigned surprise, "How did you know my disciple can meditate in ten seconds?"

Taihua's expression remained impassive: "Hm."

Huai Yin said thoughtfully, "Sometimes, a disciple being too talented becomes a problem. I have only a few years left. I thought I'd teach slowly, but who could have guessed they'd master meditation in ten seconds, and grasp the Realm of Freedom within a week. Now, I have no choice but to teach Forbidden Spells. Once those are taught, I won't have much else left to offer."

He lowered the teacup and admired the falling cherry blossoms: "Who knew that having a talented disciple would also be troublesome."

Taihua stared at him icily.

"Hmph."

She remarked, "In just half a month, from an ordinary person to the Second Rank, and mastering the Breathing Technique—indeed impressive."

Before her lay an ancient bronze mirror.

Within the mirror reflected a raging storm, a soaring motorcycle, and a radiant youth bathed in light.

The image froze, as though it were a masterpiece painting.

Huai Yin chuckled, "Naturally, my judgment has always been exceptional."

Taihua gave a deep glance at him and said, seemingly casually, "Besides talent, the boy is courageous as well. I've already sent someone to meet him, giving him a chance to make a request directly to me."

Huai Yin laughed, "That kid is arrogant. I doubt he'd ask for anything outrageous."

Taihua nodded slightly, "Indeed, nothing outrageous. He merely asked me to step down and see, with my own eyes, the plight of those people—for Mu Feng, for the Unclean, and for those waiting in the shadows."

She sneered, "The greater the power, the greater the responsibility—how eloquent."

Huai Yin narrowed his eyes, "That does sound like words he'd say. The boy is too soft-hearted, taking everything upon himself, meticulous to the point where you shouldn't take him too seriously."

"I feel the gist of his comment implies he sees me as incompetent."

Taihua glanced at him, "He even called me a Vulgar Master."

Huai Yin froze, his expression turning solemn: "That rebellious disciple!"

Who knows if it's just his rebellious phase or whether he's simply been given too much leeway.

Why does he dare to mock anyone!

"Hmph."

Taihua said indifferently, "See it I shall."

On the top floor of the Deep Space Technology Building, in the office.

Gu Jianlin sat on the sofa drinking a cold glass of cola, his head lowered, focused on the Merit display of the Deep Space Network.

His Merit Value had already soared to thirty thousand.

In the history of the Peak City District, no newcomer had ever earned such a high amount of Merit.

And that was simply the reward for his principle of "being kind to others" over the past half month.

Of course, Merit was not the real focus.

The Ether Association's leadership had also given him many other rewards this time, such as priority access to the Omega Sequence Resource Library—things money could never buy.

"You do realize that everything you just said will be reported straight to the President, don't you?"

Lu Zijin chewed on a french fry, her eyes gleaming with amusement as she looked at him: "I told you not to provoke, but you didn't listen."

Gu Jianlin said calmly, "Minister Lu, I was merely speaking the truth. If one leads the entire Extraordinary World, then they must carry the responsibility. If they can't handle words of truth, they shouldn't be sitting in that position."

In the birdcage, a green-feathered parrot squawked loudly, "Exactly, exactly!"

Lu Zijin rolled her eyes and said lightly, "Let me remind you of something: domestically, the thirteen division ministers and the Night Watcher special department were all trained by the President. Although the Omega Sequence operates independently as a transcendent military group, this was her idea, including the later Catastrophe Plan."

"You could argue the Omega Sequence essentially falls under her military command."

She continued, "And she is merciless. The previous generation's President was her husband, and after the Ancient God Chaos two hundred years ago, she almost single-handedly upheld humanity's world. As peaceful as reality may be now, the battles against the Ancient God Clan were equally fierce. The world we enjoy today was carved out by her leading her forces."

Gu Jianlin paused for a moment, wondering how old she must be.

Lu Zijin continued, "Although we are all her students, none of us have ever dared to speak to her like this. Even when vying for power in private, no one crosses her line. Because anyone who challenges her authority—whether they are her hand-raised students or her own children—she kills without hesitation."

Gu Jianlin narrowed his eyes.

"Even a vicious tiger does not devour its cubs!"

The green-feathered parrot squawked, "Savage and tyrannical!"

Lu Zijin stated meaningfully, "The President appreciates you for your talent, but never trespass her boundaries. Unless you become so powerful she has no choice but to use you."

Gu Jianlin contemplated briefly, "Is it true that the President once fought the Candle Dragon Venerable?"

"Yes, roughly a few hundred years ago."

Lu Zijin replied indifferently.

Gu Jianlin hesitated for a second, "Is the President herself a Catastrophe?"

Lu Zijin shook her head, "No."

Gu Jianlin breathed a sigh of relief.

However, Lu Zijin then added calmly, "But all the Catastrophes were trained by her."

Gu Jianlin's hand shook, spilling cola on the table.

The green-feathered parrot's pupils shrank to a pinpoint.

"Because the concept of Catastrophes was only introduced in modern times. In her era, such classifications didn't exist."

Lu Zijin added with a faint smirk, "Oh, by the way, the President is also the Master of the King of Qing."

At that moment, Gu Jianlin felt like there were two versions of himself.

Because he mentally cracked open.

The green-feathered parrot flapped its wings frenetically inside the cage, screaming, "Is it too late to change owners now?"

"Although their relationship is close, in this Extraordinary World everyone's goals differ. The President and the King of Qing aren't necessarily always united. They've had numerous disagreements early on."

Lu Zijin sighed and said helplessly, "Originally, I wanted to advise you to rein it in once you enter the Omega Sequence; to stop provoking others entirely. Sure, some of them are useless, but it's better to keep human relationships in check. Leaving face for others means leaving space for future encounters."

She shrugged lazily, "Now it seems unnecessary. Since you've already provoked the President, everyone else pales in comparison. Suit yourself."

Gu Jianlin rubbed his face, wondering why no one had warned him about this earlier.

But it didn't matter.

He was simply speaking the truth, upright and unyielding.

Even if the sky falls, that remains true, whether it's the President personally or not.

After all, he'd already provoked the Candle Dragon Venerable.

The President hardly made a difference.

Let the storm rage ever fiercer.

"Oh, by the way, don't worry too much about Zicheng and Chen Qing. Once their injuries heal and they ascend, they'll naturally return. Right now, you're quite famous; even some captain-level leaders lacking potential are fighting tooth and nail to latch onto your glory. Some are even campaigning to clear your father's name, denouncing the Judgement Court."

Lu Zijin smiled mischievously: "As for Guardians, you can pick and choose freely."

Gu Jianlin shook his head; this world was just like that.

For many, truth doesn't matter.

Only interests matter.

When he was weak, he was just the son of a Fallen.

Now, with his strength, his father turned into someone wronged.

Indeed, fists are the ultimate truth.

"Your spirituality is already three-quarters full. Want me to send over some Spiritual Secret Medicine? You need to advance soon—Second Rank barely passes in the Omega Sequence. If you don't climb the ranks quickly, others will overtake you. After all, you're young and newly awakened."

Lu Zijin's eyes twinkled mischievously as she said coquettishly, "But don't lose hope. As long as you reach Fourth Rank soon, I'll sweet-talk my dad and offer you the entire Lu family's resources."

A loli appearance paired with an older sister voice.

Normally, this would be quite delightful.

However, thinking of her actual age, Gu Jianlin found it slightly unsettling.

The green-feathered parrot rotated its eyes dramatically: "Bleh."

Gu Jianlin: "..."

In that instant, deathly silence overtook the office once again.

Lu Zijin glared coldly and said, "Maybe we should stew this bird."

At noon, Gu Jianlin left the Deep Space Technology Building holding the birdcage.

The green-feathered parrot had yet again become a bare-feathered parrot.

It trembled pitifully, tears in its eyes, seething with resentment.

The poor creature—its newly grown feathers had all been plucked again.

For now, Gu Jianlin's schedule was considerably free.

With the opening of Qilin Immortal Palace imminent, the division no longer assigned him any tasks. All attention was focused on Black Cloud City, which had reportedly been reconstructed and developed into a near-transcendent military base.

Nearly all investigators would be heading to Black Cloud City to undertake exploratory missions.

And members of the Omega Sequence wouldn't just participate in these missions—they'd endure grueling supernatural training.

As long as they were present at Black Cloud City during training sessions, their location wasn't a concern.

Other times, they were free to do as they pleased.

Suddenly, a cold voice sounded.

"Gu Jianlin."

He turned around to see a chilling aura descending upon him.

Han Jing stood at the entrance of the building, arms crossed, looking at him coldly, saying pointedly: "There's something I need to discuss with you."

Chapter 262 - 137: Sea Demon, Is That You?

Gu Jianlin turned around and saw a cold and sharp woman leaning against the stone pillar.

Han Jing, the deputy leader of the Nightwatchers, and his father's former colleague.

This woman gave off the impression of being cold and rigid, with a naturally stern face, like one of those middle school female discipline directors who would drag you to the office for a scolding if you stepped out of line.

Although it was hard to create a complete profile of her personality at the moment, it was evident that she had undergone strict training, had a tumultuous past, and possessed an extremely tough personality—definitely a difficult person to deal with.

Besides her, there was a middle-aged man standing off to the side, his face filled with an arrogant expression.

A quick profile revealed that he embodied features commonly associated with the majority of imbeciles.

"Hello, what brings you here?"

Gu Jianlin was exceptionally polite because his infamous reputation had already spread far and wide, and he needed to do something to salvage his name.

Be kind to others!

Remember, be kind to others!

Han Jing kept her stern face and got straight to the point: "Would you consider becoming a Nightwatcher candidate?"

Before anything else could be said, the middle-aged man chuckled softly: "The genius seeds trained in the Omega Sequence eventually get assigned to various departments, return to their families, or join ancient sects. Since the hope of becoming king is slim, we start selecting people in advance. Having a faction to back you means you can build a future too."

Gu Jianlin frowned: "And this is?"

"This is Wang Taisheng, the inspector of the Nightwatcher Department," Han Jing said coldly.

Han Jing continued in an icy tone: "Your talent is exceptional, even surpassing your father's. That's why I hope you'll join the Nightwatchers in the future. Our department will spare no effort in training you. You've saved Mu Feng and Fu Qingxuan, and many Nightwatchers admire you, ready to be your strongest support."

Wang Taisheng smiled pleasantly: "That's exactly right."

Gu Jianlin was slightly stunned, surprised that they had come to recruit him.

The Nightwatchers were a special operations department; their members were nearly all super elites, akin to secret agents in the Extraordinary World, traveling the globe to handle various emergency situations.

Joining wasn't entirely out of the question.

No, wait.

Old Gu seemed to have been a prodigy like him, then joined the Omega Sequence.

Eventually, he became a Nightwatcher.

If Gu Jianlin followed the same path, wouldn't that be walking in his father's footsteps?

No, that's a bit bleak.

Han Jing spoke faintly: "Think it over carefully."

Wang Taisheng smiled and said: "As long as you stop investigating your father's case, you'll be safe."

Suddenly, Gu Jianlin fell silent, his gaze subtly changing.

Han Jing glanced at him and said: "I know what you're thinking, but that doesn't necessarily mean your father's case has issues. What it does mean is, if you insist on investigating it, you're essentially declaring war on the Judgement Court. They will see you as a weapon put forth by another faction trying to confront the Judgement Court outright."

"Considering you've already made a name for yourself and proved your value, with the King of Qing behind you, many people will come forward to seek justice for your father—but they may not be truly sincere in helping you."

She paused and continued: "They may harbor ulterior motives, looking to manipulate you to fight the Judgement Court. The factional struggles are incredibly brutal, and in the end, the person who suffers most and in the worst possible way will undoubtedly be you. If you cause too much upheaval and disrupt the balance between factions, even the President won't tolerate it."

A sharp glint flashed in Wang Taisheng's eyes as he said coldly: "The President values talents, but that doesn't mean she won't kill such talents either. History is full of geniuses, and in the grand scheme of things, they're not worth much. The most valuable asset will always be your own life. Kids, there are things you simply can't bear."

There was something he didn't say.

That is, the King of Qing doesn't have much time left to live.

This was a commonly held belief.

Gu Jianlin didn't hesitate and directly said: "Sorry, I refuse."

He grabbed the birdcage and walked away.

Han Jing's gaze grew razor-sharp.

"Do you really think you're something special? In the Omega Sequence, your rank is the lowest—in what capacity will you compete with others? And the tasks assigned to you will be the lowest too. By the time you endure for years and rise to high-levels, the King of Qing will likely have passed away. What will you do then?"

Wang Taisheng's grin vanished, and he spoke coldly: "Become a pawn in factional struggles? Have you ever thought about how your presence disrupts the internal balance of the association and whether you can handle the cost of that?"

Gu Jianlin didn't look back, responding calmly: "I can."

It was an answer that left them speechless.

Han Jing and Wang Taisheng both fell silent.

"Fine, fine, I really can't understand. Your father died because of the Gu Family's curse. Since he's already dead, does it really matter what he did? Is it worth destabilizing factional balance over such trivial matters?"

Wang Taisheng was so enraged he laughed bitterly.

For some reason, Han Jing glanced at him.

Gu Jianlin suddenly stopped walking, turned around expressionless, and said: "First, I don't care about the association's internal factional tussles, but even without me, do you think they wouldn't fight amongst themselves? Don't try to pin everything on me. Secondly, I don't know your relation to the Judgement Court, but keep one thing in mind."

He enunciated every word: "It was the Judgement Court that provoked me first."

His father's case—he knew with absolute certainty that it was a wrongful injustice.

Originally, he might have approached it with more patience and subtlety.

But since the Judgement Court had crossed him first, there was no saving face now.

With that, he turned and left.

As he stepped outside, a suppressed voice filled with anger echoed from the lobby door.

"Do you really think you can shake the Judgement Court?"

Gu Jianlin let out a chuckle.

From inside the birdcage, the parrot immediately perked up, loudly jeering: "Who the hell cares? Who the *bleep* are you?"

Wang Taisheng's expression froze in place.

"He, he..."

He extended his finger, trembling.

Han Jing shot him a cold glance, folded her arms, and turned to leave.

A red supercar was parked by the roadside.

Gu Jianlin sat in the passenger seat, looking at the bald parrot in the cage, and sighed deeply.

In the end, sarcasm won out.

His resolve to "Be kind to others" barely lasted five minutes before failing again.

How did it turn out this way?

Gu Jianlin believed it wasn't his fault—it was the fault of the world.

His infamous reputation in the Extraordinary World would likely remain stained forever.

It didn't matter, though, as long as his persona in the real world stayed intact.

By now, Youzhu should have received the secret medicine he sent her.

She was someone who cared deeply about self-maintenance and would probably be thrilled.

The driver's seat was empty—Lin Wanqiu had been waiting for him in the car but had vanished.

About five minutes later, the doors to the Deep Space Technology Building swung open again.

A group of masked demon hunters affiliated with the Judgement Court emerged, their gazes chilling.

Lin Wanqiu was at the very end, still dressed as an alluring older sister, stunningly beautiful.

But Gu Jianlin caught a fleeting glimpse of panic and fear in her eyes.

It felt like an illusion, so brief it almost disappeared.

This woman was very good at hiding her emotions. If not for her unnatural body language, it would've been difficult to detect the fear and unease lurking beneath her seductive gaze.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," Lin Wanqiu said, opening the car door and smiling alluringly: "The Judgement Court's demon hunters wanted to question me. It took a little time. Shall we head to Black Cloud City now?"

Gu Jianlin nodded slightly, casually responding: "Is the Judgement Court investigating a traitor?"

Lin Wanqiu chuckled silently and then started the car, driving onto the long street and blending into the traffic.

"Yes, after all, the Dark World's only way to get intel on the association's actions is by bribing informants," she said, somewhat intentionally. "Let's not talk about that anymore. I heard Captain Lu and Deputy Captain Chen are recovering from injuries and preparing for advancement. Do you currently have a favored Guardian in mind?"

She was getting down to business.

Gu Jianlin could sense this woman's deliberate attempts to flatter him.

It was a complete departure from the commanding attitude she'd displayed at the hospital.

"Not yet," he replied evenly.

Lin Wanqiu's smile deepened as she casually flipped her long wavy hair over her shoulder, exuding an intoxicating charm. "Then... what do you think about me?"

Gu Jianlin replied calmly: "Not much."

Lin Wanqiu's expression froze instantly—this was the last response she expected.

She was a Fourth Rank Priest, a rare healer, stunningly attractive.

Plus, she had a Sixth Rank Angel as her mentor within the Priest path.

There was no way she should've been rejected.

"Is there some misunderstanding between us?"

She took a deep breath, maintaining her gentle smile, and softly said: "The last time at the hospital, it was just to check your physical condition. Although the Judgement Court did ask me to pay attention to any abnormalities in your body, they only wanted to know if your father had left you anything or to figure out the nature of those two Mythical Weapons. But I didn't comply with them and ultimately said nothing."

Gu Jianlin grunted in response: "Is that so?"

"The Judgement Court is notorious for being ruthless—I don't like those people either," Lin Wanqiu added.

All right, anyone in the Peak City District could tell she loved associating with the Judgement Court.

After all, their authority was unmatched.

Now, she claimed she didn't like them.

"Hmm."

Again, Gu Jianlin grunted softly, his head lowered as he fiddled with his phone.

Just then, he noticed an unexpected voice message on WeChat.

Youzhu: "Do you have a problem with my chest size?"

A cold and clear voice, tinged with discreet annoyance.

Gu Jianlin froze in disbelief—how did things come to this?

"Who is it?"

Lin Wanqiu began gossiping again.

Gu Jianlin set his face expressionlessly: "My sister."

Lin Wanqiu suddenly realized, remembering this teenager's profile—

He came from a restructured family.

The family members' information had been detailed in his file.

Her lips tilted upward slightly as she subtly adjusted her neckline and pushed out her full chest.

Gu Jianlin: "..."

No, the attempt to flatter was just brazen at this point.

After a moment of silence, he suddenly thought of something and casually asked: "By the way, Captain Lin, you mentioned last time that Mythical Weapons can be exchanged for other resources?"

Lin Wanqiu's eyes brightened, and she quickly said: "Yes, if you feel those two Mythical Weapons aren't suitable for you, you can absolutely trade them with others. Since you've joined the Omega Sequence, you're already entitled to exchange for one Mythical Weapon. This way, you could have three Mythical Weapons."

She explained earnestly: "With three Mythical Weapons and effective synergy, you'd be invincible within your rank."

As she spoke, she paused slightly.

It occurred to her that this boy might already be invincible.

"Got it, thanks," Gu Jianlin said.

Lin Wanqiu glanced at him and smiled before asking: "What are the effects of your two Mythical Weapons? If they're not suitable, I can help you report them or find someone to trade them with—I have extensive connections."

Gu Jianlin looked into her eyes and finally confirmed her true identity.

Priest path.

A Fourth Rank Holy Mother.

The Judgement Court's investigation had frightened her, leading to her desperation to find support.

At the same time, her intense interest in the Lock of Nonexistence and Soul Comforting Bell became unmistakable.

She was even willing to use her beauty to seduce a seventeen-year-old boy.

Indeed, boys must protect themselves well in the outside world.

Gu Jianlin sighed softly.

Sea Demon, is this you?

Chapter 263 - 138 I am also a Barbarian

The ancient temple was shrouded in twilight, where millennia-old dragon sandalwood burned silently, tendrils of smoke curling around.

Threads of twilight streamed down through the cracks in the dome.

Light and shadow shifted, intersecting and intertwining.

In front of a tilted, damaged stone statue, Taihua stood with hands clasped behind her back, quietly raising her head to gaze upward, her phoenix robe fluttering in the wind.

Her silhouette was steeped in loneliness, yet her golden robe shimmered brilliantly in the twilight.

After a long time, alchemical array patterns began to light up on the stone floor, intricate and arcane gold symbols rippling outward. Phantom-like silhouettes coalesced like specks of light, eventually solidifying into form.

Fifteen figures in total.

Among them, thirteen were branch directors from various jurisdictions.

In addition, there were leaders of two special departments.

The leader of the Nightwatch Department, codenamed Lin Dong.

The First Saint of the Judgement Court, codenamed Li Huo.

This was neither the real world nor the Ancient God Realm.

But rather a spatial Mythical Weapon of the Ether Association, named the Illusion Realm.

"President, don't attempt to use the Illusion Realm to conceal your coordinates. I know where you are now! You've gone to Ying Province!"

Chen Xingli stood amidst the shimmering golden array patterns, his expression solemn and stoic, rigid and unyielding: "I've just received a call. The Ying Province Branch has expressed strong protests. This is no longer the age of ignorance and barbarity. Under our initiative, Ascenders across the globe signed the Hei Mameni Soul Contract to jointly uphold peace and stability in the Human World. How could you go to Ying Province on your own and kill Susano's sons?"

This man, who immediately began questioning upon arrival, was the director of the First Branch, stationed at headquarters.

He was also the most powerful among the thirteen branch directors.

Lu Zijin smirked beside him. The President's infamous reputation for ruthlessness was already well known.

Only Senior Brother, this straightforward fool, dared to criticize her relentlessly at every meeting.

The other high-ranking officials, however, kept their eyes down, pretending to see nothing and hear nothing.

"I didn't go to Ying Province on my own."

Taihua said evenly, "I went openly and honorably."

Well, that's the President for you!

In the otherwise silent room, only Chen Xingli stepped forward once again.

He rebuked her with righteous indignation: "You were the one who proposed the contract, yet you took the lead in violating it, committing wanton slaughter. How could you behave this way? At the very least, you should consult with us first."

Taihua didn't even turn her head. Her single reply obliterated his argument: "I am a barbarian."

Deathly silence.

Chen Xingli's face immediately flushed red with anger, unable to utter a word.

Everyone watched the First Branch director, stared at his enraged expression, and inwardly clicked their tongues.

Evidently, this was not the first time something like this had happened.

"The Hei Mameni Soul Contract was indeed proposed by me, but I am a supervisor, not a contract-bound party. The East is the Land of Divine Revelation, while Ying Province is too close, possessing a certain heritage—precautions must be taken."

Taihua stated calmly, "Those not of our kind must have different hearts."

She paused briefly, then scoffed: "Besides, some of Susano's sons dared to show me disrespect."

Chen Xingli glanced at the surrounding high-ranking officials and interrogated in a low voice: "How do you know this? You're not part of the Bai Ze Clan, nor are you on the witch's path. Did you act on mere rumors without any proof?"

Taihua shook her head. "I dreamed it."

Inside the ancient temple, dead silence fell once again.

Chen Xingli took a deep breath as his phantom figure began flickering and dissipating.

The high-ranking members present knew that this branch director was likely about to storm out in anger.

Sure enough, with a stiff face, Chen Xingli said coldly, "If there's nothing else, I'm going to deal with the consequences of your misconduct. The Ying Province Branch is extremely dissatisfied; if mishandled, it might lead to significant issues."

At this moment, Taihua replied, "Don't concern yourself with the Ying Province matter. The focus now is on the exploration of Qilin Immortal Palace. What lies within the palace remains unknown."

"It has been confirmed that the Qilin Immortal Palace likely houses Ancient Gods from both the Candle Dragon and Qilin Clans."

She paused for a moment: "The Kui Dragon Ancestor resides inside the Immortal Palace."

The high-ranking officials felt a chill race through their hearts.

Throughout history, there were only a few Ancient Supremes, and their appearances were rare.

The real threat was always the Primordial Ancestors.

"Don't worry. Two thousand years have passed. Whatever the Kui Dragon Ancestor has been plotting, it is now extremely frail. Not long ago, Bo Jun clashed with it and confirmed that its retained strength is minimal."

Taihua spoke in a composed tone.

That was convincing. If faced with a fully restored Ancestor, even a Seventh-order Transcender would stand no chance.

In the real world, escape might still be possible.

But in the Ancient God Realm, death was certain.

"You must remain vigilant; there is still a living member of the Qilin Clan inside the Immortal Palace—at least ancestor-level."

Taihua's voice grew colder as she continued, "It might even be the Qilin Venerable's true body."

For a moment, everyone in the temple froze, holding their breath—so quiet they could hear each other's heartbeats.

"Though Qilin Immortal Palace has not met the criteria of a forbidden-level super ancient ruin, its variables are too many, even Divination Masters and witches cannot accurately predict them. If the exploration goes well, it will be straightforward. If not, we may have to confront two Supremes simultaneously."

Taihua said coolly, "Two thousand years ago, the Candle Dragon Venerable suffered severe injuries to seal the Qilin Venerable. It's highly likely something was left behind in the Immortal Palace. Do you think it might return to claim it?"

Chapter 264 - 138 I am also a Barbarian_2

Alright, compared to this matter, if the Ying Province people want to stir up trouble, let them be.

The variables within the Qilin Immortal Palace are far too many.

If luck doesn't favor us, human history might meet its end this year.

"But there's no need to worry excessively. Even if the Qilin Venerable is alive, their condition won't be good. Over the years, the Candle Dragon Venerable also faced problems. With Huai Yin guarding Peak City, they might not descend into reality."

Taihua paused: "However, the You Ying Group lurking outside is still eyeing fiercely—it displeases me greatly."

"Understood, I'll begin preparing to activate the Heavenly Person's Wedge immediately."

Chen Xingli stated solemnly: "When the time comes, teacher, please coordinate with me!"

After speaking, his figure suddenly vanished.

The numerous ministers also bowed deeply and said, "We will prepare immediately."

As figure after figure disappeared, the temple once again sank into absolute silence.

Finally, just as Lu Zijin bowed and prepared to leave.

"Zijin, you stay."

Taihua suddenly spoke.

Amid the disturbance of light and shadow, Lu Zijin froze in place, pointing at herself: "Me?"

She said sweetly, "Teacher, I haven't been misbehaving or causing trouble lately, you can't punish me casually!"

Taihua turned, his dignified and solemn expression devoid of emotion, looking down at her condescendingly with a majestic voice: "You're plenty old enough—why would I punish you?"

Lu Zijin pouted coquettishly: "Then why keep me here?"

Among the thirteen ministers, she was practically just a slacker who rarely managed anything.

"Gu Ci'an's son—isn't he someone you brought up?"

Taihua glanced at her.

Lu Zijin's smile remained on her face, but her heart stiffened.

That damn brat.

The trouble you stirred actually left me to take the blame!

"Well, technically, it was my brother who brought him up."

She replied with a grin: "Nothing to do with me."

Taihua raised an eyebrow: "Is that so? You should know—this is someone Huai Yin values. Though I see no possibility within him, Huai Yin aims for him to become king of this Omega Sequence."

Lu Zijin found it utterly absurd hearing this: "At his age, what king could he become? Chair-Slaying King?"

Indeed, it seemed highly improbable—the timing was far too tight.

The boy's talent was remarkable, yes, but advancing post-Superdimension wasn't something to be trifled with.

Even extraordinary talent must heed certain rules.

Back when Gu Ci'an was alive, he had been such a prodigy—and yet, he never became king either.

Taihua snorted coldly, his gaze filled with contempt: "If you claim he has nothing to do with you, then should he ever be crowned a king, your brother's accomplishments will undoubtedly shine the brightest."

Fine!

Lu Zijin braced herself and admitted: "Alright, it's me. This kid's got this nature—always mocking others on sight. At the time, he didn't even know you were the honorably esteemed master of Qing's King—please don't take it personally!"

Taihua scoffed again: "Sorry to disappoint you—I'm just a barbarian myself."

Lu Zijin suddenly felt a sense of foreboding.

"That little one from my family arrived at Black Cloud City three days ago too."

Taihua said faintly: "The child lacks discipline. As a Vulgar Master, I'm out of solutions—might as well let our Newcomer King guide him for a bit. Perhaps it'd spark some kind of chemistry."

Lu Zijin's beautiful eyes quivered slightly: "You're certain?"

Taihua paused for a moment: "Certain."

A red sports car sped onto the cross-sea bridge.

Lin Wanqiu was driving, wearing black sunglasses. Her alluring and refined features danced amid strands of hair flowing with the wind.

Gu Jianlin glanced at her, his thoughts clear.

The identities of the five figures were already mostly confirmed.

The Pharmacist and the Scholar weren't worth mentioning—they were already under control, their backgrounds mundane.

While the Butcher was indeed his Tiger General, he was nothing but a wandering outlander.

The most intriguing figures remained—the Moon Princess and the Sea Demon.

The former was now cohabitating with him, though the term sounded ambiguous—it was exactly as it implied.

The latter, the Sea Demon, has had her identity revealed.

However, when Gu Jianlin unleashed his Life Perception, all he heard were enchanting melodies like a spring breeze.

As an Ascender along the Priest pathway, his condition regarding health was virtually impeccable.

No hereditary illnesses, no risk of cancer, no worries about things like high blood pressure, or gout.

Food always tastes delicious.

Choosing the Priest pathway generally ensures lifelong health and happiness.

"Uncle Mu once said, do not overly rely on profile and Life Perception. This is a Transcendent world, full of unknown methods—you can't deduce everything with conventional logic. Not sensing traces of a Fallen on Lin Wanqiu doesn't mean she isn't corrupted. Especially since she's chosen the Priest pathway."

"If Lin Wanqiu turns out to be the Sea Demon, then everything would click. Also, her close ties to the Judgement Court—her current rush to seek a new protector probably stems from fear of exposure."

"If I were to truly utilize her, she might hold value that rivals the Pharmacist's."

Gu Jianlin pondered silently.

Suddenly, the sky dimmed, clouds billowing ominously overhead.

The world's colors shifted—darkened and hollow.

They had entered the Forbidden Zone in Black Cloud City!

"Will you first go check on Mu Feng and his group?"

Lin Wanqiu asked reservedly.

Although her offer to become a Guardian had been rejected, she wasn't giving up.

The driver's role she fought tooth-and-nail with the deputy minister to obtain—she wouldn't let it go to waste.

If need be, she'd simply invest time, treating it like chasing a younger boyfriend; with perseverance, even a needle could wear down into nothing.

"Yes."

Gu Jianlin nodded slightly.

At that moment, the sky trembled violently.

The sky dome seemed to tear, golden light pouring like a waterfall, engulfing the darkened world!

The dazzling Golden Realm descended from above, like Heaven's Gate swinging open—a miracle enveloping the entire city!

Heavenly Person Realm!

Gu Jianlin felt raging fury surging in his mind. The Black Qilin instinctively shrank away, overwhelmed by the discomfort, and retreated into slumber.

At the same time, his breathing became effortless.

Breathing in harmony with heaven and earth.

"Such a wide-scale coverage... Is the association going all out this time?"

Gu Jianlin murmured softly: "Are they targeting the Qilin Venerable—or the Kui Dragon Ancestor?"

In this instant, amidst the brilliance of the realm, there emerged a splendid, unmatched phantom of majesty.

Her figure adorned with a phoenix crown, a phoenix robe flowing regally.

Cold, impassive eyes akin to smoldering suns surveying the land below.

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Above the sky dome, a dignified and majestic golden phantom overlooked the world between the sea and sky.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the battle is about to begin."

Her voice was vast, carried on the howling winds of the sea, reverberating as though in every ear: "This is the moment concerning humanity's survival, the crossroads that will determine the course of human destiny, the radiant chapter to be inscribed in human history."

"Survival, or extinction."

She paused: "To fade into obscurity among the masses, or to reign supreme over the lands."

With a thunderous roar, the golden-lit sky dome trembled as a mountain resembling the pitch-black Dragon Bone seemed to tear the heavens apart, shrouded entirely in golden mist, magnificent and towering, displaying its rugged majesty.

"The Road to Kingship is right before your eyes."

Her voice gradually dissipated, and the oppressive aura that had enveloped the world between the sea and sky vanished entirely.

Her figure disappeared into the expanse of the heavens and earth.

The Heavenly Person Realm still blanketed the Black Cloud City, with the brilliance of gold burning fiercely.

Gu Jianlin stared at the departed figure above the sky dome, falling into silence.

His evaluation was: majestic and domineering.

But not as impressive as Candle Dragon Venerable.

In the birdcage, the parrot was startled and exclaimed, "I thought my master was already unmatched in the art of showing off, but I didn't expect someone even better at it. Whose subordinate was that?"

Gu Jianlin lowered his head and silently gave it a glance.

Lin Wanqiu cleared her throat and said, "That's the President. Few people ever get to see the President. I suppose the people in Black Cloud City must be overjoyed right now, and the forums are likely exploding."

Dead silence.

Gu Jianlin distinctly noticed the silly bird roll its eyes and faint theatrically.

"What was that mountain just now?"

He suddenly asked out of curiosity.

Because Gu Jianlin noticed that the shape of the mountain closely resembled a pitch-black Dragon Bone.

Similar to those black Chains that had bound him in the Qilin Immortal Palace.

"That's the Ghost Valley Secret Treasure. Every generation of the Omega Sequence unlocks a form of ancient inheritance as a reward for the Kingship Seal, also a unique prize for the Beneficiaries of the Catastrophe Plan."

Seeing Gu Jianlin willing to talk to her, Lin Wanqiu felt there might still be hope for the Guardian's matter, and softly explained, "The ultimate reward of this generation's Catastrophe Plan is precisely the Ghost Valley Secret Treasure, though no one knows what it actually contains."

Gu Jianlin's heart stirred, thinking to himself that this must indeed be the Ghost Valley Secret Treasure.

He knew exactly what the so-called Ghost Valley Secret Treasure was.

It was the secret weapon to deal with Candle Dragon Venerable!

"Got it, thank you."

Gu Jianlin said.

Lin Wanqiu smiled tenderly, "You're welcome. Just don't be shocked later when we enter Black Cloud City; it's completely transformed after a week of renovations, nothing like its former decrepit state."

Gu Jianlin had already heard about it previously, that the Dawn Combat Sequence had entered the Qilin Immortal Palace for preliminary exploration and clearing, and supposedly a significant amount of Advanced Combat Power had gone in, consisting of Vanguard Suicide Squad members.

Meanwhile, the Ether Association's infrastructure department had been rebuilding Black Cloud City, turning it into a military base.

"Hold on, turn right ahead and park."

Gu Jianlin instructed.

Lin Wanqiu was momentarily puzzled, but still pulled over on the roadside.

Gu Jianlin opened the door and got out. This was already at the edge of the Forbidden Zone, an abandoned market that had been desolate for many years. Within the rundown alleys were piled-up miscellanea, including a sewer entrance with a loosely covered manhole.

He walked over to the sewer entrance and retrieved a small metal case hidden there in advance.

This had been placed here by the Scholar's men five minutes ago—ten vials of Fallen Angel Blood in total.

The timing was perfectly calculated, neither too early nor too late.

As soon as Gu Jianlin reached Black Cloud City, he could secure these ten vials of Spiritual Secret Medicine.

This was his resource for advancing to the Third Rank.

"Did you hide something here earlier?"

A moment later, Lin Wanqiu saw him return holding a metal case and asked in suspicion.

Gu Jianlin gave a succinct response and sat in the passenger seat, casually asking, "Do you plan to investigate or report this?"

Lin Wanqiu was taken aback: "Of course not. Everyone has their secrets. In fact, many people in the Association secretly buy some contraband in the Dark World. While this violates the Association's regulations, as long as it's not too excessive, generally no one interferes. Especially for talents like you—it's even more lenient."

She added, "Besides, my relations with the Judgement Court... aren't particularly good."

Gu Jianlin chuckled silently.

Indeed, the faction alignment begins immediately—how interesting.

The red supercar drove into Black Cloud City. The entrance had been transformed into a sprawling parking lot, accommodating countless luxury cars, extravagant business vehicles, military jeeps, and freight trucks.

The desolate and decrepit city had undergone significant renovations over the week, emerging anew; at the very least, the roads had been repaved with asphalt, and the old tubular buildings and single-story houses had been demolished, replaced with military facilities. From afar, training grounds could be seen, as well as newly erected, modern office buildings.

Their glass curtain walls reflected the sunlight, exuding a contemporary vibe.

The entrance also had a guard station, where nano warriors stood under the sun, their expressions solemn and resolute, though their gazes remained fixed upward.

Excitement was hidden in their eyes.

Evidently, they were thrilled and fervent due to the President's appearance.

"Black Cloud City has been remodeled like this, outsiders from the Association probably can't get in now."

Gu Jianlin asked casually, "What happened to the original residents of the city? Did they all flee?"

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Lin Wanqiu murmured in acknowledgment and explained: "Well, during the Great Purge at Black Cloud City, those who could escape have already fled. Most of these people likely went to the Dark World to seek shelter under the Youying Consortium. For instance, before Black Cloud City was purged, the population at West Port wasn't nearly as large."

Gu Jianlin thought to himself that this made sense: "So what will happen to the West Port Forbidden Zone in the future?"

"The West Port Forbidden Zone is actually controlled by the Youying Group. The association currently won't start a full-scale war with them. Last time, it was because the aura of an Ancient God at the Divine Servant Level emerged, along with the chaos caused by a Nightmare Master."

Lin Wanqiu continued: "Over time, more Fallen, Unclean entities, or gray Ascenders involved in criminal activities will flood into the West Port Forbidden Zone. These people can't be completely eradicated, so the association tacitly allows their existence. As long as they don't go overboard, giving them a Forbidden Zone is better than letting them wreak havoc in the real world."

Gu Jianlin roughly understood, hoping the shopkeeper and his daughter were safe.

After parking the car, the two walked into the guard station.

They saw a nano warrior with a poker face say, "Please halt."

A drone hovered mid-air, scanning with a red beam.

"Gu Jianlin, Omega Sequence, ranked ninety-ninth, authentication approved."

"Lin Wanqiu, A-Rank investigator, authentication approved."

At the security pavilion by the station entrance, a middle-aged man in military uniform walked over with a smile and said, "So, the Omega Sequence's seed is reporting here. Hello, I am Li Sheng, Vice Officer under Director Chen Bojun. You can call me Vice Officer Li. I'll introduce you to the Omega Sequence situation."

He had no airs and a warm demeanor.

Gu Jianlin nodded slightly: "Hello."

Vice Officer Li wasted no time, holding a tablet as he explained, "As you can see, the Omega Sequence has been transformed into a think tank military base. Anyone within the association's system has access to this facility. We've already established a direct passage to the Immortal Palace, allowing entry from the city straight into the palace."

"Typically, ordinary investigators form small teams to explore the Immortal Palace."

"As for the Omega Sequence, you must undergo specialized upper-level training. The resource pool associated with the Omega Sequence will also be open to you, doing everything possible to hasten your growth."

"This year, the Omega Sequence selected one hundred individuals globally, divided into four tiers based on rank. Within each tier, there are separate groups."

"According to your rank, you'll be assigned to the fourth tier. This is the weakest tier, with the lowest training intensity and, naturally, the least resources allocated."

At this point, the vice officer's face showed a peculiar smile: "In the fourth tier, most people fail to keep up and eventually get eliminated, only to join other departments."

Gu Jianlin frowned, no wonder everyone acknowledged his talent yet believed he had no future.

It was because his rank was too low, and time was limited.

"No worries, as soon as you advance to the Third Rank, you can still rise to a higher tier."

Lin Wanqiu comforted him from the side.

At this moment, Vice Officer Li suddenly said, "However, due to your exceptional performance impressing the higher-ups, Taixu conducted a temporary evaluation of your combat ability and decided to assign you to the second tier. This tier consists of an entire group of Fourth Rank individuals, and you'll be assuming the role of group leader. Do you agree?"

He added, "If you agree, I'll make the arrangements immediately. If you decline..."

Then you'll obediently muddle along in the worst tier.

Gu Jianlin thought, "This is unexpectedly good news. It seems my performance was indeed outstanding."

Entering the Fourth Rank tier meant reaching Captain Level.

Moreover, he was about to advance to the Third Rank soon, just in time to experience what Superdimensional Level felt like.

Suddenly, Lin Wanqiu's phone vibrated—it was a message from the Minister.

Lu Zijin:

"Stop him! At all costs, stop him! This is a public scheme; the President is deliberately setting him up! The old man knows the kid's impulsive nature; he'll surely fall for it! Joining the second tier is one thing, but absolutely avoid becoming a group leader! That group includes the Little Princess!"

"Now Wan Runtu, that fool, already has his eyes on him. If you throw the Little Princess into the mix, this situation will spiral out of control!"

Lin Wanqiu nearly dropped her phone upon seeing the words "Little Princess."

As she looked up again, preparing to speak, it was already too late.

"Of course, I agree."

Gu Jianlin said.

Vice Officer Li's smile deepened, and Taixu's voice rang from the tablet.

"Permission update completed."

"Gu Jianlin, Divine Path, Second Order Junior Fate Officer, ranked ninety-ninth."

"Permission updated to: Second Tier, Group A Leader."

"Good luck."

Upon hearing this, Gu Jianlin finally felt relieved.

He did not think this was a case of pushing him too far.

After all, he was on the verge of advancing to Third Rank—it was just crossing a single rank, hardly a big deal.

Lin Wanqiu, however, fell into deep thought.

Admittedly, this young man before her did have the qualifications to enter the second tier.

But the issue was...

"Regarding other details about the base, including the living area and dormitory buildings, you can check them anytime on the Deep Space Network. As a Second Tier Omega, everything allocated to you will be of the highest configuration."

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Vice Officer Li donned a peculiar smile as he hung an identity badge on Gu Jianlin's suit, nodding in satisfaction. "This signifies your position as the leader of Group A in the second echelon, a true emblem of identity."

"Alright, then. Best wishes for a bright future, until we meet again."

With that, he turned and walked away.

"Thank you."

Gu Jianlin carried the birdcage and suitcase, taking in the revitalized Black Cloud City.

For the first time, he felt a glimmer of anticipation for the future.

"I wonder which high-ranking officer has such great foresight."

Inside the birdcage, the parrot chirped, "Such a good person indeed."

Gu Jianlin commented, "He truly is a good person."

Lin Wanqiu hesitated for a moment before speaking, "This is a directive from the President."

Gu Jianlin froze for a moment.

The parrot squawked, "The President?"

Lin Wanqiu confirmed, "Yes, the President rarely issues orders like this."

Gu Jianlin remained silent for a second.

The parrot sighed deeply, "Ah, the President indeed—benevolent as always. Despite my master mocking the Grandmaster as a Vulgar Master, the Grandmaster bore no grudge and even pulled strings to promote him."

Lin Wanqiu hesitated for a bit, unsure if she should provide clarification.

Gu Jianlin actually felt a bit guilty.

Although he couldn't help but sense something odd.

Along the road, he kept encountering patrol teams of nano warriors crossing paths with them.

Not to mention investigators from all around the world, passing by with their own teams.

There were even prodigies from the Omega Sequence among them.

Gu Jianlin noticed all of them staring at him with expressions of inexplicable shock.

No, not at him.

At the identity badge on his chest.

This gave him an uneasy feeling.

According to the map instructions on the roadside, the residential area was just 500 meters ahead, then a right turn.

A multitude of apartments had been built there, resembling a high-class neighborhood. After all, most of those who managed to enter the association were elites; while training required hardship, the living environment had to be upscale and sophisticated.

Hardship wasn't the goal—it was merely a phase.

If better conditions were available, then enduring hardship wasn't necessary.

The Omega Sequence's residential area was separated by a wall, through which greenery and gardens could be seen. Apartments, partially concealed among lush foliage, revealed faint white edges.

Opposite the residential area lay the medical department.

"Mu Feng and the others are living over there."

As the medical department's head, Lin Wanqiu spoke with authority on this topic: "They've received top-notch medical treatment now. Other than still needing medication to suppress their deformities, they're pretty much alright."

She added, "On top of that, we recently collaborated with the pharmacy department to develop a new type of medication that extracts the effective ingredients from Heavenly Born Grass while minimizing its toxicity. It'll be refined into secret medicine for ingestion, which can reduce health depletion, helping them live longer."

Gu Jianlin blinked slightly, "I see."

It was evident that Lin Wanqiu had a rather gentle attitude toward Fallen and Unclean.

This might be because she herself had been contaminated.

She continued, "Soon, I'll attempt advancement. Once I reach the Fifth Rank as a Priest, I'll be able to channel stronger powers, aiding further restoration of their Life Force."

Gu Jianlin raised an eyebrow. Another gesture of goodwill, huh?

Still, he accepted this favor with a slight nod. "Alright, thank you."

Lin Wanqiu's smile grew even more enticing, feeling that she had gained favor with this young man.

"Do you want to visit them first?"

She asked.

Gu Jianlin shook his head. "No, I'm waiting for someone first. I brought them gifts."

He glanced down at his phone, quietly waiting for the time to pass.

Moments later, a husky young man arrived, carrying bags upon bags, sweating profusely. "Brother Lin, I'm here!"

Gu Jianlin lifted his head. "You're here?"

"Yeah, it was tough, but I finally got the stuff you mentioned!"

Cheng Youyu was drenched in sweat and wiped his face as he spoke. "It's not just me. Xiangsi and Brother Cheng are here too. They wanted to express their gratitude personally to Uncle Mu for saving them. Plus, I heard Xiangsi has something important to discuss with you—it's related to Judgement Court matters."

Gu Jianlin froze for a moment.

Suddenly, Cheng Youyu's gaze landed on the identity badge on his chest, and his face changed dramatically. "Holy crap! Second echelon, Group A! Brother Lin, who did you curse at this time? Or worse, who did you beat up again? What terrible act of karma made you the Little Princess's group leader?"

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Gu Jianlin saw the expression on the chubby man's face, and the ominous premonition grew stronger: "Little Princess?"

Cheng Youyu rubbed his teeth nervously: "How should I explain this to you?"

A moment later, Nie Xiangsi came over with her bag. She was carrying several shopping bags, probably having just returned from a shopping trip. At first, she still seemed timid, but when she saw the badge, she froze in place.

When Zhang Cheng arrived, holding bags of meat, poultry, dairy products, and eggs, he wore the same expression.

He even forgot to greet anyone, his face full of shock.

And that wasn't the end of it. When they entered the hospital, every medical staff member passing by who noticed the badge on his chest showed expressions of astonishment and disbelief, their gazes filled with pity and sympathy.

This hospital was established internally by the association, and the medical staff were all Alchemists and Priests.

Uncle Mu and the others were assigned to a special quarantine area. The environment was quite nice, with a separately well-maintained apartment and a lush garden. Members of the security team were stationed around the area, keeping watch at all times.

Normally, access to this facility required special clearance and a permit.

However, Lin Wanqiu, as the head of the medical department, pulled some strings and brought everyone in.

"Old Mu, you've had a hard time all these years, I'm sorry."

"Hardship isn't really hardship; the truly tough times were just these past few months after Old Gu passed away. Before that, living in Black Cloud City was fairly normal apart from the lack of sunlight."

"How can you call that normal? It's only because we, your old friends, are incompetent, failing to uncover what truly happened back when you encountered trouble. Why did Rhein and his Judgement Court hunt you down so relentlessly? Even if it was for a power grab to clip Lin Dong's wings, you were already ruined—what was there for him to gain?"

"Old Gu was also investigating this matter before, but he never found any answers."

In the garden, Uncle Mu stabilized his stance, maintaining a punching posture as he let out a deep exhale.

Chen Bojun sat next to him, his face pale, holding a cup of goji berry tea.

Noticing everyone's arrival, the two men turned their heads, their expressions varied.

"Here already?"

Chen Bojun showed a knowing look, his expression carrying an enigmatic smile, eerie and ambiguous.

Uncle Mu looked in good spirits, even able to practice martial arts. However, seeing the boy's badge, his expression also became strange: "Xiao Gu, what kind of mess have you gotten into this time?"

Gu Jianlin stayed silent for a second. He noticed their peculiar gazes and expressions and couldn't help frowning.

"Whatever it is, just spell it out," he said stiffly. "Who is the Little Princess?"

Cheng Youyu's face turned odd, but he explained anyway: "Ji Xiaoyu, the Little Princess of the Ji Family. The Ji Family is an ancient clan from the East, which has produced many remarkable individuals, such as the previous President. The Little Princess's grandmother is the current President. She is a Fourth Rank Ancient Martial practitioner and a part-time Alchemist. People call her the Deadly Poison King..."

"A part-time Alchemist?"

Gu Jianlin was surprised: "Can Alchemists have part-time roles?"

"The so-called part-time Alchemist refers to someone with expertise in pharmacology. They don't possess Alchemist-specific skills but have substantial experience. For instance, if you master all aspects of drug preparation, even with an inexperienced rookie Alchemist, you'd be able to guide them with ease."

Cheng Youyu shivered at the thought of something terrifying, his face pale with lingering fear: "But the problem is, everything she studies isn't legitimate. Her methods are sneaky and sinister, absolutely disgusting. Xiangsi is one of the few people who can get close to the Little Princess."

Gu Jianlin turned to look at the sailor-uniformed girl.

Nie Xiangsi hesitated for a moment before speaking softly: "The Little Princess is just like that. Her transcendent talent is phenomenal—she awakened at ten years old and reached Fourth Rank by age twelve. But because her parents passed away too early, her personality became somewhat... warped. In the end, she turned into a devil star."

"Ugh, no point saying so much—just watch the video!"

Zhang Cheng immediately logged into the Deep Space Network, found a forum video, and pressed play.

With a loud bang, thick green toxic mist erupted across a basketball court. At the same time, gut-wrenching screams rang out as a colorful figure dashed out, crawling and stumbling.

Within seconds, he became bloated all over, transforming into a literal pighead.

He emitted a stench—an unbearable, stomach-churning stench.

One glance at the color of the toxic mist was enough to sense the foulness.

The smell seemed to breach the screen, invading their noses.

Deep within the dense fog, someone stood with their hands on their hips, laughing maniacally.

The arrogance was overwhelming.

Gu Jianlin stared at the scene and fell into deep thought: "Is that laugh the Little Princess? But the real question is—who's that running out screaming?"

The parrot burst out laughing: "Hahaha, who's the unlucky fool? This is killing me."

Zhang Cheng's expression suddenly crumbled, his smile turning insane.

Nie Xiangsi slowly turned her head away.

Cheng Youyu's face flushed red as he said sharply with a dark expression: "Heh, that was me..."

Parrot: "..."

Gu Jianlin was dumbfounded; he hadn't expected this chubby guy to have such a tragic past.

"That's just how the Little Princess is."

Lin Wanqiu handed over her phone: "Minister Lu sent a warning earlier, but by then it was already too late."

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Gu Jianlin glanced at the message. No wonder this woman had been hesitant to speak earlier.

Uncle Mu sighed, "Time flies. The Little Princess has grown up so much. I first saw her when she was four years old. Back then, the President personally asked me to teach her martial arts. The moment we met, she poisoned my tea. Even with a Priest in attendance, I ended up with diarrhea for two whole days."

"Haha, you got off easy. Last time my brother tried to teach her, she left him completely bald."

Chen Bojun added with a sigh, "That's just how she is—wild and unmanageable. Anyone who tries to discipline her gets tormented. The Second Team's A Group has consistently gone without a leader because she keeps chasing them away. Frankly, the Little Princess is formidable, armed with bizarre poisons and endless dirty tricks. No average person can stand against her."

He paused for effect. "Even if you can defeat her, you'd still suffer terribly from her poisons."

Diarrhea was manageable.

Baldness was a bit terrifying.

Then there was Fatty's video.

Gu Jianlin fell into a brooding silence.

So, the President was lying in wait for him.

On the surface, it was presented as a promotion. But in reality, it was meant to trip him up and humiliate him.

While there was no true malice involved, there was certainly plenty of mischief.

And the so-called Grandmaster had such a petty temperament.

Vulgar Master.

The parrot's eyes widened: "Insidious! This is a conspiracy!"

No, this was an open scheme.

Even if Gu Jianlin knew about it in advance, he would still willingly walk into this trap for a chance to join the Second Team.

"I had planned for someone else to take on A Group's leadership."

Chen Bojun said, "It almost worked. Such a pity."

Uncle Mu froze. "Could it be because of that training ground explosion the day before yesterday?"

They all turned their heads. In the distance, faint rumbling sounds came from a training ground.

It seemed the construction crews were working on rebuilding it.

"Who was it?"

Gu Jianlin wondered. Almost succeeding meant it must've been quite the individual.

"You know her."

Chen Bojun glanced at him. "Thunder. She just advanced to the Fourth Rank."

Uncle Mu nodded slightly, "That Sword Tomb successor? She's indeed quite gifted. Likely, she harbored Extreme Thunder since childhood, which hindered her advancement significantly. But once she steps into the Superdimension, it'll all pay off. Give her some time, and she might even catch up with the First Team directly."

Gu Jianlin was startled—it turned out to be her.

The First Team essentially required a Fifth Rank skill level.

"Thunder and the Little Princess are like lightning striking ground—unceasing collisions. Neither backs down, and every encounter ends in combat. Although I didn't witness their battle, rumors say the duel between the two female warriors escalated to the edges of the universe. Stars shattered, laws were erased! Although the Little Princess couldn't beat her, she fought fiercely, rising again after every defeat."

Cheng Youyu marveled: "In twelve hours, they fought nine times. That's a fight every hour and a half—nearly tearing the base apart. Eventually, Thunder got transferred elsewhere."

"When I went to heal the Little Princess, she was still plotting revenge."

Nie Xiangsi timidly added, "Actually, Senior Sister Tang probably held back a little."

Zhang Cheng interjected, "That's true. I've been beaten by Senior Sister Tang before. The Sword Sect Path and Ghost Slayer Path are pure killing arts."

Gu Jianlin cradled his forehead—this was truly a tangled mess.

Luckily, he was about to break through to the Third Rank.

Otherwise, he'd probably get thoroughly beaten up.

"This directive came from the President, who approached Minister Lu personally to issue it. The original statement was, 'The Little Princess is unruly; as her incompetent mentor, I cannot discipline her. Perhaps it's better left to capable folks. Since you're Peak City District's Newcomer King and are favored by the King of Qing, you must have exceptional qualities.'"

Chen Bojun paused briefly. "It's also to give you a platform to shine!"

Uncle Mu let out a helpless sigh.

Gu Jianlin's eye twitched slightly.

Everyone stared at him with pity in their eyes.

"Alright, I'll leave you to your reminiscing."

Turning away, Chen Bojun said, "Old Mu, don't forget to deal with the boxing manual situation."

Uncle Mu replied curtly, "Got it. But my inherited boxing manual? Don't even think about it."

Chen Bojun chuckled. "Fine!"

The apartment's living room smelled richly of tea, with a faint sandalwood aroma hanging in the air.

"Xiao Gu, thank you."

Uncle Mu poured a cup of tea, hesitated, then pulled a bottle of cola from the fridge and set it on the coffee table. With sincerity, he said, "I almost forgot—young people like you usually prefer cola over tea."

The fridge was high-end, loaded with various buttons. His unfamiliar movements revealed that he wasn't quite adept at using it.

Gu Jianlin shook his head: "No need to be so polite. This is what I should do—you've shown great kindness to my father."

"What is 'should' anyway? If it weren't for you, we would've likely been captured by the Judgement Court, interrogated for days, then secretly executed."

As Uncle Mu spoke, his gaze turned calm. "Thank you. Truly... thank you. But I must say, if something like this happens again, don't act recklessly. You have talent and tremendous potential—your life is worth more than all ours combined. It's not worth risking it."

He advised, "In the world of Transcendents, life is measured by its value. Your talent and ability to oppose the Ancient God Clan means your life carries significance beyond just being yours—it represents the entirety of humanity's hope."

"I don't know what Old Gu left you, but whatever it is, it will bring immense power—and immense consequences. Cherish your life. Don't act so impulsively again."

"True, you've earned the approval of the King of Qing, who will always watch over you. But with your personality, I suspect it won't be long before you stop listening to even him. Alright, I'll be more confident—remove 'suspect.' It's definitely happening."

"You're simply lawless—I can see it already. Just promise me you'll listen to the King of Qing closely. This is the most important opportunity of your life—grasp it tightly and don't let go. Do you understand?"

This old man was like a father, endlessly nagging.

What was peculiar was that he didn't ask anything else.

Because he knew—this child had become a disciple of a Catastrophe-level entity.

Under the King of Qing, all problems were trivial.

Still, he worried that Gu Jianlin might go too far and lose his life.

Gu Jianlin wouldn't promise anything.

"Don't bring this up again. If it happens again, I'll still do the same thing."

He stated firmly, "The Judgement Court's trash doesn't deserve to make me back down."

The parrot squawked, "What kind of scum are they!"

Uncle Mu paused in mild surprise. "Lu Zicheng gave you this parrot, huh?"

Gu Jianlin replied with a grunt: "You've heard about the Nightmare Master incident, right?"

Uncle Mu fell silent for a moment, then nodded. "Yeah, I've heard."

An expression of faint sorrow and wistfulness filled his eyes.

His eldest daughter had died in an incident eight years ago.

Though now, revenge had been served.

"Your personality combined with this parrot—a complete disaster waiting to happen."

Uncle Mu sighed, "I'm crippled. I can't control you."

Gu Jianlin shook his head, saying, "Don't say that. Are you comfortable living here?"

Uncle Mu nodded slightly. "Comfortable? That's a stretch. I spent so long hiding underground like a rat. The world changes so quickly, folks like us, discarded by the times, adapt poorly. Nevertheless, compared to the underground, this place is paradise—a nice environment. Everyone enjoys it."

Gu Jianlin asked, "What about Wanwan?"

Uncle Mu gestured toward the upstairs room: "She's taking a nap."

Thinking of the sweet little girl, Gu Jianlin felt a rare sense of warmth.

A cute child like Wanwan deserved to be pampered like a princess.

This was the life she should have.

"By the way, Uncle Mu."

Gu Jianlin said seriously, "I have something I need to ask you."

Uncle Mu noticed his solemn expression and asked, "What is it?"

"The Night Watchers—someone approached me."

Gu Jianlin explained, "A person named Han Jing, and another named Wang Taisheng. They want to recruit me into the Nightwatch Department, but their condition is that I stop investigating my father's matter."

He continued, "It's an uncomfortable demand. What do you think?"

"Wang Taisheng... oh, if it's him, it's no surprise."

Uncle Mu said, "He's part of the turncoat faction—leaning toward the Judgement Court's side."

Gu Jianlin thought—so that's how it is.

"As for Han Jing, what did she say? You didn't contradict her, did you?"

Uncle Mu's expression grew odd: "She was your father's first love and former fiancée."

Spit.

Gu Jianlin nearly choked on his cola.

Chapter 270 - 141 Third Rank, Great Fate Master!

Gu Jianlin was shocked beyond words: "First love? Fiancée?"

Well done, Old Gu.

Who would've thought there was still an unresolved love debt here.

No wonder that woman always looked at him with such an inexplicable gaze.

As if she wanted to devour him alive.

This is just typical Old Gu, always bringing unexpected surprises—can't help but admire him.

Uncle Mu's expression grew peculiar as he said, "Yes, though I don't know the details either. But Han Jing has always had feelings for your father. Given her personality, she wouldn't just let things concerning him slide; there may be some hidden motives. Have you noticed how the Judgement Court has been keeping a very close eye on the Night Watchers?"

"The accusation against me is that during my exploration of Qilin Immortal Palace, I was bewitched by the Ancient God's power and massacred my companions. Furthermore, I was charged for aiding and releasing the Unclean without authorization in the past."

He reminded, "You know about your father's situation too. In the past, several Night Watchers who made mistakes were relentlessly pursued, and dismissal was common. Have you figured anything out?"

Gu Jianlin pondered for a moment: "The Judgement Court is clipping the Night Watcher's wings."

"Exactly."

Uncle Mu replied.

"It's now essentially confirmed that your amnesia was caused by the Soul Loss Gu. I'll find a cure for this type of Gu Worm as soon as possible."

Gu Jianlin responded earnestly: "This matter is related to the Nightmare Master. Everything happened inside the Qilin Immortal Palace. During this reclamation project, I'll investigate thoroughly. You don't remember anything?"

Uncle Mu fell silent for a long time before shaking his head regretfully: "Sorry."

"It's alright, I trust you."

Gu Jianlin paused: "Even if, in the end, the culprit truly is you, at least we'll have closure."

Uncle Mu chuckled: "In that case, I'd rather take my own life."

Gu Jianlin didn't say anything. If he had done such a thing himself, he would choose death as well.

He'd be ashamed as a son.

"I'm old enough to see past these things, but I just worry about you running into trouble. Your performance in the West Port Forbidden Zone was impressive, enough to make even the President take notice of you. While you poked fun at her, she might occasionally make things difficult for you, but what's rightfully yours won't be taken away."

Uncle Mu sighed: "However, the factional struggles within the Ether Association have never stopped, and many people end up as sacrifices in the crossfire. Even though I know you won't listen, when investigating your father's situation, try to keep a low profile. Don't easily accept alliances from any faction; don't become their pawn."

"Got it."

Gu Jianlin looked up at the time: "It's late, I won't disturb your rest anymore. I'll go check on Wanwan."

Uncle Mu smiled: "Alright, second floor's where she is. Go on."

This standalone apartment was no different from a small villa. Wanwan lived in the princess-style room on the second floor.

The small pink bedroom was decorated with many charming dolls and stuffed toys strewn on the bedside table and windowsill.

Wanwan was curling up on a soft bed with her delicate little face exposed, fast asleep wrapped in a quilt.

At this moment, Nie Xiangsi was about to place the clothes she'd bought into the closet.

Zhang Cheng had also bought some snacks, intending to surprise the young girl.

Only Cheng Youyu sighed in dismay; the items he bought were somewhat unimpressive.

But it wasn't his choice—Brother Lin had specifically told him to buy those things.

"Wait a moment."

Gu Jianlin stood at the doorway, speaking softly: "Leave all those gifts with Uncle Mu."

Nie Xiangsi and Zhang Cheng turned back, their expressions skeptical.

Gu Jianlin caught onto their thoughts, and he smiled silently: "When people have too much, understand too much, happiness dwindles gradually. As a child, not having candy and suddenly getting a piece of chocolate spontaneously feels like joy. But if you're suddenly given a whole candy shop, it simply becomes commonplace."

"You wouldn't be interested in candy anymore; instead, you'd seek a different kind of happiness, new pleasures. However, all the happiness one can experience in a lifetime has limits. The more joy you gain at once, the lonelier the future becomes."

He paused: "So, go slow."

Some children are born in Rome.

Others are born blind to light.

But don't despair; the suffering you experience isn't what you deserve.

It's an enemy—to be conquered.

When you fight your way through and finally greet your first ray of sunlight, you'll feel a happiness others could never fathom in their lifetime—a unique treasure gifted by fate.

You'll grow exceptionally strong.

"That does make sense,"

Zhang Cheng muttered.

Nie Xiangsi seemed thoughtful, retrieving the lovely small dresses she had prepared.

"Alright, here comes the hardship."

Cheng Youyu grabbed numerous large bundled bags and dumped out textbooks and exercise sheets.

Wanwan had already reached the age to enter primary school—failing in many areas shouldn't extend to education.

Once the little girl wakes and sees herself surrounded by mountains of books and practice sheets.

She might shed tears of blissful gratitude.

In her dreams, Wanwan picked up the malicious intent and unconsciously rolled onto her side.

Beside her head on the shelf was a copy of "Six-Year Primary School, Three-Year Simulation."

The scene felt strangely wholesome.

At this point, Gu Jianlin noticed a bruise on her small leg sticking out of the quilt.

At sunset, after visiting all the elders from the shelter, Gu Jianlin was planning to leave.

He opted against waiting for Wanwan to wake because he wasn't skilled at dealing with kids.

As long as they were okay, he felt relieved.

"Brother Lin, if there's no other issue, then I'll take my leave. Please take care,"

Cheng Youyu bowed deeply, as if attending a farewell ceremony for the deceased: "If you really can't manage the Little Princess, better to retreat—it's not disgraceful! After all, even Holy Land-level big shots struggle against her antics; it's truly unbearable!"

Zhang Cheng kept a solemn face, bowing deeply as well: "Hope we meet again."

After the two left, the twilight left only Nie Xiangsi hesitating as she nervously looked at him.

"I heard from Cheng Youyu you had something to speak to me about?"

Gu Jianlin asked politely.

Nie Xiangsi softly responded "yes," seriously adding, "Twice now, you have saved us. I want to properly thank you. There's something important—the Judgement Court is already preparing evidence to incriminate Uncle Mu and the others."

Gu Jianlin's pupils slightly contracted.

"This I overheard while my uncle was on the phone,"

Nie Xiangsi spoke softly: "From now onward, I'll keep following his moves. If they make any progress, I'll notify you right away. I believe Uncle Mu and the others are good people—they cannot be wrongfully convicted."

Gu Jianlin paused, feeling surprised: she really was a dutiful daughter.

"But if you're helping Uncle Mu like this, won't it affect things over on your uncle's side?"

He paused: "I remember..."

Nie Xiangsi bowed apologetically: "Sorry, I know my uncle and your father were close friends, but years ago, my uncle wasn't like this. I don't know what happened, but he's become different—obsessively chasing fame and fortune now."

She whispered: "However, I hope you believe me; I genuinely want to repay Uncle Mu and the others."

Finishing her words, she seemed too flustered, quickly leaving the scene.

In the quiet, Gu Jianlin watched her retreating figure in thought.

The Judgement Court had already begun its operations.

Which meant he had to act quickly on his end as well.

The most pressing matter now was finding a quiet place to promote to Third Rank.

The Great Fate Master!

For the Divine Path progression, at Third Rank, an incredibly important skill becomes accessible.

—Spiritual Body!

Using dark matter and dark energy, channeling a portion of spiritual power to manifest a Spiritual Body.

Even at Demigod Rank, this ability remains crucial.

Later stages will feature very potent transformations.

Moreover, with every promotion, Gu Jianlin's prior extraordinary abilities evolve further.

This time's advancement might upgrade his Ghost Transformation!

Gu Jianlin possessed Dual Core Drive along with extraordinary abilities refined by Ancient God Power.

Combined with the Breathing Technique and the evolved Realm of Freedom.

Plus the Soul Comforting Bell.

No way he couldn't handle the Little Princess.

"If it doesn't work, should we consult Director Chen and Minister Lu?"

Lin Wanqiu asked nearby: "Or perhaps seek the King of Qing?"

Gu Jianlin shook his head: "No need."

Lin Wanqiu looked at his confident demeanor, thinking he truly deserved to be someone capable of resisting Instructor Wan's Slaughter Domain.

"I plan to advance in the apartment."

Gu Jianlin frowned and asked: "Why are you still following me?"

This woman didn't have a great reputation; figuring out her utility was something he needed to think through.

Lin Wanqiu looked slightly aggrieved: "I'm a Fourth Rank Holy Mother—you really don't need me to assist you with your promotion? My Holy Aura can speed up your accumulation of spirituality."

Gu Jianlin hesitated, surprised that the Priest Path included such abilities.

"Besides, your apartment is also in Zone A, and it's very close to the Little Princess. Based on her character, she'll likely sneak over to ambush. I can secretly apply Light Protection for you—immunizing you from physical toxins."

Lin Wanqiu quickly suggested: "I'm actually quite useful."

Gu Jianlin fell into deep contemplation.

The helicopter's rotor blades whipped up gusts as petals of cherry blossom flew in the wind.

"President, shall we depart for Kyoto Airport now?"

The pilot asked: "The people from the Heavenly Plain are already waiting there; they wish to apologize to you."

Inside the cabin, Taihua stared at Tokyo's bustling nightscape and spoke indifferently: "Not interested—tell them to go away. Change the route immediately—there's no need for Northern Europe, head directly to Peak City."

The pilot was stunned, his hands trembling with shock: "What? Did something happen at the Immortal Palace?"

As the President's personal helicopter pilot for over forty years.

He was among the most familiar with her temperament worldwide.

If she personally stepped in, blood would undoubtedly be shed.

What in Peak City required her involvement?

Hopefully, the Qilin Venerable hadn't awakened and started threatening the world!

"Stop trembling, it's fine."

Taihua glanced at him coldly and said: "Just going to watch a show."

At ten-thirty at night, Gu Jianlin sat cross-legged on his bed, eyes closed.

The trash can held empty vials, then was lit by the lighter he casually tossed inside.

A silent burn began.

Ten bottles of Fallen Angel Blood had been infused into him, causing his spirituality to surge violently.

Simultaneously, a gentle Holy Light enveloped him, aiding in gathering his spirituality.

His Breathing Technique synchronized with meditation, creating a tidal wave of spiritual intensity.

It was then that unfamiliar melodies entered his Life Perception.

Ding-dong.

The doorbell rang downstairs.

"Is anyone home?"

A voice called sweetly from below: "We're A-Team members, here to visit our new leader and bring you gifts."

Gu Jianlin listened to the voice, clear and pleasant, exceedingly melodious.

"The Little Princess?"

This voice sounded surprisingly gentle, completely unlike the Demon Lord of Mayhem she was infamous for. It seemed more like a polite and kind young girl.

Gu Jianlin contemplated briefly, and embracing the principle of being kind to others, he chose to answer the door.

If love could soften the opponent, why resort to violence?

Preventing his bad reputation from spreading further.

Meanwhile, rustling noises emanated from the bushes outside the apartment.

A petite shadow stood nearby, appearing well-mannered.

She gazed at the pitch-black apartment, her expression transforming into one of depraved glee.