

## Ancient 311

### Chapter 311 - 162: The Peculiar Tree Burial

In the Returning Burial Forest, a pale fog filled the air, with faint, chilling howls echoing through the silence.

Wan Runtu, carrying thirteen alchemy weapons on his back, swaggered through the mist. Watching the nine others dispersed ahead, he held a walkie-talkie and lowered his voice: "Reporting to headquarters, the team has entered the Living Burial Area-Returning Burial Forest. The rescue mission has begun. No anomalies detected so far. Report complete."

The information from the Ancient God Realm cannot be transmitted to the real world.

Thus, the "headquarters" he referred to was the Ether Association's base in the Qilin Immortal Palace.

That was within Dawn City, which had risen from the ground in the past week.

Although the Ancient God Realm is perilous, it isn't entirely unsuitable for human habitation.

Places like the Returning Burial Forest are designated as special zones, regions humanity cannot conquer.

You can venture into such areas.

They offer opportunities for adventure and treasure-seeking.

However, large-scale human settlements are unsuitable here.

Outside the special zones, numerous Ascenders gather in tribes.

Where there are people, there are needs, and thus business arises.

Eventually, this creates the unique ecology of the Ancient God Realm.

"Received."

Chen Bojun's voice came through: "Lao Wan, tone it down. While this rescue mission doesn't require them to fight, don't push them too hard. After all, they're all geniuses; they must have some pride."

"Got it."

Wan Runtu cheerfully agreed on the surface and hung up.

The next moment, a deranged, unhinged grin spread across his face.

"Brats, prepare for hell!"

"Let's see how capable you really are!"

As the chief instructor of the Omega Sequence, he had every reason to find these brats irritating.

After all, people from his generation fought their way through blood and fire, roaring on the battlefield, dragging crippled bodies soaked in blood, carrying the cold corpses of their comrades, rolling in the mud, singing around campfires, sharing a bottle of secret medicine, and splitting half-rations of military food. United in life and death, they shared mutual affection and support.

And now, look at these modern youngsters—there's no sense of unity whatsoever.

Free-spirited and undisciplined.

Chaos and disorder.

Although perhaps the President shoulders some blame here—under her influence, the Ether Association had developed a strong penchant for individual heroism, sprouting countless rebellious geniuses.

There's nothing wrong with geniuses exhibiting personality, but this team is simply outrageous!

The second-tier trio, entering the Immortal Palace for the first time, showed signs of nervousness.

You could scare them stiff with just a fart.

The Little Princess, an absolute Devil who fears nothing, seemed like she was on vacation—looking left, peeping right, bouncing around, yelling loudly.

Then there's that lunatic Poison Master who, upon entering the Gui Cang Forest, collected all sorts of bizarre plants. So far, she's already been poisoned six times, once nearly dying.

Someone once asked her why she persisted, and her answer was that she wanted to become a modern-day Shennong.

One has to admit—impressive.

Damn inspiring.

Crazy!

Then there's Dawn, equally abnormal. Despite being a support character with no combat skills, she insisted on leading the charge in the group. She claimed it was to train her durability and survival ability by absorbing damage for the team.

Crazy!

Nightmare was even more outlandish—he wouldn't even sneeze without first performing a divination. He's absurdly cautious.

Crazy!

As for the final two, they're outright nuts.

Tang Ling, the leader of the rescue squad, showed no intention of setting an example. Her first act in the Returning Burial Forest was to take out bottles of skincare products from her bag.

Sunscreen, insect repellent, and moisture protection—spraying them liberally on her snow-white neck and arms.

She then went to town on her long, fair legs.

"Achoo!"

Gu Jianlin had been engrossed in studying Old Gu's strategy dossier on his phone when he suddenly sneezed. He looked up with bewilderment, his eyes filled with confusion.

A parrot squawked, "What the hell is Li Zai Gan doing?"

Tang Ling, holding her four spray bottles, stepped up and spritzed the boy thoroughly. She said indifferently:

"Boys need to take care of themselves when they're out and about."

She paused for a moment. "I brought you here, so I'll take responsibility for you."

Gu Jianlin thought to himself: Your idea of 'responsibility' is certainly peculiar.

"Focus for now, and search for clues."

He scanned the surroundings.

Rather than a dense forest, this place resembled a burial ground. Each towering ancient tree was decayed, covered in strange, archaic markings, reminiscent of desperate gouges made by fingernails.

The leaves were dry and brittle, seemingly weathered over countless years, crumbling upon the lightest touch.

Unusual vegetation thrived in the underbrush—carnivorous flowers with sharp teeth, glowing gemstone-like fungi emitting eerie light, and red dandelions dispersing airborne wispy fragments that twinkled like fireflies in the breeze.

Countless skulls hung from the crowns of the ancient trees, creating an eerie and terrifying sight.

"For Alchemists, these plants are all rare medicinal ingredients. Because this is a Living Burial Zone, many ancient humans and Ancient Gods are buried here, which has led to the growth of numerous herbs with special properties."

Tang Ling looked up. Dim sunlight pierced through the dense canopy, leaving fragmented shadows on her face. "Look at these skulls—they're linked to a tradition of the Ancient God Clan. After defeating their enemies, they would keep the skulls as trophies. When they fell dormant, they would hang these trophies around their burial sites."

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"These customs later spread to the Human World. In ancient tribal times, there was such a tradition. They firmly believed that doing so would enslave the souls of the vanquished."

She glanced with a hint of mockery in her eyes, "Which means letting those souls become a guarding army for them."

"However, the Ancient God Clan was not superstitious. They had their reasons for doing this."

Gu Jianlin suddenly spoke up.

"Yes, this was actually a special kind of ritual."

Tang Ling rarely turned serious: "That's why this place is called the Living Burial Area. Things buried here are likely alive and will crawl out of the graves, howling to devour you."

Gu Jianlin grunted in agreement.

Tang Ling stared at him and asked, "Aren't you afraid?"

Gu Jianlin thought to himself that he was the very thing crawling out of the coffin, so there was nothing to fear.

But being emotionally intelligent, he still said, "Afraid."

Tang Ling was silent for a second, "You don't seem so."

Gu Jianlin got up, searching the ground for traces and casually asked, "Are you afraid of these things?"

Tang Ling earnestly said, "I'm also a girl, of course, I should be afraid."

Gu Jianlin: "..."

"By the way, what were you looking at just now?"

Tang Ling asked suspiciously.

Gu Jianlin found it inconvenient to answer because he was looking at his father's guide.

Although it was a document left by Old Gu before he disappeared and contained no detailed solutions for the Immortal Palace, it recorded a wealth of knowledge with invaluable worth.

Just then, an exclamation came from afar!

"Good news, brothers and sisters!"

Dawn said excitedly, "I think I stepped on a trap!"

After entering the Returning Burial Forest, this guy had been leading the way, facing the gale.

He prided himself on being thick-skinned and durable, and capable of self-recovery, making him the best choice for triggering traps.

At this moment, Nightmare rushed over with the Crystal Ball, shocked: "Impossible! I didn't foresee any danger!"

The Poison Master came over, glanced at his feet, and asked, "Are you sure you stepped on a trap?"

Everyone crowded around, scraping away the loose, damp soil on the ground.

But when they saw what was at Dawn's feet, everyone fell silent.

A bottle of drained nutritional drink.

The crowd exchanged glances, speechless.

This absurd scene in the ancient ruins truly felt like a dissonance of time and space.

Still, finding traces of human activity here gave a subtle sense of relief.

Although it was unclear whether they were enemies or allies, at least that feeling of loneliness and fear slightly diminished.

"This proves someone came here before us, possibly Independent Awakened who accidentally entered the Immortal Palace, but most likely other pioneers. From the traces, it looks fresh, no more than a day old."

Gu Jianlin came over, squinting: "There should be other clues nearby."

Tang Ling said lightly, "When we entered the Returning Burial Forest, we didn't see any signs of other people."

Suddenly, Nightmare's eyes turned pale, he stroked the Crystal Ball he held, sneered after a moment, and said: "Nineteen hours ago, a team of more than ten appeared in the Returning Burial Forest, well-equipped and well-trained. Without exception, all were Ascenders, and their Spiritual Concentration was not low, at least above the Third to Fourth Rank."

He added, "They are not affiliated with the association, nor are they the missing Omega."

He finished with a provocative expression.

Gu Jianlin squinted, sensing a strong sense of provocation from him.

Tang Ling hesitated for a bit, typed something on her phone, and handed it to him: "This might be my fault because their divination team's result differed from your profile. And since they backed the Judgement Court's faction, I couldn't help but mock them."

Gu Jianlin was taken aback; indeed, they were like-minded individuals.

Even the parrot's eyes brightened up.

Just then, Ji Xiaoyu's shout came from not far away.

"Come quickly, there's a grave here!"

The crowd looked towards the sound, seeing a black rock wall cut extremely flat, with a giant human face protruding from it, as if a desperate person were howling at the sky, covered in strange patterns.

Below the rock wall was a decaying ancient tree, with a person embedded within it!

It was a naked person, very small in stature, seemingly fused with the ancient tree, their body covered with twisted bark-like patterns, unknown how many years they had lain here, covered with dust, rotting and withered.

It was unclear if it was male or female, but there was no hair, only a child's face.

Numerous grim skulls hung down, eerily sinister.

The black soil was soft, actually burying many ancient broken burial artifacts.

Ji Xiaoyu stood beside the ancient tree, carefree and fearless.

However, the scene was indeed somewhat bizarre, striking at first glance.

Moreover, this unique burial style was unheard of.

Nightmare reminded: "Be cautious, there's an Alchemy Matrix in this tree, blocking my divination. I have no idea what or who this is, whether dead or alive. Don't approach recklessly."

He searched on the ground for a while and found a piece of a broken shield.

Closing his eyes for divination, he frowned, "An artifact from the Late Han Dynasty. From the residual information on it, I vaguely sensed that the tomb's owner died young, no older than twelve."

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Everyone was taken aback; this should be the people who have sought the Mystery of Immortality after intruding into the Qilin Immortal Palace for two thousand years.

"Wow, is this Cao Cao's tomb?"

Ji Xiaoyu looked quite excited, "Isn't it said that Cao Cao's body hasn't been found yet?"

Everyone: "..."

"Take a closer look at this face."

Given that this was the Little Princess, Nightmare suppressed his urge to act out and patiently said, "This is a child's face. Would Cao Cao be a child? Besides, if this were really Cao Cao, he absolutely wouldn't be buried here so simply; he would have intruded into the third layer of the Immortal Palace."

Ji Xiaoyu was unconvinced, "What if this was Cao Cao as a child?"

Nightmare had a look as if struck by lightning.

This logic is beyond absurd.

But actually, from entering the Returning Burial Forest until now, he has been the most outstanding.

With some divination, everyone chose relatively safe routes.

And according to the results of the divination, traces of the missing persons were sought.

Any movement would be quickly divined.

Although careful, it wasn't a bad thing.

Gu Jianlin, at a distance, stared at the child in the tree and squinted his eyes.

For him, this was truly novel.

Others have entered the Qilin Immortal Palace before.

Only he was here for the first time.

During this time, he mostly spent familiarizing himself with this world, absorbing the knowledge left by his father.

Tang Ling glanced at him.

"What's up?"

Gu Jianlin asked casually.

"If you don't start showing your capabilities, our places will be replaced."

Tang Ling's expression was serious.

Gu Jianlin raised an eyebrow, "Then how do you know I'm not incapable?"

Tang Ling replied without hesitation, "Because I've heard how amazing Professor Gu Ci'an is, so his son shouldn't be bad either, especially since you've already written about my great-grandfather, haven't you?"

Gu Jianlin smiled silently.

In this half-hour, he had already digested it almost completely.

So, yes, it's time to start.

He closed his eyes, recalling the knowledge his father left him in his mind.

Channeling his father's behavior and logic.

Portraying, sketching.

When he opened his eyes again, in front of him seemed to appear a refined and weathered middle-aged man.

Like a ghost that didn't exist, standing beside him.

A 3/7 hair parting, a cigarette in his mouth, with a smile full of mischief.

Gu Ci'an.

A person he imagined.

"This thing is called a tree burial, in modern terms it could also be called Schrodinger's tree burial. The person is still alive when buried, but once the ritual begins, it's uncertain. This should be the son of some noble of the late Han Dynasty, suffering from an incurable disease, with only the power of the Ancient God Clan able to save him."

Gu Jianlin and Gu Ci'an said in unison, "Once the tree burial ritual is performed, the person's life or death becomes an unknown, and he likely consumed the Ancient God's Blood in his lifetime, although it's unclear which grade of Ancient God's Blood it was. It could be the Ancestor, the Primordial, or even... a Supreme."

"Be cautious, no one knows what the tree burial will turn him into."

They paused, "Rotten to this degree, he should be emerging soon."

Silence.

Everyone turned to look at the young man at the back, utterly shocked.

Of course, Gu Ci'an did not exist.

Only Gu Jianlin stood there alone.

And only his voice echoed in the silence.

What truly shocked people was how this guy knew!

Chapter 314 - 163: The Secret of Tang Ling

In the distant shadow of the trees, Wan Runtu heard the term tree burial and was obviously stunned for a moment.

Although many outsiders believe he is a reckless brute, and indeed he didn't have the slightest academic insight over the years, in reality, he has tumbled around the Ancient God Realm for many years, accumulating considerable experience, no less than those so-called archaeology experts.

The difference is, he can't fully summarize and organize what he knows.

If Chen Bojun were here, he could accurately explain the historical origin of tree burial, the principles of this bizarre live burial ceremony, and tell you why it's dangerous and how to avoid it.

But Wan Runtu could only say four words: Holy shit, run!

But he knew that little brat from the Gu Family was right.

"Not bad."

He muttered, "Even recognize tree burial, no wonder he's so cocky."

Although unwilling, he still took out a small booklet, listing the names of the rescue team.

He ticked off Gu Jianlin's name.

Just like in kindergarten, where good performance by a child would be rewarded with candy.

In the end, after the mission, merits would be awarded based on this.

"Let's see what you guys do later."

The next moment, he once again revealed a crazed, madman-like expression.

Sometimes sneering, sometimes numb, sometimes hideous.

Clearly, none of the team members present had ever heard of the term tree burial, and their expressions were all very bewildered.

Gu Jianlin wasn't intentionally trying to show off.

But wanted to let Old Gu play some of his rightful role.

Can't let the paper money burn in vain.

"Tree burial?"

Nightmare's expression slightly changed, questioning, "How come I've never heard of it? How do you know about it? Profile alone wouldn't accurately name this type of burial, unless you..."

He didn't dare to finish his sentence because he feared getting cut.

But before he finished speaking, a cold iron sword was already placed on his neck.

"Do you really want to be the brainless villain getting face-slapped in a novel? If you're finding faults, at least find something decent. Since you're already a Fifth Rank Prophet, why not divine the truth yourself?"

Somehow, Tang Ling's frosty white hair turned flaming red, eyes filled with arrogance and disdain, chin up as she said, "I'm the leader of this operation, don't provoke trouble."

Gu Jianlin was a bit surprised; he found this girl seemed to change not because she needed to fight.

Her reason for changing color was actually her temper!

White hair turns red instantly, and she becomes a raging elder sister, ready to draw her sword at teammates for a minor disagreement.

The crowd, seeing this red hair, fell silent like cicadas in winter.

No one dared to say anything sarcastic.

"Hmm... I understand."

Nightmare cleared his throat and awkwardly took a step back.

Tang Ling still didn't let go, pointing her sword at him, "Hmm?"

Nightmare looked at the peculiar eyes of his teammates around him, face turning beet red.

Then he took a deep breath: "Sorry, Team Leader! I was wrong!"

Tang Ling squinted her vermillion eyes, "Hmm?"

Nightmare looked extremely uncomfortable, bowed deeply: "Team Leader, Vice Leader, I'm sorry, I was wrong!"

Tang Ling satisfactorily sheathed her iron sword, saying calmly: "Be careful next time."

The other rescue team members seemed to take this scene as routine.

Gu Jianlin whispered, "Is she always like this?"

The team members looked at each other, and surprisingly no one dared to discuss this raging elder sister privately.

In the end, it was Dawn, the usually good guy, who said: "Little brother, how do you think she got into the first echelon? It's because she beat everyone below the top ten, making no one in the top ten accept

her challenge anymore, just like you stepped over the Little Princess into the second echelon. Otherwise, how could people acknowledge?"

Ji Xiaoyu next to them was so angry she bit her handkerchief; in her eyes, they were just a pair of shameless lovers.

The hatred level reached unprecedeted heights.

Tang Ling was fine, just needed intense resistance, and she couldn't do anything to you.

Sword Sect, Ghost Slayer, Ancient Martial.

These three Inheritance Paths had no ability other than fighting and were called the three great illusionary gods.

Gu Jianlin, on the other hand, was rather terrifying. He was a damn Divine, able to drain you to paralysis, surprisingly mastering the absurd Breathing Technique of the Realm of Freedom, making you completely powerless to resist.

Then you'd be strung up on a lamp post.

The key is this guy was patient; the more you resisted, the harsher he beat you.

And he enjoyed it tirelessly.

With the Little Princess' intelligence, how could she know this young man was using her as a living target for practice?

"Focus your attention and keep away from the surrounding trees."

Tang Ling ordered.

Gu Jianlin glanced at her, casually asked, "Is it necessary to be so fierce?"

Tang Ling glanced at him, but didn't seem as fierce as before, and said calmly: "This mission still calculates merits at the end. You don't have a growth-type Mythical Weapon yet, do you?"

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

This woman actually looked out for him.

The next things were simple; since discovering ancient relics, it was just one word.

Move!

Everything buried here was valuable, and maybe it could uncover history about the Ancient God Clan.

Among these people, Tang Ling was surprisingly most interested in these burial items, packing them all up.

Chapter 315 - 163 Tang Ling's Secret\_2

The movements were cautious yet highly professional.

But the others were different; their focus was on their own safety and the traces of the missing persons.

Many of them were here under orders.

Most likely, the forces supporting them had issued directives demanding the missing people be found, no matter what.

As a result, each of them was somewhat anxious.

Only Tang Ling was focused on collecting Merit.

Gu Jianlin observed this woman. He had been pondering something for a while.

Tang Ling, clearly a Sword Tomb successor, a student of the Catastrophe, esteemed by the President, with exceptional innate talent—frankly put, a true daughter of heaven.

Yet she dressed extremely simply, wearing a plain white jacket, a camisole, and a pair of ultra-short shorts.

The total cost of her entire outfit might not even exceed two hundred bucks.

In comparison to Youzhu, the difference in cost was astonishing.

Even her phone seemed quite dated.

Yet, the cosmetics she pulled out from her bag were high-end products.

Though still inferior compared to Youzhu's, at least they weren't garbage.

It didn't make any sense.

By anyone's standards, she should be the kind of person who has everything handed to her, commanding the world as she pleased.

When constructing a profile of her personality, Gu Jianlin was struck by a pervasive sense of discord.

It might be due to frugality, but the odds of that were slim.

She simply spent her limited money wisely, on necessities.

So the question was: Why is this girl broke?

And considering how much she spent on games, she didn't seem poor at all.

Suddenly, eerie laughter echoed throughout the dense forest.

"Who's laughing!?"

The crowd jolted in alarm, scanning their surroundings.

Without anyone noticing, the mist in the Returning Burial Forest had thickened dramatically, and the sinister laughter grew heavier.

Without hesitation, Dawn released golden light, enveloping everyone.

Poison immunity.

Life Force enhancement.

Mental interference blocked.

Increased resistance to physical damage.

The fortune of all team members received a positive boost.

Meanwhile, Nightmare started divination with the Crystal Ball, muttering incantations softly.

At the same time, a silver-white halo lit up beneath their feet, Danger foreknowledge shared across the team!

"Feel free to use your powers; I'll prepare secret medicine to replenish your spirituality,"

The Poison Master uttered faintly.

"Mountain Ghost, Demon Blade, Blue Whale."

Tang Ling issued commands indifferently, "The three of you are responsible for support and defense."

As for the fighting, they had three powerhouses for that.

Tang Ling, Gu Jianlin, and Ji Xiaoyu.

The team allocation was perfectly executed.

At this moment, Gu Jianlin seemed to sense something. Lacking a suitable weapon, he simply picked up a big rock from the ground, tested its weight, and slowly approached a withered ancient tree.

Tang Ling noticed this, her vermillion eyes narrowing as she tightened her grip on the Iron Sword.

Ji Xiaoyu was brimming with excitement, cracking her knuckles.

The child buried in the tree hung its head, seemingly still asleep.

At that moment, everyone heard faint whispers.

It seemed to say: Come!

Come here!

Summoning his courage, Gu Jianlin moved forward first, earning silent admiration from the crowd for his outrageous bravery.

"I'm here."

He said coldly, "What do you want?"

In truth, it wasn't that he was fearless; his confidence wasn't entirely firm either.

Though he felt assured that nothing would go wrong, he couldn't help but feel uneasy.

After all, this was a thousand-year-old corpse before him—saying he had no fear would be a lie.

Even if Gu Jianlin instantly regained the full power of Qilin Venerable, he was still just a seventeen-year-old boy. No matter how precocious, there were limits to his mental resilience.

Even the special training he underwent with Candle Dragon Venerable hadn't changed that.

After all, she was a peerless beauty; no matter how solemn and majestic she appeared, she didn't trigger actual dread.

But a corpse lying before you, with the potential to reanimate?

That was a different kind of unnerving.

He had to keep silently repeating to himself:

You inherited the power of an Ancient Supreme.

You are the legendary Qilin Venerable!

You are invincible!

The parrot screeched mockingly, "Afraid of a ghost?!"

However, at that very moment, the child sleeping in the tree suddenly opened its blood-red eyes, thrusting its head out while issuing a beast-like roar, grotesque and horrifying!

"Oh, hell!"

Gu Jianlin genuinely felt like giving this horrific creature a certificate of achievement.

Congratulations on unlocking the achievement: You scared Qilin Venerable!

Take that honor and die!

Gu Jianlin's forehead flared with a pale Ghost Fire, which suddenly turned pitch black.

In his moment of terror, he immediately activated Ghost Transformation, entering a rampage on the spot!

With a deafening bang, the child's head exploded violently.

It shattered like a watermelon, but what gushed out was black blood!

Gu Jianlin instantly dodged backward, ensuring that none of the foul liquid touched him.

But the more pressing issue was that the ghostly entity remained alive!

Despite its head being shattered, the child forcibly tore apart the decayed tree bark with its hands, crawling out from within stark naked. Its wrinkled, withered body was drenched in black blood.

Utterly revolting.

"Oh, turns out it's a boy."

A tall, slender shadow darted forward, red hair flowing in the air.

Tang Ling lunged ahead, gripping the Iron Sword tightly as it buzzed with vibrations. In an instant, countless strikes overlapped like illusions, erupting in a conflagration of devastating force. The violent Sword Qi surged like tidal waves!

With a thundering roar, the boy's body was slashed into fragments before being torn apart by the rampant Sword Qi!

Chapter 316 - 163 Tang Ling's Secret\_3

This is the Sword Sect's damage output!

However, in the next instant, the soil was suddenly torn apart.

A pair of pale, withered hands abruptly grabbed her sneakers.

As the blood-stained dirt sprayed into the air, a pale skull emerged.

Gu Jianlin's quick reflexes allowed him to raise his right hand, which seemed to be enveloped by the Spiritual Body of the Kirin Arm!

At his fingertips, an intense black cross-shaped flash pulsed!

"Void Flash!"

The parrot screeched.

BOOM!

A rich black cross-shaped flash flickered briefly, and a jet-black beam of light pierced through the dense fog in an instant.

The pale skull was suddenly penetrated, and eerie black spell marks crawled over its entire body like living creatures, quickly causing it to rot and decay into a shriveled corpse.

Tang Ling widened her beautiful eyes in astonishment. As one of the Catastrophe students, she was knowledgeable.

This was actually a combined skill.

Ji Xiaoyu, having been a victim of this ability last night, could deeply relate as well!

At the same time, a similar monster appeared under her feet but was instantly shattered with a decisive stomp.

"Watch out for the trees!"

Nightmare shouted, "They're all buried living corpses!"

The withered ancient trees suddenly split open, and one pale, grotesque skull after another emerged.

Each skull bore a chilling, sinister grin!

Dawn and Poison Master were protected at the center.

At this moment, it was time for the various Inheritance Paths to showcase their powers.

As one of the Ghost Slayer paths, the Demon Blade was equally hailed as the King of Damage Output.

She was a Fourth-Rank Shura, with speed so incredible that her movements were almost impossible to track.

The blade light surged like a tide.

All the ancient trees were severed by her, and shattered corpse fragments and black blood spattered everywhere.

Blue Whale then activated its thought ability, directly pulling out the heads that protruded from the soil.

It was as though pulling radishes—straightforward and efficient.

Then, clenching both hands tightly—BANG!

All the heads exploded mid-air into fragmented pieces.

"Wait, don't kill them!"

Just then, Mountain Ghost suddenly shouted, "There are at least tens of thousands of corpses buried in this pit! It's not just our team that has come here—others have died here before!"

Now partially transformed into a Ghost Person, a pale Ghost Fire burned on his forehead.

A flaming spiritual body, resembling the head of a lion, floated behind him, roaring ferociously.

Its size was over three meters tall, exuding a commanding presence!

"Rise!"

With a loud command, rustling sounds came from within the dense forest as decaying corpses began to rise, covered entirely in black spell marks.

They moved like zombies, emitting monstrous growls before instantly clashing with the ghostly creatures, tearing and biting at each other in a blood-soaked frenzy.

The group felt a chilling sensation on their scalps at the mention of tens of thousands of corpses!

Gu Jianlin, however, remained focused on observing the Fourth-Order Cloud Monarch's abilities.

"Envious?"

Tang Ling cast him a sidelong glance.

Gu Jianlin didn't respond. Instead, something suddenly caught his attention.

Tang Ling had previously warned them to stay away from the trees.

It was clear she had already anticipated the source of the danger.

"Did you know this was a tree burial?"

Gu Jianlin suddenly asked.

Tang Ling pouted. "I didn't know; wasn't it you who told me?"

Gu Jianlin clearly didn't believe her.

"Where's Instructor Wan? Call Instructor Wan!"

"There are too many undead creatures here—we can't handle this alone."

"We have to find a way to retreat!"

Given the combat power of this rescue team, they weren't entirely helpless.

The sheer volume of enemies was overwhelming, but at worst, they could simply escape.

Moreover, they weren't really panicked.

After all, a seasoned Instructor Wan was waiting outside.

But at that very moment, a piercing scream erupted.

They saw Wan Runtu coughing up blood, surrounded by several monsters emerging from the trees.

He looked utterly drained and gravely injured.

The group: "..."

Oh no, an over-actor!

This performance was too fake—the monsters hadn't even touched him yet!

Clearly, Instructor Wan was doing it on purpose. The living corpses swarmed over him, biting fiercely.

Despite being made of flesh and blood, the sound of metal grinding echoed as they bit him.

Even after the corpses broke their own teeth, they couldn't even scratch him.

And yet Wan Runtu continued wailing as if he were being dismembered alive until countless corpses drowned him entirely.

The roaring ceased.

Watching this scene, Gu Jianlin's restless emotions slightly lost control. "Has he always been like this?"

Tang Ling shook her head. "This means that Instructor Wan thinks this level of danger doesn't require him to intervene and that we can handle it. If we fail here, we're worthless wastes who deserve to die."

Suddenly, Ji Xiaoyu shouted, "Everyone, bow your heads and leave it to me!"

The group momentarily froze before revealing excited expressions.

The Little Princess had another resounding nickname besides Absolute Poison King.

Duobao Child!

As for the meaning? Just take it literally!

Being elites, the group didn't hesitate to crouch down and bow their heads.

Ji Xiaoyu then pulled a handle resembling a fire poker from her skirt pocket and forcefully injected spirituality into it!

With a tremendous BOOM!

The fire poker burst into blazing flames, forming a forty-meter-long fiery blade that unleashed rolling waves of searing heat, cutting through the enemy hordes like a whirlwind.

Mythical Weapon, Purgatory Ghost Slash.

—Unleashed!

With a single swing, scorching fire left a heart-stopping mark amidst the thick fog.

Simultaneously, columns of blistering flames erupted from the depths of the ground, exploding violently!

"Run!"

The group hastily retreated; this Mythical Weapon clearly spared no distinction between friend or foe!

BOOM!

Flames engulfed the entire forest, detonating into a massive mushroom cloud.

Ji Xiaoyu's wild laughter echoed through the dense fog as she shouted gleefully, "Now you all know who the true ruler is, don't you? I conquered Buzhou Mountain when I was seven—what about you?"

Indeed, the brat hadn't been giving her all earlier.

Though such a Mythical Weapon wasn't something to use recklessly.

Unless she wanted to blow herself up, too.

Yet in that fleeting moment, Gu Jianlin abruptly turned his head towards the dense forest's depths.

"There's someone."

He suddenly said, "I detected a Life Rhythm."

Chapter 317 - 164: Suspicions of a Traitor

I have to say, although Ji Xiaoyu is a bit mischievous, she indeed comes in handy at critical times.

After all, she is the biological granddaughter of the President. No matter how unruly her character is, it's impossible for her to deliberately scheme against her teammates. Besides, she probably doesn't have the intellect for that. Moreover, she's a walking treasure chest, and to this day, no one knows how many Mythical Weapons she carries.

Her name is always on the bounty list in the Dark World.

Although her bounty is zero.

But everyone knows she's the most expensive.

Looking at the petite silhouette with her hands on her hips amidst the raging flames, everyone felt a strong sense of security.

Of course, there was also a tinge of guilt.

They had to rely on a child to resolve the crisis this time.

Yet in the next moment, Ji Xiaoyu came charging out of the flames, yelling: "Run fast!"

Behind her, a horde of living corpses crawled out from the dead trees or the soil. Even though their bodies were being incinerated by the flames, they still howled and chased after her, making for an extremely horrifying scene.

Most critically, after being burned by the flames, those living corpses emitted a stench!

No, it was a downright stench!

Those unaware might think the Little Princess had poisoned them again.

"Run fast!"

Everyone was an elite, and they knew what needed to be done at this time.

Even someone like Gu Jianlin, with his defiant personality, couldn't withstand it: "Direction six o'clock, 115 meters."

Tang Ling dashed alongside him, surprised: "Your Life Perception reaches that far?"

Gu Jianlin responded expressionlessly: "It's a gift from my father."

By now, he had learned to push any mishaps onto Old Gu.

Although the others didn't understand the reason, they could only run toward the six o'clock direction.

The Little Princess was running at the back.

At this moment, Tang Ling and Gu Jianlin slowed down simultaneously.

Ji Xiaoyu ran past them, bewildered, unsure why they had suddenly stopped.

However, in the next instant, both of them raised their legs and kicked her on the butt!

Their actions were perfectly synchronized and standard, almost exuding the aura of world-class football champions.

Uninformed observers might think they had planned it in advance!

Bam!

Ji Xiaoyu's exclamation got stuck in her throat as she drew a graceful arc in the air and fell face-first into the ground.

Fortunately, her path in Ancient Martial made her skin tough and thick-skinned, so she wasn't hurt and felt no pain.

But she felt utterly humiliated!

Just as she was about to get angry, she suddenly realized she had landed at the front.

Looking back, the horde of living corpses had already overwhelmed her former position.

"Hurry up, don't just stand there!"

Everyone raced past her: "Those two are staying behind to cover us!"

"Sorry, Little Princess!"

Dawn grabbed the Little Princess by the scruff of her neck and sprinted like crazy.

Gu Jianlin glanced back at the departing group, saying expressionlessly: "Feels good."

Tang Ling picked up the Iron Sword and blandly said: "Quite satisfying."

Though they didn't like that kid, she was indeed very useful.

With their pride, they would never let a twelve-year-old child be the rear guard.

"As usual, you take the left, and I'll take the right, fight for five minutes then withdraw."

Behind Gu Jianlin, a sinister and terrifying ghost energy surged, clusters of pale ghost fires ignited, ghastly golden Ghost Hands tore through the Void, mysterious black talismans were scattered across the palms, and ancient iron chains adorned the wrists.

When these four Ghost Hands clenched fiercely, it seemed as if Evil Spirits were roaring.

"Mm."

Tang Ling responded indifferently, then suddenly remembered something, seriously hanging her backpack and the pouch full of Funerary Goods on his Spirit Ghost Hand at the back.

Like dancing a graceful waltz, she wielded the Iron Sword, plunging into the horde of living corpses.

Sword Qi swept across like a storm!

Even in his berserk state, Gu Jianlin was astonished by this operation.

"Just fight for five minutes, no need to go all out."

Tang Ling's proud voice echoed amidst the corpse horde, relaxed and leisurely.

Boom!

Gu Jianlin unleashed a Dark Shock, obliterating countless living corpses in the dense black light.

"I have a question, when your first team came in, was it the same situation?"

He suddenly asked.

Tang Ling swung her sword, beheading a living corpse: "Something like that, but what we encountered wasn't a tree burial, but some petrified sculptures, and those living corpses emerged from the sculptures, including one that was an Ancient Ancestor."

Gu Jianlin gave an acknowledgment and then turned to look aside.

Alright, it's your turn, Old Gu.

Come forth.

The Old Gu he imagined, grinning mischievously, said mysteriously: "My good son, now you realize how important your well-read and knowledgeable old dad is, right? What Tang Ling's group encountered is called Stone Burial, and yours is Tree Burial, but they have one thing in common."

"After thousands of years, unless a large number of living people die here, they cannot awaken."

He paused: "Unless someone temporarily awakened them, after being forcibly awakened, these living corpses naturally become mindless, terrifying monsters, extremely aggressive."

Gu Jianlin gazed at the fog-laden sky above, lost in thought.

"I see."

"Hurry and get out of the way! I want to return and fight!"

"I, Ji Xiaoyu, have never bowed to anyone my whole life, who wants those two to rescue me!"

"What are you dawdling around here for? If you want to fight, fight; if you want to retreat, retreat! So annoying!"

The brat whined impatiently, biting a handkerchief in frustration.

However, everyone was serious, and nobody paid her any mind, focusing their attention on what lay ahead.

Because ahead was a roaring river with scattered large boulders and dense shrubs and bonfires burning on the ground, alongside six tents.

Ten mercenaries raised their automatic rifles, aiming at them.

Each of their eyes was as sharp as an eagle's, evidently on the Overlord Path.

Outside the tents, identical twin women wearing black tight-fitting combat uniforms were strapping multiple Tachi on their backs, looking nervous and scared, remaining vigilant at all times.

Lastly, an elderly man in a kimono and a handsome young boy stood.

Nightmare raised a hand to signal his teammates not to advance for now, and then looked up and asked calmly: "Who's the leader among you?"

The old man in the kimono stood up, with a gentle smile, saying: "It's me. My name is Jing Shangxiu, from the Ying Province. This is my pioneering team, and we came in from the sea."

His statement carried a hint of flattering intent.

Because he clearly sensed that the opposing team had unquestionable strength and configuration.

Nightmare, however, frowned: "Yingzhou people? Through whose channel did you come?"

Jing Shangxiu hesitated for a moment, with his teammates equally tense.

"Ether Association, A-rank investigator, Omega Sequence ranked fourteenth, codenamed Nightmare."

Nightmare said coldly: "We're conducting a classified mission, and we need you to report your identity and the channel through which you entered the Immortal Palace, otherwise we will treat you as enemies and eliminate you on the spot. Even if some of you manage to escape to the real world, you will still be listed on the Ether Association's wanted list."

He paused: "I have marked your spirituality."

"I suggest not resisting."

Dawn said gently: "You won't be able to beat us."

Meanwhile, Demon Blade and Blue Whale started stepping forward, their expressions indifferent.

Especially Mountain Ghost, who began picking up the remaining household items on the ground, ready to cast a curse.

As for Ji Xiaoyu, whether to fight or not, she was nearly driven crazy.

Jing Shangxiu and his subordinates didn't expect to encounter members of the Ether Association, which was an unfortunate turn of events.

"I came through Mr. Liu's channel."

He sighed and admitted truthfully: "I, along with my student and a pair of nieces, came from Ying Province. These ten mercenaries were recruited from the black market."

"We can assure you that everyone here is clean and by no means wanted criminals. We have not harmed any members of the Ether Association since entering here; we're just here for treasure hunting."

"If you require anything, we can provide assistance free of charge."

Nightmare exchanged glances with his teammates, pondering whether to simply eliminate this group.

Because it's quite possible they were the ones who attacked the first team.

Especially in a place like the Qilin Immortal Palace, where there is no order, law, or bottom line.

When it comes to profit, anything can be done.

If you sacrifice your safety for others' kindness, you might end up being the one devoured.

Meanwhile, footsteps echoed from deep within the dense forest.

Gu Jianlin, carrying the bags of the irritable sister, walked over expressionlessly: "What's going on?"

Tang Ling followed him, using tree bark to disdainfully wipe her sword edge.

Seeing the two return, none of the group had any particular reaction.

The combat prowess of these two was the fiercest in the team, with no chance of them perishing in the living corpse horde.

After a simple briefing, Tang Ling turned to the young man: "What next?"

Gu Jianlin considered it, glancing at the crowd, and asked one question: "While you were here, were you attacked by living corpses, be it from inside trees or sculptures?"

Nightmare, though inclined to contest him, took out the Crystal Ball, eyes turning white.

Teammates remained on high alert.

If they showed any sign of lying, they were ready to strike.

Jing Shangxiu frowned and answered: "No, we haven't been attacked by living corpses. Instead, we encountered several mutated beasts; we just came out from an Ancient Ruin."

Their subordinates exchanged glances, evidently unaware that the living corpses here would genuinely attack people.

Gu Jianlin squinted his eyes, finding this quite intriguing.

When the first team of eleven entered, they coincidentally faced living corpses.

And this rescue team encountered living corpses as well.

In other words, there's a traitor.

"Shall we camp here tonight?"

Tang Ling glanced at him.

Gu Jianlin nodded: "Okay."

Chapter 318 - 165 Moon Princess: He Can't Make It Without Me

Qilin Immortal Palace, Extreme Cold Cliff.

"Ha!"

The Moon Princess gripped the blood-red Tang Blade in both hands, disappearing like a phantom and leaving behind fragmented afterimages.

Dozens of frost-covered giant wolves hadn't even comprehended what was happening before countless crisscrossing blood-colored flashes severed their heads. Subsequently, their bodies split apart, and frost-like blood erupted from the wounds.

In just a few minutes, she had carved a bloody path with her formidable personal combat prowess.

Occasionally, fractured wolves dropped icy blue Crystal Stones from their bodies.

"Go, boss, you're the best! Keep pushing forward!"

The Butcher cheered her on from behind, enthusiastically collecting materials along the way. Within less than ten minutes, he'd already filled six baskets, resembling a farmer returning with a full harvest, simple-minded and honest.

It didn't matter if it was the Ether Association or the You Ying Group.

The Moon Princess's talent was astonishing to all.

First off, she possessed phenomenal innate talent.

Moreover, her sword skills were masterful, her movements nimble and agile, fully exploiting the abilities of the Ghost Slayer Path.

Most importantly, she was incredibly familiar with the Qilin Immortal Palace.

This was thanks to her mentor, who had trained her intensively in the Immortal Palace for quite some time.

Such monsters were nothing to her.

She could wipe them all out alone and didn't even need teammates.

Meanwhile, other candidates could only stand by awkwardly, glaring helplessly. Everyone was clearly of the Fourth Rank, but why was there such a vast disparity? On her side, the operation was as ferocious as a tiger, but upon checking their own score, it was zero and five.

As for her, it was mindlessly rampant slaughter, as though the living corpses opposing her were mere cabbages.

"Hmph, what's so great about her? Usually, she pretends to be aloof and doesn't bother with anyone. But now, inside the Immortal Palace, she's more enthusiastic than anyone else. Isn't it just to please the Third Master?" Judith sneered sarcastically from behind. She was a girl from North America and one of the candidates in the Dark World.

"Yeah, I used to think she was actually cold."

Zhao Enmin snorted beside her, "Didn't lots of people pursue her before? Yet that little minx always claimed she had a boyfriend and came here just to earn enough before going home to marry him. At the time, I didn't believe it. I mean, how could someone who holds their own in the Dark World have such simple ambitions? Now, look at her — wasn't that all a facade? Pretending to be above it all, acting like advancing isn't a big deal, and now look at her."

"I'm more curious whether those people chasing her were blind."

A teenage girl murmured beside them, "She always wears a mask. What if she's ugly underneath?"

"Then she'd have to go to Enmin's country for plastic surgery, hahaha."

"Wasn't she hard to find recently? Maybe she's already been, who knows."

"Tsk, tsk, tsk."

It's unclear why, but everyone undeniably disliked people who pretended to be idle on the surface yet secretly worked hard behind the scenes. The moment someone like that appeared, they'd immediately become a target for unanimous mockery.

"Focus! We're in a pioneering zone!"

Ning Chen frowned and sent them a cold glare.

The group instantly fell silent.

This was the Third Master's personal guardian, who typically wouldn't involve himself in their business.

But not intervening now wasn't an option.

Because the Butcher was already walking over.

The giant-like man strode forward, each step causing the ice beneath him to shiver and crack open fissures.

"My boss is way better-looking than you few sows."

He grinned chillingly, "Dare to yap off again in private, and I'll twist your heads off."

The green tea girls turned pale with fright. Despite being handpicked as candidates, they were far from mere pretty faces; each one was a venomous rose of the Dark World—ruthless and lethal.

During missions, they never hesitated to sacrifice some charm, ensnaring men driven by lust.

Then, when their usefulness ended, they'd promptly kill them.

They could even offer themselves to power-players to obtain resources.

One night they'd call them "Dad," and by the next day, after squeezing every drop of value, they'd mock them as "three centimeters."

But the Moon Princess stood apart from this crowd.

She never stooped to such dirty deeds for personal gain.

Nor did she use her beauty to obtain advantages.

This set her far apart from the majority of women within the Dark World, inevitably making her a target of exclusion.

Still, the Moon Princess's style, emerging unstained from filth, naturally attracted many admirers.

Though she wore a mask that concealed most of her face, her eyes alone refuted any possibility of her being unattractive.

What's more, given the ease of uncovering purchase records in the Dark World, it was evident.

Expensive makeup and skincare items—bought like they cost nothing.

Within the entirety of the You Ying Group, the Moon Princess was considered untouchable.

It would be odd not to attract jealous criticism.

Still, these detractors limited their insults to private murmurs.

Setting the Moon Princess herself aside.

Not even the Butcher was someone they dared provoke.

Rumor had it that both the Moon Princess and the Butcher were highly valued rising stars by the upper echelons.

The former required no discussion.

The latter, however, had recently surged ahead, achieving a record-breaking streak of 167 consecutive victories in boxing tournaments.

Opponents left pulverized beyond recognition—the scenes were staggeringly brutal.

No one understood what had led to his sudden explosive strength.

Outsiders even joked that this brute had received the Supreme's inheritance.

But that notion was laughed off.

What Supreme would entertain a brainless idiot like him?

Boom!

In less than ten minutes, the pack of mutated wolves had been entirely slaughtered.

Frozen peaks shattered into fragments, tumbling down the cliffs.

A frost-white snow lotus emerged into view.

Cold Frost Snow Lotus—a critical material for advancing to Fifth Rank via the Ghost Slayer Path.

The Moon Princess picked up the Cold Frost Snow Lotus and stored it in her backpack, showing no hint of excitement in her eyes. She didn't even realize her prior slash could've easily destroyed it outright.

She held the blood-red Tang Blade carefully, tapping at the ice.

The shattered ice revealed a crimson piece of molten lava.

"Wonderful, I found it."

She murmured, using gloved hands to extract the molten lava and place it carefully into an alchemy stone box. Then she wrapped it in a pink gift box, secured it in her backpack.

This was Corrosive Magma—a vital material for advancing to Fourth Rank via the Divine Path.

"Achoo."

The Moon Princess sneezed adorably, pulling her white down jacket tightly around herself and retying her scarf.

The rules of the Ancient God Realm differed greatly from the real world, with highly unpredictable weather. Traveling just a few kilometers might mean drastically varied climates—one person wearing shorts while another bundles up in thick coats.

If two groups crossed paths in such conditions, they'd subconsciously glance at each other.

Then silently curse one another as idiots.

The Butcher, carrying his baskets, approached and excitedly said, "Great job, boss! The Frost Winter Stones you've collected far exceed the quota. They should earn enough points to exchange for the Time Worm. Your sword skills are highly polished; tomorrow, we could hone them further under the guidance of Bitter River Master. You've already reached Master Level!"

He gave a simple grin, "That makes you the Fifth Rank Moon Master soon enough!"

The Moon Princess simply nodded, her expression grave, showing little cheer.

"Boss, don't relax—keep at it!"

The Butcher paused, "After all, it's His will!"

Qilin Venerable.

A decree from an Ancient Supreme.

The Moon Princess felt mounting pressure, puffing her cheeks and using lip-reading to say, "Are you certain He genuinely intends to make me a Female Sacrifice? What exactly about me does He like? Can't I change it? I used to think there's reproductive isolation between Ancient Gods and humans until I learned about this Female Sacrifice thing—it's terrifying."

The Butcher scratched his head, "I'm not sure; it's just a suspicion. But considering how beautiful you are—if you bulked up to my size, maybe He'd reconsider!"

The Moon Princess gave him a look as though he were an idiot, "Then I'd rather die."

The Butcher sighed helplessly, "Who knows what He's thinking. I even tried pleading on your behalf."

The Moon Princess's gaze turned serious, "Don't do anything so dangerous next time."

"Got it! But, boss, you saved me after all."

The Butcher scratched his head, "I was terrified at the time, thought I was going to die there. But unexpectedly, He suddenly changed His mind and ordered me to protect you well. He meant that you can't keep slacking off—you must focus on advancing, not romance."

He hesitated, his expression grave, "Otherwise, He'll break up the lovebirds and drag you into being a Female Sacrifice!"

The Moon Princess froze, her single strand of hair standing upright amid the cold wind.

"I never thought that in the Extraordinary World, I'd be forced to work hard..."

Being a Female Sacrifice was out of the question.

Even if the other party was an Ancient Supreme.

This life, it was impossible.

She would die first!

The Butcher considered aloud and used lip-reading to say, "Perhaps the Supreme has His deeper reasons. We, the Divine Servants, and you—He might be cultivating us to act in the human world, doing tasks for Him."

The Moon Princess faintly replied, "I understand."

"Which isn't too bad, really. After all, the Scholar mentioned that the Supreme is learning about humanity. His reign as the Lord of the World isn't far off. To Him, we hold some value—me, the Scholar, and the Pharmacist Old Thief—if we disappoint Him, He might outright devour us."

The Butcher said, "As for you, boss, you're the only clean one among us. In His eyes, you're of significant importance. But if you keep slacking off, you might really get sent off as a Female Sacrifice."

Life wasn't easy. The Moon Princess sighed.

"I see, I won't disappoint Him."

After a moment of reflection, she asked, "By the way, where's the Third Master?"

The Butcher's expression subtly shifted, answering, "Seems like He's meeting a contact. Reportedly, Fourth Master's people near the Returning Burial Forest found an Ancient Ruin likely tied to the Wedge. The situation is tense, and preparations are happening in secret."

"The Returning Burial Forest?"

The Moon Princess's gaze flickered briefly, "Let's go there too!"

The Butcher froze, thrilled, "Now?"

He thought his boss had finally matured.

Upon hearing news of the Qilin Wedge, she was proactively heading to the scene, ready to make achievements for the Supreme.

The Moon Princess said nothing, merely turned, slung her pack, and began to walk away.

"That guy's so solitary and stubborn; hanging around the Ether Association, he's bound to face exclusion."

She paused, "Without me, he'll struggle."

Ancient God Realm, Returning Burial Forest.

At this moment, Gu Jianlin sat beside the bonfire, staring pensively into the flames.

"Here."

Tang Ling handed him a piece of roasted beef leg, tearing off a small slice with her slender, pale fingers, and held it up to his mouth, speaking lightly, "Want to eat?"

Chapter 319 - 166: Gold Toilet

Gu Jianlin was no stranger to being fed by beautiful women. Back during those months he was hospitalized after the car accident, lying in bed hooked to an IV and unable to move, it was the icy beauty from his family who fed him mouthfuls of food.

"You're actually in the mood to eat at a time like this?"

He took the chunk of roasted beef leg handed to him, popped it into his mouth, and said indifferently.

"Life is short. You have to enjoy it while you can."

Tang Ling's long hair, frosty white as snow, cascaded over her shoulders. After finishing the roasted beef leg, she pulled out a wet wipe to clean her glossy, ruby-red lips. Then, taking out a compact mirror, she meticulously reapplied her lipstick. "After all, both Nightmare and Dawn have confirmed it's not poisoned, so eating this is definitely better than consuming the Poison Master's secret medicine."

When a rescue team sets out, they don't carry these kinds of frivolous supplies.

That's because they have an Alchemist on their team.

The secret medicine could provide the body with everything it needs, though it lacked any flavor.

After a brief discussion, the team still decided to make camp here for a short rest.

Their greatest confidence originally came from Instructor Wan.

Now, it was clear Instructor Wan was merely pretending, obviously testing them.

The living corpses' combat power wasn't particularly strong, but what they lacked in strength, they made up for in numbers. No one could handle them all. If too much energy was expended, they might not be able to handle any later surprises.

If someone launched a sneak attack when they were exhausted, the whole team could be wiped out.

At the moment, a few tents had been pitched around the camp. Team members were resting.

But in reality, no one let their guard down, ready to act at any moment.

Across the river, about twenty meters away, were Jing Shangxiu and his team.

Although everyone agreed on camping here for the night,

there was a ten-minute debate on how to deal with the group on the other side.

Mountain Ghost and Blue Whale felt that this mysterious group should just be killed.

But others thought there was no need to kill them—driving them away would suffice.

The two sides couldn't reach an agreement.

In the end, it was Tang Ling who made the final decision: to coexist with them peacefully.

That was Gu Jianlin's suggestion.

It wasn't out of the kindness of being a Holy Mother, but because keeping them alive still had utility.

According to the Yingzhou elder, they were here treasure-hunting because news had spread from the You Ying Group that an Ancient Ruins site near the Returning Burial Forest might contain some rare treasures.

Now the You Ying Group's Master had led his own team inside and driven out all the adventurers within.

Jing Shangxiu was one of those expelled.

So far, they hadn't retrieved much of value, just a few ancient tokens from the ruins.

"Relax, I won't shortchange you! Let's trade item for item! I think these things of yours are worth it!"

Ji Xiaoyu took off the diamond necklace hanging around her neck and threw it over. "This was a birthday gift from my second sister. It came out of the... Assyrian Empire or something. Anyway, it's definitely more than enough to cover the cost of your goodies!"

Jing Shangxiu seemed very eager to curry favor with the association people.

Plus, the Yingzhou people's habit of bowing and scraping made them appear exceedingly humble.

Terrified that one misstep might provoke the other side into killing them outright.

They had also observed that this little girl was no ordinary member of the team and didn't mind offering up goodwill.

Even the roasted beef leg earlier had been their gift.

Ten minutes later, Ji Xiaoyu was holding an archaic and ornate Golden Tripod, as well as a silk scarf made of some special unknown material that had withstood thousands of years without decaying.

"Such generosity, Little Princess!"

"An ancient token from the Assyrian Empire, just given away like that!"

"I recall that thing has a special effect—it helps accumulate spirituality."

The teammates immediately started lavishing her with praise.

Ji Xiaoyu enjoyed being the center of attention. Binding the silk scarf around her neck, she sat down on the ground.

Then she cleaned the Golden Tripod with river water and used it to hold beef bone soup.

Her extravagance was on full display.

"Hmph."

Tang Ling snorted softly, seeming a bit disdainful of such ostentatious behavior.

But Gu Jianlin furrowed his brow, his expression turning rather strange.

He vaguely remembered that something similar had been mentioned in Old Gu's files.

At that moment, the imagined figure of Old Gu in his mind also wore a peculiar expression, leaning in to mutter something to him.

Eugh.

Gu Jianlin felt a wave of nausea surge up, almost making him puke out what he had just eaten.

"What's wrong?"

Tang Ling glanced at him.

Gu Jianlin, unable to restrain himself any longer, said coldly, "That Golden Tripod... in the context of ancient tribes, its name was 'En Gu,' which means 'receptacle for all worldly filth.' It was a religious ritual tool. During the primitive era when the Ancient Gods first descended, their believers used this thing to collect the filth of the Ancient Gods."

He paused. "Care to guess what counts as the filth of the Ancient Gods?"

Tang Ling's expression suddenly changed, as if something clicked in her mind.

After a moment's hesitation, someone asked, "Wait, don't tell me..."

At that point, everyone couldn't help clutching their stomachs.

Ji Xiaoyu, in particular, suddenly seemed dazed.

"That's right, it's a toilet."

Gu Jianlin said in an icy tone, "The Ancient Gods' toilet."

Eugh!

Ji Xiaoyu vomited on the spot, tossing the Golden Tripod aside as the broth spilled all over the ground.

"But the silk scarf is indeed a good item, a symbol of status."

Gu Jianlin suddenly changed the topic.

Chapter 320 - 166: Gold Toilet\_2

Ji Xiaoyu vomited for a while, her lively eyes brightening slightly, offering some consolation.

"That thing is made from the silk of Heavenly Cold Ice Worms. In ancient times, only the earliest Ancient Ancestors who aligned themselves with the Ancient God Clan could use it. They were the oldest royal family, dating back nine thousand years."

Gu Jianlin said earnestly, "Due to its unique material, this type of silk scarf was mostly used for wrapping feet."

Ji Xiaoyu yanked the scarf from her neck and threw it on the ground, spitting furiously.

Pei! Pei! Pei!

When she raised her head again, she angrily bit into a handkerchief.

"You were sent by my grandmother to disgust me, weren't you?!"

She roared.

"You're absolutely right."

After saying that, Gu Jianlin paid no attention to the irritable child and instead turned to gaze into the depths of the dense forest.

Tang Ling glanced at his back and followed him.

At least on the first layer of the Qilin Immortal Palace, there was no distinction between day and night.

Yet the time on their phones showed it was already one o'clock in the morning.

They had been inside the Qilin Immortal Palace for half a day now.

A deep mist shrouded the dark forest, extending as far as the eye could see.

The living corpses that had climbed out of the tree burials seemed to have lost themselves in the woods and didn't pursue them further.

Gu Jianlin stood before a smooth rock wall, gently brushing his hand against its patterns.

At the top of the wall was a massive, ancient sculpture.

It looked like an ancient monk draped in a sacrificial robe, bowing his head to gaze at them with hollow eyes.

Above, seawater flowed in the air, faint luminous strands cascading down like countless threads.

"So, this is the world where the Ancient God Clan once lived?"

Gu Jianlin murmured softly.

What he felt here was a sense of raw primitiveness and wilderness, along with the sediment of endless years.

Beyond that was a profound and intense religious atmosphere.

Mystical. Eerie.

"Yes, the legendary Ancient Supreme beings were born by devouring a planet. Each Ancient Supreme had their own world. The Qilin Immortal Palace is the world that belongs to the Qilin Venerable."

Tang Ling paused. "But its Wedge was shattered during a battle two thousand five hundred years ago. No one knows where the fragments are scattered. If the Wedge were successfully implanted into Earth, this world would fully merge with reality. At that point, its laws and rules would completely fall under the control of the Qilin Venerable."

Gu Jianlin froze. Wouldn't that turn the place into his private backyard?

"Your father said that the descent of the Qilin Immortal Palace is a trap. Who knows what that means?"

Tang Ling said flatly, "But that likely has nothing to do with us. That's a concern for the higher-ups."

Thinking of this so-called trap, Gu Jianlin felt a bit uneasy.

What sort of trap would the First-Generation Qilin Venerable have set?

Hopefully, the trap wouldn't end up ensnaring him.

"Do you have any thoughts about this situation?"

Tang Ling suddenly asked.

Gu Jianlin thought for a moment. "My ideas will likely require your cooperation."

Tang Ling narrowed her beautiful eyes. "Oh?"

"Your great-grandfather, Tang Zijing, suddenly went insane back then, didn't he?"

Gu Jianlin asked abruptly. "During the earliest observation period of the Qilin Immortal Palace."

Tang Ling hesitated, then gave a faint acknowledgment. "Yes. He used to love me dearly, but for some unknown reason, he suddenly seemed like a completely different person, eventually succumbing to madness."

She seemed to recall something, her eyes growing pensive. "Many people said he couldn't resist the temptations within the Qilin Immortal Palace and chose to betray humanity's camp. We always thought he had died, but unexpectedly..."

"Unexpectedly, he became a Divine Servant, didn't he?"

Gu Jianlin mused.

Tang Ling looked at him suspiciously and asked, "How did you profile him as a Divine Servant?"

After all, she had only seen a red mist at the time, not clearly identifying anything.

It was only because Gu Jianlin managed to sketch her great-grandfather's demeanor, physique, and even capture the emotion in his eyes that she couldn't dismiss it as nonsense.

Though it was admittedly absurd.

Nonetheless, Gu Jianlin drawing someone unknown to him lent credence to the idea, making the Candle Dragon Clan features appear valid.

"I'm not sure. Ever since my car accident, I've been able to perceive the truth of these things."

Gu Jianlin paused for a moment. "It's just a feeling."

"But I don't believe your great-grandfather went mad because of greed for the treasures of the Qilin Immortal Palace."

He stopped briefly. "He had another reason."

Tang Ling was momentarily stunned, then gave him a meaningful look. "Why?"

"Because your great-grandfather's situation is eerily similar to that of a Nightmare Master. Both went insane for no apparent reason when the Qilin Immortal Palace was first observed, and both were nearing the threshold for advancing."

Gu Jianlin's gaze turned cold as he spoke. "According to Hasegawa Shinichi's testimony, the Nightmare Master was controlled by a mysterious organization and eventually chose to become a Divine Servant of the Candle Dragon Clan to resist that control. Your great-grandfather was also a Divine Servant of the Candle Dragon Clan. It's highly likely that the two were working together."

Tang Ling's beautiful eyes narrowed. "Hasegawa Shinichi?"

That man had been killed by the boy before her near the Qilin Immortal Palace's perimeter.

"The Soul Comforting Bell."

Gu Jianlin raised his right hand, revealing a black bell hanging from it. "I enslaved his soul."

Tang Ling's eyes widened in shock. "You're revealing such a secret so easily?"

"Since you've chosen to trust me, I will trust you."

Gu Jianlin smiled faintly. "I'll also tell you about the other artifact—the Lock of Nonexistence. Even if I didn't mention it, you'd probably guess. After all, its functions are already known to you."

As for betrayal, he genuinely didn't fear it in the slightest.

If Tang Ling turned out to be a problem, Gu Jianlin would rather she showed her true colors sooner.

After all, this was the Qilin Immortal Palace.

Originally, Gu Jianlin thought he'd feel some fear visiting such an unfamiliar realm for the first time.

Unexpectedly, despite the place's primitive wilderness and heavy religious mystery...

He wasn't scared at all.

Instead, the ancient god's power evoked a strange sense of kinship.

"Hasegawa Shinichi's soul is in your possession?"

Tang Ling said seriously, "That's crucial evidence. Don't reveal it lightly."

Gu Jianlin replied, "I understand. The reason I'm sharing this with you is to tell you that your great-grandfather, the Nightmare Master, Uncle Mu, and my father—they all faced similar situations."

"I suspect they're being targeted by the mysterious organization Hasegawa Shinichi mentioned."

He paused briefly. "And that organization is also observing us."

A gleam flashed in Tang Ling's beautiful eyes.

"I asked around earlier. Jing Shangxiu and his team spent three days here. They walked the same paths we did, yet weren't attacked. Why were we specifically targeted as soon as we arrived?"

Gu Jianlin chuckled. "Both the tree burial and stone burial sites were deliberately awakened. This is the Living Burial Area, where a legendary ancient ruin is said to exist. Uncle Mu had his accident here, followed by ten subsequent Omega casualties. So, what do you think—will we also encounter trouble?"

At this point, Tang Ling understood. "You mean there's a traitor!"

"Precisely."

Gu Jianlin turned around. "Get some rest. If everything goes as expected, the culprit will surface soon."

Tang Ling stared at his back, suddenly asking, "Aren't you afraid?"

Gu Jianlin paused mid-step.

"I'm tired of searching for clues."

He said, "Why bother looking one by one when they'll come to us themselves?"