

Ancient 361

Chapter 361 - 185: Won't You Consider Giving Me a Hug?_3

He sat in the chair, holding a bottle of sea salt, sprinkling it over the steak, with a freshly opened bottle of red wine beside him.

Behind him was a massive pitch-black void, so deep it seemed bottomless.

"I knew you'd be home for dinner, so I didn't prepare a portion for you."

He stabbed a piece of steak with his fork and stuffed it into his mouth, chewing softly: "What are you standing there for? Go on."

Gu Jianlin was stunned, then suddenly burst into helpless laughter.

"Thanks, senior brother."

Seeing the other's appearance had finally lifted the weight off his heart.

"No need to thank me."

Jing Ci said with a faint smile, "The reason the little girl didn't reply to your messages is that she fell asleep at home. After all, she was badly injured and needs proper rest; she's probably sleeping like the dead."

Gu Jianlin remained silent. To outsiders, it might have seemed as though his senior brother had a talent for profiling, knowing just about everything.

"It's not that I know everything. It's that when you care about someone, you show it too clearly."

Jing Ci paused briefly, then suddenly looked up at the strikingly beautiful attendants and said with a smile, "Go back and tell Wang Taisheng—don't play these silly games again. No one can restrict my junior brother's personal freedom unless... he wants to join his useless son in the critical care ward for a duet."

As soon as he finished speaking, the massive black hole swallowed everything.

When the darkness faded, the martial arts arena was completely empty.

The attendants exchanged uneasy glances, each seeing fear in the other's eyes.

Black Cloud City had already been sealed, even its dimensions had been locked down.

This was all to guard against the time-space abilities of the Ghost Slayer Path.

How could this person casually perform time-space travel?

At eight-thirty in the morning, the sound of the apartment door opening echoed through the home.

"Zhuzhu, your dad and I are heading to work now. Don't sleep in too late. Get up early and eat something."

Shi Jing, noticing her daughter hadn't looked well the night before, assumed it was due to her period again. Before leaving, she thoughtfully prepared breakfast, boiled a kettle, and left a box of painkillers on the table.

As for her father, being a typical man, the best he could offer was: "Drink more water!"

With a click, the door shut behind them.

Su Youzhu groggily sat up in bed. Her pale aqua short hair cascaded over her shoulders, her powdery white nightgown rumpled from sleep. One shoulder strap had slipped down, revealing a smooth, rounded shoulder and a refined collarbone.

She had gone through so much the night before that she had collapsed into bed as soon as she got home.

Fortunately, the side effects of the Yin Yang Twin Jade hadn't kicked in yet. Otherwise, she might have been crying out in pain and sent to the hospital by her clueless parents, leading to an avalanche of misunderstandings.

She casually picked up a glass of water, took a few sips, and instinctively reached for her phone.

Then she froze.

On WeChat, there were over several hundred unread messages.

Scrolling up to the very top, the first message dated back twelve hours ago.

Someone had been messaging her constantly over the past twelve hours, trying to check on her condition.

Unfortunately, she had slept through it and didn't hear a thing.

Otherwise, no matter how sleepy she was, she would have made a video call to him.

Su Youzhu looked at the messages; she could clearly feel how important she was to him.

But straight men would be straight men.

The first message: "Are you there?"

Every message afterward was just a smile emoji.

Su Youzhu didn't know whether she should be happy or annoyed. Initially, she had been groggy from waking up, but seeing the string of smile emojis had fully awakened her in irritation.

Fine, he was probably mad too.

Because she had been reckless in the Qilin Immortal Palace.

Hoping for sweet words from that guy? Impossible in this lifetime.

She was just about to reply when the sound of keys turning came from outside the door.

Bam!

The door was pushed open forcefully.

Gu Jianlin leaned against the doorframe, panting lightly. To avoid being spotted by neighbors, his senior brother had opened a time-space portal directly to the rooftop. Saving time, he had jumped straight down from the eighth floor.

After cushioning his fall several times, he landed steadily.

He didn't even know what kind of mood he was in when he opened that door.

The closer he got to home, the faster his heart raced.

Even though he knew she was fine, the inability to see her made him inexplicably anxious.

More chaotic than when he woke up from a car accident three months ago.

More nerve-wracking than the moment he first awakened from the Qilin Immortal Palace's tomb.

More intense than the life-and-death trials he had faced in the past few months.

But when he finally saw the girl in the room, everything seemed to settle.

Sunlight streamed through the window. Su Youzhu sat duck-like on the soft bed, her pale aqua short hair softly curled, her snowy shoulders and collarbone catching the sunlight. Her face remained as pristine as an icy snowfield, her beautiful eyes clear and lively.

As if reflecting his worried appearance.

"Are you planning to just stand there in the doorway?"

Su Youzhu glanced sideways at him and said seriously, "Aren't you going to consider coming over and hugging me?"

Gu Jianlin stood frozen like a statue, not moving an inch. The door, prompted by inertia, closed gently behind him.

Su Youzhu stared at him for a long time, let out a little snort, and got up from the bed.

Barefoot, she walked over to him, lifting her face that was as delicate as snow and ice.

"Gu Jianlin, is it really that hard to take the initiative just once?"

Su Youzhu puffed her cheeks slightly and said coldly, "Dating and family obligations are not the same. If that strange curse counts even girlfriends, then the Night Watcher's deputy captain Han Jing would've already gone down with our mentor long ago."

Gu Jianlin gazed at her expressionlessly, saying nothing.

"Hug me if you want, or don't."

Su Youzhu pursed her lips, turning halfway around.

Suddenly, she felt an arm wrap around her slender waist, the warmth of a familiar touch pressing against her back.

Her cheeks blushed, her body shivered instinctively, as though sinking into soft foam—weak and powerless.

Gu Jianlin held onto her delicate frame, inhaling the familiar cool fragrance from her hair, feeling an all-too-rare sense of calm and relaxation.

"Just this once."

He suddenly spoke.

Su Youzhu gazed at the sunlight outside the window. Her lips curled into a satisfied, triumphant smile.

"You know," she said softly, "some things start with just one time and then happen countless times after that."

Chapter 362 - 186: King of Qing, The Fisherman

The May Day holiday has brought Peak City, this coastal city, back to life.

Both workers and students are on vacation. Coastal attractions are packed, social media forums are flooded with photos of scenery and food, the commercial streets bustle with crowds, lively music fills the air, men stroll in and out of bathhouses or internet cafés arm-in-arm, and girls in cool summer outfits wander through malls.

Su Youzhu, however, had fallen sick.

Fortunately, the illness wasn't too serious. Her parents dragged her to the hospital for a check-up, and the verdict was just a common cold.

"A normal cold like this? Let Xiao Lin drag her out for a few laps, that'll do the trick. And drink more hot water."

Uncle Su, true to his military background, had a sharp and no-nonsense way of thinking.

"Step aside! She's so frail right now, and you're talking about running laps?"

Shi Jing glared at him. "Go brew some herbal medicine for Zhuzhu! Hey, Zhuzhu? Zhuzhu?"

"She's mad again, isn't she?" Uncle Su muttered.

Shi Jing grumbled, "My big sister's family is getting more annoying every time. Next time, I'm not letting them visit."

The family had just finished dinner and bid farewell to a round of visiting relatives.

Most of them were from Mom's side, bringing their spoiled brat of a kid, causing chaos as usual.

Neither Gu Jianlin nor Su Youzhu, given their blended family dynamics, could ever expect harmony with such extended relatives. They hated mingling with those distant aunts and cousins, and detested their kids even more.

Take for example that aunt who just brought her dim-witted son who recently qualified to study abroad. She practically wore "showing off" on her face, going on about foreign systems and international affairs in every other sentence.

The implication was clear: no matter how good Gu Jianlin's grades were, they were useless if he couldn't study abroad.

As for Su Youzhu, her poor grades and lack of focus were apparently unforgivable. Aside from her looks, she had nothing going for her, and should just get married early.

That wasn't all. Auntie's clueless son, as if he'd never seen such a beautiful girl before, immediately had his teenage hormones raging. He kept attempting to strike up a conversation, even asking for her WeChat.

But knowing Su Youzhu's personality, she simply went back to her room with a cold expression. Talking to him? Not a chance in hell.

Gu Jianlin gave him just the right look.

The stare of the Qilin Venerable.

Though he was a modern Supreme, still in his formative years, the number of lives he'd claimed over the past month was beyond count. His aura of killing intent was genuinely honed.

Not only could it stop kids from crying at night, but it was perfect for shutting relatives down when they tried to act smug.

Auntie and her spoiled kids were practically scared stiff and left in a hurry.

"This is no longer the era when clans stuck together for support. Everyone lives their own lives now. Where's the family bond? That superficial blood tie is worthless," Gu Jianlin muttered as he lounged on the sofa, fiddling with his tablet, which displayed the Deep Space Official Website's database.

On the table were mom's homemade fried chicken wings and a chilled cola.

Nothing beats the feeling of being at home.

Ever since the mission at the Qilin Immortal Palace ended, he'd been relaxing at home.

Taking the time to catalogue and review his recent gains.

Studying up on Transcendent knowledge.

And most importantly, staying home to take care of Youzhu.

"Makes sense."

Mom said indignantly, "Your cousin still has the nerve to pine for Zhuzhu? He should take a look in the mirror first. This year, we're not visiting them for New Year's. We'll celebrate at home ourselves."

"Works for me! As long as Xiao Lin is here this year, and when Xia gets back, it'll be lively enough,"

Uncle Su cheerfully agreed. "Besides, there's been enough natural disasters and man-made calamities this year. We're better off staying put. Didn't the news say there's major trouble in the west?"

Gu Jianlin glanced at the LCD TV on the wall, where a rare natural catastrophe was being reported.

According to reports, meteor showers were falling over the westernmost Pamir Plateau of the country. Flames were igniting in the sky, massive tornadoes wreaked havoc, and so far, no modern technology could pinpoint the cause. Even teams of adventuring scientists who dared venture in had mysteriously vanished.

Local residents even claimed to see broken stone pillars in the heavens.

Some said they could hear dragon roars in their dreams.

"Old monster."

Gu Jianlin murmured softly.

He vaguely guessed it could be related to the Dragon Bone being devoured.

The Ancient Supreme likely sensed it and flew into a rage.

Of course, as the culprit, he wouldn't feel the least bit guilty about it.

If the old monster reclaimed the Dragon Bone, the consequences would be even more frightening.

"True, there was even a gas explosion in Southern City the other day. So terrifying."

"Don't remind me. The office building next to mine actually collapsed because of it."

"Not to mention the reports of illicit yachts appearing off the coast recently. What's going on?"

"Who knows. By the way, Xiao Lin's parrot looks pretty interesting. Let's find some time to take it out."

This time around, the family had acquired an exquisite birdcage.

The Parrot Emperor stood inside it with a proud posture, eyes glinting like copper bells, radiating sharp wit like bolts of lightning.

The couple was both fascinated by the bird and attempted to get it to speak.

But only Gu Jianlin knew that whenever it spoke, chaos ensued. He had already ordered the parrot to stay silent.

Otherwise, tomorrow morning's breakfast might just end up being carrot stew with parrot.

"Why doesn't it talk? Doesn't seem very bright."

"Maybe its intelligence hasn't been awakened."

The couple whispered to each other before heading to their bedroom to rest.

Chapter 363 - 186: King of Qing, The Fisherman _2

Su Youzhu was still in her bedroom, doing something unknown.

Gu Jianlin recalled that long embrace, rested his hand against his forehead, and sighed.

In the end, emotion triumphed over reason. This was a rare occurrence for him.

But he still didn't understand why, in the end, he couldn't resist hugging that girl.

Perhaps the atmosphere had reached that point, making it impossible to hold back.

He would have to exercise more restraint in the future.

Otherwise, he'd really end up getting beaten.

At least, when their parents were around, Youzhu's attitude toward him remained normal, without displaying excessive closeness.

However, whenever no one was around, it was a completely different story.

Ding-dong.

Su Youzhu: "Do you want to sleep in my room tonight?"

Gu Jianlin stared at the message, utterly stunned.

This girl might appear to be an ice-cold beauty, but her occasional teasing and flirtation were far from subtle.

It made his scalp tingle.

Gu Jianlin: "Are you crazy?"

Su Youzhu: "What's the problem? They won't come into my room anyway."

Gu Jianlin: "What if we get caught?"

Wait—how did things escalate to the point of talking about getting caught? He absolutely wasn't going.

Su Youzhu: "Don't you have the Lock of Nonexistence? You won't be discovered."

Gu Jianlin: "Is that what Mythical Weapons are for?"

Su Youzhu: "If you don't come, I'll go to your room."

Haha. Goodbye.

Gu Jianlin set down his tablet, got dressed, put on his shoes, and prepared to leave.

He couldn't afford to provoke her, but he could still avoid her.

With a slam.

Su Youzhu, still nestled in her blankets, heard the sound of the door closing. Her vermillion lips curved slightly.

Moonlight streamed through the window, illuminating her face, porcelain-like and flawless.

"Finally gone."

She gently propped herself up, her delicate frame trembling unsteadily, nearly causing her to fall back onto the bed. Her smooth, fair forehead was now glistening with beads of sweat, her chest heaving violently as her breathing grew heavy.

Her clear, luminous eyes were filled with exhaustion and weakness.

This was the beginning of the Yin Yang Twin Jade's side effects.

A simple jade pendant hung around the girl's chest, its rustic surface engraved with intricate, ancient patterns. One side was as black as ink, while the other was as white as snow—symbolizing the duality of yin and yang, starkly opposed.

When her teacher had given her the jade, they had warned her of its side effects.

When a doppelganger died, it inflicted severe trauma on the original body.

Most devastatingly, the pain endured by the doppelganger would rebound onto the original body tenfold.

"All those who choose to escape shall pay tenfold for their avoidance."

This was the warning left by the scholar who had first discovered the Yin Yang Twin Jade.

Not that Old Gu had tricked her—this Mythical Weapon's benefits were undeniable. As long as you didn't encounter an exceedingly rare Authority like that of the Red Qilin Ancestor, it would essentially grant you an extra life, and life itself was priceless.

As for the pain, if you could endure it, the experience would tremendously benefit your future advancement.

However, her teacher had specifically reminded her that, of those who obtained this Mythical Weapon, few had survived the side effects of their doppelganger's death. Some had even succumbed to the relentless torment, driven to take their own lives.

Thus, Su Youzhu had made thorough preparations. Avoiding her parents was easy enough.

But she could never fool him.

Which meant she had to find a way to send him away.

Su Youzhu pulled open the drawer of her bedside table, revealing two boxes of secret medicine inside.

The Wandering Soul Secret Medicine.

Stone Heart Ink.

These were the two secret medicines she had prepared in advance. The former would place her in a dream-like state for the next eight hours, while the latter would provide partial relief from the pain.

While the effect of the Yin Yang Twin Jade originated from soul-deep pain that no medicine could truly alleviate,

these still provided some level of support.

From here on, she could only endure it herself.

Su Youzhu swallowed both secret medicines, then buried herself under the blankets, bracing for the torment radiating from the depths of her soul. Her consciousness began to sink, as if plunging into a nightmare.

Her phone screen remained lit, its wallpaper a photograph.

In the midst of torrential rain, a black-haired boy held an umbrella, walking alone down an empty street.

A girl with short, pale green hair followed behind him like a ghost. Her icy, exquisitely beautiful face was graced by a rare smile as she quietly made a peace sign, holding her phone to capture his silhouette.

This was their only photo together.

It had been taken before Gu Jianlin's awakening—back then, Su Youzhu often transformed into a ghost, silently trailing behind him. When he became aware of her presence, she would quickly find somewhere to hide, observing his every mood.

If he was happy, she would feel content as well.

If he was upset, she would carefully prepare a homemade meal to cheer him up.

Strangely enough, in the beginning, all she wanted was to make up for her shortcomings toward him, to heal his life.

But somehow, at some unknown point, she had fallen deep.

Perhaps it was because his eyes were as deep and vast as the ocean—one glance could utterly captivate.

The phone screen slowly dimmed and went out.

Su Youzhu allowed darkness to overtake her mind, sinking into a pit of despair and agony.

At 10:30 p.m., the neighborhood grocery store still had its lights on.

Gu Jianlin thought to himself that they must be here, then walked directly inside.

"You're here?"

Jing Ci, who was cleaning antiques in the display cabinet, spoke without turning around.

Meanwhile, behind the counter, Huai Yin sat in her wheelchair, fiddling with a few ancient copper coins. Her frost-white eyebrows furrowed deeply, her expression unprecedently dark, tinged with irritation.

Chapter 364 - 186: King of Qing, The Fisherman _3

Gu Jianlin saw the old man and froze: "What happened?"

Huai Yin remained silent as usual.

Jing Ci shook his head: "It's nothing. Teacher went to the Qilin Immortal Palace a few days ago to search for someone but couldn't find them, so he got a bit upset."

Gu Jianlin thought to himself—if even this teacher couldn't locate someone, then that person must really have some skills.

"Thank you for helping my sister."

He hesitated for a second: "I heard from her that this time, you found a... Ninth-order Great God?"

"Indeed. Given that it's your sister, it's only natural to be extra careful. The safest method is to invite a Great God to handle the matter. But there's no need to worry much about this—after very cordial and friendly communication, that Great God agreed readily to help."

Jing Ci said seriously, "Though this favor... you might have to repay it yourself in the future."

Gu Jianlin nodded slightly: "That's fair. If I get the chance, I'll personally visit to express my thanks."

Jing Ci gave him a meaningful look: "Good."

For some reason, Gu Jianlin suddenly had a foreboding feeling.

But he didn't dwell on it and continued asking, "When does the third lesson begin?"

This time, even Huai Yin raised his head and gave him a surprised glance.

"Oh? You're still fixated on the third lesson?"

Jing Ci smirked teasingly, "You must've heard quite a bit about the teacher recently, right? I thought you'd be considering how to escape from him by now. Judging by your current talent, you would be more than qualified to join any of the other Catastrophe masters. Besides, you're now at the Third Rank."

Third Rank meant you could change professions.

"Everything has its order, and besides that, you all have been kind to me."

Gu Jianlin replied earnestly, "I repay kindness with gratitude."

Huai Yin raised an eyebrow at those words.

Jing Ci asked again, "You must also be aware that the teacher took you in as a student because he wanted you to do things for him."

Gu Jianlin answered firmly: "It's only natural for a student to help their teacher."

Jing Ci chuckled: "But don't you want to ask what those 'things' are? Aren't you worried he'll make things hard for you? Or that you won't be able to do it?"

Gu Jianlin paused for only a second: "I can profile people. While I can't precisely sketch your personalities yet, my general impression shouldn't be far off. The old man wouldn't make things difficult for me. As for whether I can do it, since he chose me, it means I can."

"Interesting."

Huai Yin closed his eyes and muttered with a soft sigh.

Jing Ci praised, "Bold—just as the teacher's student should be."

"That said, aren't you curious about what the teacher did back then to make people fear him so much? Even your father thought he was mad."

He added meaningfully, "Gu Ci'an, for one, certainly wouldn't want you to study under the teacher."

Gu Jianlin waved his hand dismissively: "My dad couldn't control me when he was alive, let alone after he's dead. I'll clear his name and finish what he couldn't accomplish, but I won't concern myself with how he feels."

"Whether the old man is insane or not, I can judge for myself."

He paused: "And besides, when the time is right, you all will tell me."

Jing Ci raised his eyebrow and glanced toward the old man in the wheelchair.

Huai Yin nodded slightly.

"Very well, then prepare yourself, for the teacher is about to teach you Forbidden Spells."

Jing Ci thought for a while and added, "But before that, surely you still have questions, don't you?"

"It's about Youzhu."

Gu Jianlin nodded: "What exactly are the side effects of the Yin Yang Twin Jade?"

He certainly wouldn't believe the nonsense that woman spouted.

Although, as a modern Supreme, his knowledge of Transcendent matters was admittedly quite basic.

But he could always ask questions.

If you don't know, just ask.

These four words are universally wise.

"Teacher."

Jing Ci turned to look at the old man.

Huai Yin maneuvered his wheelchair out of the grocery store and arrived at the tranquil lakeside.

By the lake, there were fish baskets, along with a fishing rod. The fishing line quivered gently.

The old man casually pulled up the rod, revealing something shimmering with silver light being hooked and falling onto the ground.

Without even glancing at it, he maneuvered his wheelchair back for a nap.

Jing Ci walked over and picked up the drenched item.

It turned out to be a pair of silver-white, silk-woven bracelets, radiating a magnificent and profound glow.

"Symbiotic Lock, an ancient top-tier Alchemy Weapon, inscribed with an alchemy matrix and soul imprint from 7,600 years ago. They're paired Alchemy Weapons—one main and one auxiliary—usable only once. If you wear the main lock and your sister wears the auxiliary lock, the pain she should endure will transfer to you."

Jing Ci said flatly: "The side effect of Yin Yang Twin Jade is that the hardships experienced by the fragment over these years are amplified tenfold and transmitted back to the original body. Most people can't handle it."

Gu Jianlin instinctively looked toward the dark window within the neighborhood.

"For now, this is the only solution the teacher has."

Jing Ci remarked, "Whether to use it is up to you. Your ability to endure may not necessarily be much greater than hers, and if she manages to get through it on her own, there could be some benefits."

Gu Jianlin thought to himself—benefits are something he, as an Ancient Supreme, could naturally get for her.

There's no need for needless suffering.

As for whether he could endure it—that thought didn't even cross his mind.

"But there's one thing."

His expression suddenly turned odd.

Jing Ci raised an eyebrow: "What is it?"

Gu Jianlin looked puzzled: "Why was this Alchemy Weapon found in the lake?"

Faced with this question, Jing Ci went dead silent.

"To be fair, I don't know either."

He murmured, "I even spent a fortune hiring a Ninth-Rank Divination Master to investigate this mystery, but still couldn't solve it. The teacher is peculiar like that. Besides fish, he's caught just about anything. Last year, while fishing with him in Lake Baikal, he even pulled up an Ancient God Seed..."

Gu Jianlin stared at him in disbelief.

"It's probably some kind of mystical phenomenon."

Jing Ci pondered aloud, "You'll get used to it."

Chapter 365 - 187: Unrequited Xiangsi

Gu Jianlin found it hard to imagine that one could fish out a Mythical Weapon from the artificial lake in the neighborhood.

He didn't quite believe in such absurdity but decided to give it a try. He grabbed the fishing rod and cast a few lines. Within just ten minutes, he had caught several large fish, stuffing the basket completely full.

How strange—this artificial lake was teeming with fish! How could it be possible to not catch anything?

As soon as the basket was full, the grocery store suddenly vanished just as eerily as it had appeared, as though it had never existed at all.

Blind guess: maybe the old man was angry.

"If you're still holding up after using the Symbiotic Lock, come to the store at ten tomorrow morning. I'll teach you Forbidden Spells... the Qilin Forbidden Curse."

A new text appeared on his phone.

"Qilin Forbidden Curse? I am the Qilin Venerable—how could I not know it? But at this point, my strength should be considered formidable. By wielding the authority of the Qilin Venerable, I've acquired two different Inheritance Paths, an unimaginable advantage."

Gu Jianlin pondered for a moment: "The only pity is that the two Inheritance Paths cannot be used simultaneously. Otherwise, my combat strength would exponentially increase. I wonder if this problem can be solved. If I could use both paths at the same time, it would be ideal."

Regarding the issue of combat strength, he wasn't particularly concerned. Among peers, there was no competition; the only differentiation was how many levels higher the opposition was.

It's worth mentioning, though, that after devouring the Dragon Bone, he awakened the second Inheritance Path. Despite this, his core setup remained Dual Core Drive, and the output of his spirituality did not increase to threefold as expected.

This meant that his so-called dual core setup wasn't Qilin paired with Divine.

It was Qilin and human!

As for the Inheritance Paths, they seemed like separate systems outside the core.

And he had two systems.

Now, he couldn't help but anticipate the so-called Qilin Forbidden Curse.

What kind of chemical reaction would take place after this Second Generation Qilin Venerable learned the Forbidden Spell?

Near eleven o'clock, the lights in the yard on the first floor were completely out, and everyone at home had retired for the night.

But at that moment, his Life Perception picked up a violent rhythm—a turmoil of distress.

Su Youzhu's true intention was to find an excuse to send him away.

However, Gu Jianlin now understood her deeply. Her personality resembled that of a sly little fox pretending to be aloof but secretly mischievous. The slightest twitch of her tail gave away her scheming.

And this reservoir of sharp wit? Eight out of ten had likely been learned from Old Gu.

How ominous.

He opened the door to his home and entered the girl's room.

On the soft pink bed, Su Youzhu had wrapped herself tightly with the blanket, leaving only her short pale-blue hair and her exquisitely frosty face exposed. Her delicate brows were furrowed, her forehead drenched in cold sweat.

On the surface, she didn't seem to be in too much pain.

But Gu Jianlin, equipped with Life Perception, could clearly feel the chaos brewing within her—a tormented rhythm as if being cut into a thousand pieces, as though living through a hellish nightmare.

The intensity of her pain? No one knew.

Unless you experienced it yourself.

"Keep this bracelet on for the next three days. Do not take it off."

Leaving behind a note, Gu Jianlin uncovered the blanket, gently pulled out her slender wrist, and fastened the Symbiotic Lock.

In her sleep, Su Youzhu suddenly grasped his hand tightly.

Her pale knuckles revealed the intensity of her grip.

It dawned on him—this insecure girl grew up in a fractured family. Her birth mother had inexplicably abandoned her and her elder sister, leaving only her father behind to care for them while juggling his work.

It wasn't until later, by sheer accident, that she stumbled into the Qilin Immortal Palace, embarking on a new life.

Old Gu was profoundly significant to her.

Which explained her unwavering pursuit of truth.

Including her feelings toward him.

Gu Jianlin reached out and gently touched her hair.

This girl had silently accompanied him for the past eight years, though he had previously been oblivious to it. Reflecting now, her presence illuminated his once-lonely memories, filling them with warmth and vibrancy.

In a way, she was the person who had stayed by his side the longest in this world.

Whether intentionally or unintentionally, Old Gu had placed this girl in his life.

She was, undeniably, the most precious gift in his life.

But precisely because she was precious, she was cherished.

And because she was cherished, he hesitated.

After all, only by not possessing something could one never fear losing it.

But reality doesn't grant such luxuries.

Gu Jianlin wasn't oblivious to the fact that this girl harbored feelings for him. Even if she masked it well before, the moment she took off her disguise, everything became transparent. Her emotions surged like the ocean beneath the ice, turbulent and unrestrained.

Each glance, each gesture, and every word.

All conveyed the same message.

I like you.

This emotion, whose origins were unknown, might have stemmed from guilt over robbing him of parental love. Or perhaps it was sympathy and compassion for his loneliness, and pity after the car accident.

Of course, liking someone sometimes requires no reason.

Back in school, there had been girls who liked him, too.

But Youzhu was different.

Hers warranted careful consideration—and treasuring.

At times, Gu Jianlin felt a pang of fear.

If he hadn't inherited the Qilin Venerable's power, would everything have simply fallen apart?

Such as her first incursion into the Immortal Palace, and now this experience in the underground ruins.

Too risky.

Gu Jianlin didn't believe he needed protection, nor would his pride allow him to rely on a girl to risk her life for him.

"Rest well. Leave everything to me from now on."

He tied a Symbiotic Lock around his own wrist as well.

For a brief moment.

The darkness in Gu Jianlin's mind began to spread, and countless distorted monstrosities flashed before his eyes. Images of gunfire, the cold glimmer of passing blades, pain akin to his body being torn apart by sharp tools—his bones shattering, organs displacing.

In that instant, he nearly collapsed under the pressure, almost passing out entirely.

How much suffering has this girl endured over the years?

Gu Jianlin held himself steady, tremors coursing through his body.

This was pain from the depths of the soul, utterly unavoidable.

The agonizing sensation multiplied tenfold, almost forcing a scream from him.

But he ultimately managed to suppress it, not making a single sound.

Nor did he disturb the sleeping girl on the bed.

The Symbiotic Lock not only transmitted pain but also the memories tied to those wounds.

Scattered, broken fragments flickered before his eyes in fleeting flashes.

Countless blurry, fleeting lights surged like a flood.

Most of these were fresh injuries, all sustained within the past three months.

In other words, Youzhu had been carefully protected by Old Gu over the past eight years.

Only during these three months without him did she endure untold hardships to uncover the truth.

Once the Symbiotic Lock connected, the fine wrinkles on Su Youzhu's brows softened, her long curled lashes gently quivering. Curling up in a small ball, she seemed visibly calmer.

Seeing her recovery, Gu Jianlin felt the weight in his heart finally lift.

Supporting himself against the wall, he carefully restrained against the searing pain of countless blades, silently left her room.

From beginning to end, he uttered no sound.

Nor did he intend to tell her.

Because it didn't matter in the least.

Deep within the underground caves, molten lava cascaded like waterfalls, fiery embers bursting forth.

The earth was parched and cracked, with scorching magma flowing across it. Jagged spires jutted out like thorny brambles, spanning across a barren wasteland. The burning wind whipped through the landscape, incinerating all in its path.

Tang Zijing walked through the desolate and dry terrain, sweat streaming down his forehead as he endured the oppressive heat.

Beneath the molten falls, there loomed a massive throne.

Beyond the lava, a pair of massive crimson vertical pupils ignited, blazing with intense flames.

Tang Zijing dared not meet those enormous pupils, dropping to his knees.

"Primordial Lord."

He murmured respectfully, "I've returned."

Boom!

The Ancient Times' immense pressure rippled outward, akin to resounding thunder.

This was ancestor-level force—a power mighty enough to incinerate the entirety of the cavern.

—Kui Dragon Ancestor.

The colossal crimson vertical pupils blazed fiercely, glaring down at him.

"The fragment?"

A voice that reverberated like an ancient bell yet carried dignified majesty spoke.

However, upon careful listening, it sounded eerily like a woman's.

"I couldn't find it."

Tang Zijing admitted plainly, "It's very likely that You Ying Group's Master has taken it."

Crash!

The molten waterfall quivered, and the entire underground cavern rumbled, sending shards of rock tumbling down.

"An ordinary human snatched it from you?"

Behind the cascading lava, a shadow faintly condensed. "When I entrusted the Venerable's scales to the external world, what did you and Meng Hebo promise? How has it come to this?"

Tall and voluptuous as the most bewitching femme fatale, yet with a chilling intensity.

Tang Zijing hesitated for a second before responding calmly, "Master might have become a Divine Servant. I suspect he has secretly allied with the Qilin Venerable and joined the Qilin Clan as their Divine Servant."

"I will continue investigating this matter. Please grant me more time."

He paused, "Meng Hebo is a Gu Master—causing disasters is his forte, not mine. However, I do excel in frontal combat and can return to the real world to uncover the truth."

A dead silence ensued.

After a long while, the Kui Dragon Ancestor spoke coldly: "Then go. Confirming the status of the Qilin Venerable is of utmost importance. Otherwise, even if we obtain other fragments, it would merely serve to elevate the Venerable instead."

"Understood."

Tang Zijing suddenly added, "Primordial Lord, I just received news from the real world that the Candle Dragon Venerable has returned to Buzhou Mountain and merged with the Candle Dragon Wedge, initiating a Primordial Return."

For a fleeting second, the massive crimson vertical pupils concealed behind the molten lava flickered with a profound terror.

"Previously, when you informed the entity about the Qilin Venerable's possible escape, it didn't react this drastically. Something must have occurred last night... something intolerable."

Tang Zijing remarked.

"Do not ask what you should not inquire. Proceed with your duties. If the Candle Dragon Venerable has indeed undergone Primordial Return, it signifies that the transformation is complete, and the entity is poised to return in its full might. Our time is limited."

The Kui Dragon Ancestor said coldly, "Once the Candle Dragon discovers I am also seeking the Dragon Bone, my demise is assured. Nevertheless... if it executes me, both you and Meng Hebo will perish as well."

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In the dim and sweltering cavern, waves of scorching heat surged violently.

Tang Zijing lowered his head and calmly said, "I understand, my lord Primordial."

A majestic and indifferent voice echoed from behind the molten lava waterfall.

The Kui Dragon Ancestor looked down from on high, speaking coldly: "You have only two tasks. First, confirm Qilin Venerable's condition. Second, locate the fragments of the Qilin Wedge. That Dragon Bone is crucial. While it's useless to us, it absolutely cannot fall into the hands of the Candle Dragon or Qilin."

Tang Zijing replied, "To serve you, I would gladly die a thousand deaths."

The Kui Dragon Ancestor remained unmoved and said coldly, "Meng Hebo will accompany you outside. His rank has fallen to rock bottom and requires re-elevation. I'll assign a new-born Ancestor to follow you both."

The faint sound of footsteps echoed. She emerged from the molten lava waterfall.

Her dark red hair drifted in the air, a skeleton mask concealed her face, and her tall, graceful figure was cloaked in a black-gold robe. Her bare feet tread upon the molten lava, her entire body ablaze with searing flames, as though she were a ghostly deity.

She gently raised her hand.

A sinister crystal coffin shot up from the molten lava, crashing heavily onto the ground.

"Don't disappoint me."

She said.

Tang Zijing slightly bowed his head: "Rest assured, this will be the last time."

The next morning, Gu Jianlin returned once again to the grocery store outside the residential area.

However, this time, he appeared listless, his face pale with dark circles under his eyes, looking sickly and frail.

After all, with the Symbiotic Lock clasped onto him, the excruciating soul-pain had tormented him all night. It was utterly impossible to fall asleep under such conditions, and even the Breathing Technique for meditation was ineffective. All he could do was silently recite the Great Compassionate Mantra to divert his attention.

Finally enduring until dawn, the agony subsided, leaving him feeling as though an eternity had passed.

"Right on time."

Jing Ci adjusted his tie in the mirror, glancing at him intentionally or unintentionally: "Looks like that little girl has suffered quite a lot lately—the pain she's feeding back has messed you up this much?"

Gu Jianlin slumped into the chair at the store entrance, exhaustion written all over his face. He spoke softly: "It doesn't matter. Building tolerance to pain is also a way to increase combat capability. It's good for me."

Jing Ci froze momentarily, surprised at how ruthless this kid was to himself.

"As long as it doesn't interfere with learning Forbidden Spells, it'll be fine."

Gu Jianlin said calmly.

At this moment, Huai Yin emerged from the grocery store, supporting himself on a wheelchair. His frost-white eyebrows lifted slightly as he said in an indifferent tone: "Have you considered the possibility that you could just grab any enemy to bear the main lock and spare yourselves the torment?"

Jing Ci's hand, still tying his bow tie, paused slightly.

Gu Jianlin froze, his expression suddenly stiffening.

Seeing their reactions, Huai Yin's mood instantly brightened, even humming a cheerful tune.

Indeed, why not?

Gu Jianlin pondered for a moment, primarily because he hadn't even thought of such a possibility.

Jing Ci remained silent for a while before casually saying, "Ignore him. What do old men know? They completely lack a sense of charm. Couple's bracelets aren't just for random people to wear, are they?"

Gu Jianlin thought it made sense.

But then he quickly reacted: "Wait. Couples? I have nothing like that. Stop talking nonsense."

Jing Ci gave him a loaded look and said with profound meaning: "What are you concerned about? Legally, you two aren't siblings, and there's no blood relation either—it's permissible. Although there might be some trouble regarding the little girl's biological mother, it's not an unsolvable issue."

Gu Jianlin was taken aback: "Who is Youzhu's biological mother?"

Jing Ci answered indifferently: "From an ancient family in the Dark World. You'll find out eventually."

Gu Jianlin fell into deep thought.

The two brothers soon changed the subject, seemingly realizing something.

Clearly, the old man was retaliating for their discussion of their mentor last night.

It's just the Air Force. Not a big deal.

"Let's go."

Huai Yin waved his hand, and the entire grocery store warped suddenly.

"Where are we headed?"

Gu Jianlin asked suddenly.

Jing Ci replied calmly: "To the Soul Skywell."

Gu Jianlin was startled: "Isn't the Soul Skywell the Ether Association's secret archive?"

"What of it? Our teacher originally hailed from the Ether Association, only later becoming independent. When the Soul Skywell was first constructed, our teacher's contributions were indispensable. His venerable reputation allows him access anywhere."

Jing Ci smiled mildly, his tone slightly derisive as he explained: "Besides, the Ether Association is about to enter the highest state of alert. You Omegas have a rare chance to access the Cloud Bright Secret Treasure in the Soul Skywell—it's the perfect opportunity to make the Judgment Court bleed and fleece them."

Gu Jianlin found that reasonable, given that their teacher was a Catastrophe-ranked figure and a former student of the previous President.

Entering the Soul Skywell should indeed be effortless.

The next moment, time and space warped abruptly, plunging everything into darkness.

A buzzing sound filled Gu Jianlin's ears as light gradually emerged before his eyes.

When the distorted spacetime returned to normal, the colossal library once again appeared before him. Endless towering bookshelves formed a matrix following some peculiar order, resembling a vast maze intertwined and interwoven.

Faint sky light poured down from the Soul Skywell above, creating circular patches of light that danced on the wooden floor.

Huai Yin sat in his wheelchair with an air of composed tranquility.

Jing Ci pushed the wheelchair from behind.

At the same time, a sharp and imposing shout rang out: "Who goes there? The Soul Skywell forbids unauthorized entry!"

Within the sunshine streaming from the skywell above, a red-haired middle-aged man had appeared unnoticed. He was clad in an ancient bronze war armor and gripped a rugged black spear resembling a dragon. His terrifying aura, refined through countless battles amid mountains of corpses and seas of blood, erupted with the intensity of a hurricane, sweeping across the entire library.

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Countless ancient tomes quivered in the wind, their pages flipping one by one with a rustling sound.

The labyrinthine bookshelves trembled violently, and an erupting Qi Force almost seemed to overturn the entire library!

The iron spear resonated with a sharp, piercing aura, as though it was ready to penetrate your heart!

Gu Jianlin merely cast a glance toward him, only to see an ancient samurai towering and steadfast, standing amidst a battlefield of endless yellow sands, with shattered earth beneath his feet and collapsing mountains at his back.

This was an Ancient Martial!

At least a Holy Sanctuary Level Ancient Martial!

No need to think much; this must be one of the top-tier combat forces of the Ether Association.

This was Gu Jianlin's first time directly facing the might of a Holy Sanctuary Level Ascender. Although still far inferior compared to old monsters, the sheer proximity made him feel a palpable sense of imminent annihilation.

"Go."

Huai Yin casually raised her hand and pushed lightly!

Clang!

It was merely a simple gesture of empty air, yet a muffled thunder erupted from within the red-haired middle-aged man's body. He was sent flying backward, crashing into countless shelves before slamming heavily against the library wall.

Booming sounds reverberated endlessly!

At the same time, horrifying muffled echoes continued resonating within him, accompanied by the iron spear slipping out of his grasp, clattering to the ground with an incessant hum.

In the final roar of the reverberation, this Holy Sanctuary Level Ascender instantly vanished into the Soul Skywell.

The fallen bookshelves and shattered walls began to silently mend themselves.

"The Heavenly Fire God General has improved quite a bit over the years. Otherwise, that little push just now would've reduced him to dust."

Jing Ci explained, "That was one of the six Divine Generals from the Ether Association headquarters—an Eighth Rank Ancient Martial. In a sense, you could say he's one of the Guardians of the real world."

Gu Jianlin sank into prolonged silence.

Indeed, the old man entering the Soul Skywell was more than fitting.

Though, the reality left just the slightest gap from his imagination.

So this is what 'venerable and esteemed' meant, huh.

He seemed to have opened the door to a new world.

Still, the old man's strength was terrifying; defeating an Eighth Rank required nothing more than a casual push.

This was Catastrophe!

Yet Catastrophe was unable to overcome the old monster.

How unfathomably powerful could the old monster truly be?

Gu Jianlin felt his scalp tingling.

"Let's go."

Huai Yin, seated in her wheelchair, led the way.

Jing Ci and Gu Jianlin followed behind.

The towering bookshelves began shifting, reconfiguring into new arrangements, unexpectedly forming a pathway.

One side of the library wall collapsed, revealing a pitch-black and narrow corridor.

Candles burst into flame out of nowhere, illuminating the path ahead.

"I haven't been here for over two hundred years."

Huai Yin sighed, "The last time, I came with my junior disciple."

Gu Jianlin perked up at the mention of the junior disciple.

"The teacher's junior disciple, the famed Red King, was also the one who betrayed the Ether Association and joined the Dark World—a Catastrophe in their ranks. He was the first king of the Dark World and our senior uncle."

Jing Ci casually remarked, "The Qilin Forbidden Curse was his discovery."

Gu Jianlin pondered silently.

The narrow corridor stretched to its end, and suddenly, the path behind was no longer visible.

Faint starlight began to shine ahead.

At some unknown moment, they found themselves amidst a sea of stars. Surrounding them was an endless expanse of brilliant constellations, with countless planet-like spheres encircled by glowing rings floating in the darkness—a boundless Universe.

Beneath the glittering starlight stood an ancient stone monument, solemnly suspended in the Void.

"The Soul Skywell is, in essence, a unique space, detached from the dimensions of the real world—a small, independent realm seized by humanity from the Ancient God Clan. Where we stand now is a fractured timeline, originally located by my junior disciple who anchored it and connected us here."

Huai Yin gazed at the jet-black stone monument and smiled, "Back in the day, Yan Li claimed he was the only one who uncovered the true secrets of the Ancient God Clan because he made contact with the Primordial origin. Though, no one knows what this so-called Primordial origin truly is."

"This fractured timeline was split apart by the Candle Dragon Venerable, one of the first Ancient Supremes to descend upon Earth—and also the mightiest. From ancient times till now, we've always been curious about its purpose, but no answer has ever surfaced. The prevailing thought is, once this purpose is unveiled, it will reveal the origins and truths of everything."

She chuckled nostalgically, "Yan Li was perhaps the most likely to uncover this truth. After all, his talent did surpass mine by a smidgen. What a pity, though—he was too foolish."

Gu Jianlin silently gazed at the surrounding timeline.

Ah yes, the old monster could casually fracture timelines.

While he, hitching a ride across space and time, still got motion sickness.

A long road lies ahead; he needs to continue progressing steadily.

"The true name of the Red King: Jiang Yanli."

Jing Ci remarked coolly, "Once we're out of here, don't ever mention that name again. It's taboo."

Huai Yin stared at the jet-black stone monument and said:

"Since ancient times, one thing remains certain: putting aside the distinctions between the real world and the Ancient God Realm, at the end of humanity's Inheritance Path, their maximum potential only reaches the level equivalent to an ancestor-level Ancient God. Before the Pre-Qin Era, humanity's strongest fighters in the Ancient God Realm could only face ancestor-level Ancient Gods on equal footing."

"So then, post-Pre-Qin Era, how did humanity confront Primordial beings or those allegedly invincible Ancient Supremes? The answer, naturally, was through Breathing Techniques and Forbidden Curses."

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"The former is a power created by humans, drawing upon the Heavenly Person Realm and combining the Ancient Divine Language of the Ancient God Clan. The latter, however, is a taboo born from humanity imitating the unique nature of the Ancient Supreme through their own Inheritance Paths. These Forbidden Techniques were developed through the research and accumulation of countless predecessors since Ancient Times and flourished during the end of the Pre-Qin era."

"Humanity's Golden Age also began from this point. During that time, humans had already grasped the key power to combat the Ancient God Clan, even launching counterattacks into the Ancient God Realm and seizing the initiative."

"Until many years later, the concept of Catastrophe was formally introduced."

Jing Ci clearly understood these matters and wasn't particularly surprised.

Gu Jianlin, however, fell into deep thought. No wonder the so-called Qilin Forbidden Curse eluded him.

"My junior brother was researching the origins of Breathing Techniques and Forbidden Spells when he suddenly went mad."

Huai Yin withdrew her gaze, regrettably saying, "Don't respond! Don't respond! Don't respond! This repeated phrase has now become a famous saying in the Dark World. That fool claimed that humanity shouldn't meddle with the powers of the Inheritance Path, including Breathing Techniques and Forbidden Spells, calling them mere conspiracies."

Gu Jianlin hesitated for a moment.

"Have you heard others talk about this matter?"

Jing Ci glanced at him and smiled, "Are you curious about what he did?"

Huai Yin then resolved the confusion.

"Two hundred years ago, Jiang Yanli was convinced his conclusions were correct. He spiraled into overwhelming madness, proclaiming that it was all a shocking conspiracy—that the world was drunk while he alone was sober."

She paused, "Yet no one believed his words. Everyone thought he had lost his mind. And in that insanity, he resolved to do something unprecedented."

Jing Ci added, "Sever all Inheritance Paths in this world."

Gu Jianlin felt a profound terror exploding within him, rendering him speechless for a long time.

"Sever the Inheritance Paths?"

He muttered, "How could that even be achieved?"

According to Deep Space Official Website records, humanity still hadn't figured out how the Inheritance Paths had originally emerged.

A faint mockery flashed across Huai Yin's eyes, but she said nothing.

"If we can't discern the origin of the Inheritance Paths, then it is indeed impossible to sever them. But there's an old saying: If you can't solve the problem itself, solve the person creating the problem instead."

Jing Ci smiled, "It's alright not knowing how to sever the Inheritance Paths. All you have to do is kill every single Ascender in this world, and the Inheritance Paths will naturally cease to exist."

Kill every Ascender in this world.

Gu Jianlin felt a cold sweat breaking out all over him, his pupils trembling violently.

Madness.

This was sheer madness.

How many people would need to die for this?

It amounted to an apocalypse.

"Heaven's Punishment: Sword of Damocles. This is a segment of the world-destroying plan. The Red King, a Ghost-cutting Ninth Rank Ascender, is at the stage titled Candle Yin God, mastering the greatest number of Forbidden Spells along with Breathing Techniques."

Jing Ci said softly, "The Red King procured 3,267 meteorites from the depths of the Universe and used Forbidden Spells to transform them. Relying on the supercomputer Deep Space, he created an algorithm and established an immense Alchemy Matrix outside the atmosphere. The core of this domain is what you understand as the Realm of Freedom."

Gu Jianlin realized that the Realm of Freedom's effect was to obliterate all Extraordinary Powers within its domain!

"Although in the end, the Red King's plan failed."

Jing Ci shook his head, "Heaven's Punishment was preserved and later used on the Teacher, to keep him in check and prevent him from killing indiscriminately."

Gu Jianlin turned to look at the old man.

Huai Yin's face was impassive, letting out only a cold snort, "Unlucky."

Gu Jianlin felt a growing curiosity.

If the Red King was so insane, what had the King of Qing done in his time?

At this level, their thinking was incomprehensible.

Especially for someone like him, an Extraordinary Power illiterate—he was utterly clueless.

"The stone tablet before you records the Qilin Forbidden Curse."

Huai Yin said indifferently, "Though it seems blank, if you're on the Divine Path, focusing your spirit on it may allow you to comprehend the Ancient God Clan's language and script, gaining knowledge of the Forbidden Curse."

"However, compared to Breathing Techniques, learning Forbidden Spells is slower because they require an incubation process."

Jing Ci turned his head and said, "Go ahead and try."

Chapter 369 - 189: Fusion of the Ghost Slayer Path

Gu Jianlin looked at the stone stele. "What's the effect of the Qilin Forbidden Curse?"

Jing Ci turned his head and looked at the old man.

Huai Yin didn't move at all, but the shadow behind him suddenly trembled and silently rose from the ground!

For a moment, an eerie shadow appeared behind the old man, with a pitch-black appearance and outline, its entire body shrouded in black mist, sinister and terrifying, like an Evil Spirit!

The black shadow raised its hand, and pitch-black light gathered at its fingertips, ready to erupt!

"This is the Qilin Forbidden Curse. Its effect is that you can create a shadow clone with all the abilities of your real body, and it can even replicate your body's spirituality. Essentially, it's like having a second self. Moreover, the clone is immortal. Even if it endures fatal damage, it will disperse and require about twelve hours to coalesce again."

Jing Ci spoke calmly, "And there's no side effect at all. The moment you create the shadow clone, there isn't even any consumption of spirituality, as it draws from the natural forces around it. However, there's one drawback—its distance from the real body cannot be too far; otherwise, it will directly dissipate. The range is within one kilometer."

The shadow clone behind Huai Yin raised its hand and aimed at itself.

Bam!

The shadow clone's head was suddenly shattered, dispersing into nothingness.

Gu Jianlin saw this scene, and his heart burned with excitement. This was truly a divine technique for reasoning with others!

Double the firepower.

He immediately tried to focus his mind, staring at the ancient Fallen Stele.

For a fleeting moment, countless eerie and twisted lines surfaced on the stone stele in front of him, seemingly converging into numerous bizarre symbols. Ancient whispers filled his mind, driving him to the brink of madness.

Because he held the Ancient God Position, his mind was unaffected by external interference.

The pitch-black Qilin within his mind awakened, opening a sliver of burning golden eyes.

Even the fragment of the Qilin Wedge suspended deep in his consciousness seemed to tremble slightly.

At the same time, behind the Black Qilin, the darkness suddenly boiled over, trembling like a living thing, extending sharp edges that danced wildly like demons, chaos and fervor running rampant.

The process was so seamless.

It felt as if it was destined.

Like the natural order of the sun rising and setting, the rotation of day and night.

It was the law of nature.

"Take a guess, how long will it take for the wayward disciple to master the Qilin Forbidden Curse this time?"

Huai Yin smiled mischievously. "A week?"

Jing Ci recalled the last incident. "Three days?"

When an expert makes a move, you can instantly tell.

There are only two ways to master forbidden curses:

Either one observes the mythical body of an Ancient Supreme at close range.

Or one seeks out these Fallen Steles, which carry innumerable Spiritual Imprints from predecessors.

If someone lacks talent, even staring at it for a hundred years will yield nothing. Conversely, if they possess innate aptitude, a single glance can elicit a reaction.

Gu Jianlin's reaction had already made it quite clear.

"This isn't like Breathing Techniques. The essence of Breathing Techniques can be grasped naturally as long as the individual has talent and reaches the right emotional state. When performed, it manifests as a domain—simple yet brutal. Forbidden curses, however, are different. They require not only the cultivation of spirituality and mental strength but also a fusion with one's own soul, especially the Qilin Forbidden Curse."

Huai Yin gestured with confidence. "The essence of the Qilin Forbidden Curse is akin to nurturing another self."

Jing Ci thought for a moment. "Indeed, it's not that easy."

But just as his voice dropped, something trembled in the Void.

Huai Yin and Jing Ci seemed to sense it and simultaneously lowered their heads.

Gu Jianlin's shadow began trembling violently as well, showing signs that it was about to materialize a clone!

"This is possible?"

Huai Yin's eyes widened with shock.

Jing Ci crouched down, staring at his shadow intently, his expression perplexed.

Meanwhile, Gu Jianlin didn't hear their conversation.

Because within the depths of his consciousness, a bizarre scene unfolded.

The phantom representing the Inheritance Path trembled violently.

The Divine and Ghost Slayer phantoms were forcibly separated.

The golden eyes of the pitch-black Qilin suddenly turned blood-red and swallowed the Ghost Slayer Path phantom whole.

In an instant, the wildly dancing shadow transformed dramatically into a twisted phantom. Its body was pierced through by blades, drenched in crimson blood, trampling upon a mound of bones, clutching a sinister blade in each hand!

Ghost Slayer Path!

Gu Jianlin's second path had astonishingly fused with the shadow created by the Qilin Forbidden Curse!

Boom!

Gu Jianlin regained consciousness, breathing heavily.

As soon as he came to his senses, his first reaction was to lower his head and inspect his shadow.

Sure enough, his shadow was no longer the same as before.

The cluster of darkness was vibrating madly at an almost imperceptible frequency.

It seemed ready to break out of its cocoon.

"Awake?"

Jing Ci shoved his hands into his pockets with a casual expression and looked at him. "Hmm, half a minute—decent enough."

Huai Yin, sitting in a wheelchair, glanced faintly at the boy's shadow and murmured to herself, "The shadow has already begun hatching. Before long, it'll be usable in combat. This level of comprehension

is okay. Although it's just a notch below what we achieved back then, among the younger generation of today, it's peerless."

Gu Jianlin froze, not expecting that as the Qilin Venerable, his comprehension was still insufficient.

He analyzed the situation—it must be related to the mutation of the shadow.

Chapter 370 - 189: Fusion of the Ghost Slayer Path_2

Who could have imagined that the Ghost Slayer Path would actually fuse with the Shadow!

Last night, he was still stressing over the issue of two Inheritance Paths not being able to coexist.

But now, with the Shadow maturing, perhaps this problem could be solved!

"If you want to speed up the maturation of the Shadow, then try to make the Shadow faster than you,"

Jing Ci said nonchalantly, "When that moment arrives, you'll be able to use the Shadow directly."

Gu Jianlin found himself bewildered. According to common sense, the Shadow couldn't possibly be faster than oneself.

"I'm not using the Divine Path—you'll have to figure this out yourself."

Jing Ci added: "Forbidden spells are divided into two types: Original Forbidden Curses and Ancient Forbidden Curses. Original Forbidden Curses stem from the Ancient Supreme, and each person can only master one type of curse corresponding to their path. Ancient Forbidden Curses, however, are unrestricted. In the future, you'll have plenty of time to learn more forbidden spells, including Breathing Techniques."

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

At that moment, the Soul Skywell trembled violently, as if on the verge of collapse.

"Time to leave. Don't let the Ether Association discover that the teacher was giving you special treatment here. Keep this in mind: when using forbidden spells in the future, try to find a secluded place, or use the Lock of Nonexistence to hide it."

Jing Ci advised: "Keep your trump cards hidden. If you can ambush someone, make sure it counts."

Gu Jianlin blinked: "Got it."

"Remember, you never came here today, and the teacher never gave you extra lessons."

Jing Ci continued: "Recently, the Ether Association has been conducting a thorough internal purge, exposing quite a few traitors, and many people have died. It's a sensitive period, so it's best not to provoke their fragile nerves."

Huai Yin snapped his fingers expressionlessly.

For some reason, Gu Jianlin, through profiling, discovered something peculiar.

The two of them seemed to be in a rush.

But before he could verify anything, the space twisted once again.

The world spun.

France, Provence.

For a moment, a grocery store appeared amidst the wilderness. The spring breeze swept through, carrying a rich aroma of flowers.

Jing Ci gazed at the vast expanse of purple lavender, lost in thought.

However, when he turned around, he fell silent once again.

Huai Yin pulled out his reading glasses from his pocket, followed by a wrinkled notebook, flipping through to find phone numbers.

In his haste, he even licked his fingers to facilitate flipping the pages.

Finding the number, he picked up the satellite phone in the store and pressed the buttons.

As the call connected, the elderly man squinted contentedly, humming a tune.

Reclining in a redwood deck chair, he was as carefree as a rider galloping with triumph in spring.

"Master, I hope I'm not disturbing your rest."

While brewing tea, Huai Yin chuckled into the phone: "It's nothing serious—I'm just getting old and thinking about you, Master. Once I've handled those two tasks for you, we can catch up properly."

He sighed: "It's been ages since Silver and Gold saw each other too—they miss you dearly."

Whatever the President said on the phone immediately displeased Huai Yin, who frowned: "Master! How could you think I'd be that kind of person? We're all getting on in years. What's left to brag about anymore? In your eyes, am I really that vain? I'm just nearing the end of my days, wanting to see old friends before my time's up—nothing more."

"Understood, fine. Go ahead with your meetings since they involve the Candle Dragon and Qilin, the two Supremes, as well as potential traitors within the association. Caution is key."

He said gently: "Hmm, you're asking for my opinion? I believe such matters are best discussed in person."

Black Cloud City's medical department, private apartment building.

Wanwan was in the study room on the first floor working on her homework, surrounded by a mountain of exercise books.

She was a smart young girl, highly intelligent—within a week, she had mastered the curriculum for third grade. Now, battling with math equations, she bit her pen, her brow furrowed in frustration.

She didn't like homework at all.

Studying brought her endless pain.

Compared to this, her days scavenging in the junkyard were far more joyful.

But her older brother once told her she represented the hope of Sanctuary and had to study hard to earn test scores, ensuring everyone could continue living peacefully within the refuge.

It was rumored that if one studied hard enough, they could awaken the Academic Master Path, ascend to the Ninth-Order University God, and clear the injustices against the sanctuary's inhabitants, punch out the Judgement Court, and stomp the Night Watchers.

Even the Five Supreme Beings of old wouldn't be her match—she could save the world.

The world would finally know peace.

The little girl was dumbfounded. Her first reaction was disbelief, so she sought confirmation from her father and sister for help.

But after exchanging peculiar looks, both of them earnestly confirmed the story.

Wanwan was astonished.

Later, someone told her that she wasn't the only one capable of awakening the Academic Master Path, meaning she didn't have to study so rigorously—just doing "okay" was sufficient. Saving the world wasn't mandatory.

The little girl breathed a sigh of relief.

At that moment, thunk-thunk!

The window was knocked on.

Wanwan jumped in fright, thinking the troublemaking kids who bullied her had come again.

She turned and ran immediately.

"Don't run, it's me!"

Outside the window appeared a delicate little face framed by short platinum hair.

Wanwan froze, turning her head timidly, her clear eyes blinking: "Sister Xiao Yu? You're back?"

Ji Xiaoyu crossed her arms: "Of course! There's no cage in this world that can confine me! The Ancient God Realm is nothing—not dangerous in the slightest! Even if the Qilin Venerable showed up, I'd knock them out with one punch!"

Her followers blushed below.

The Little Princess was being hoisted up by her gang.

Wanwan hesitated: "Really? I heard Sister Xiao Yu got sanctioned before."

Ji Xiaoyu's expression turned awkward: "What? Sanctioned? Who could sanction me? That's nonsense!"

Wanwan thought for a moment and weakly said: "But while you were gone, the hospital's TV channels looped videos of you hanging from a streetlight, complete with illustrations. Everyone saw it."

Ji Xiaoyu froze on the spot.

Whoever did this was absolutely despicable!

Her face flushed instantly, nearly bleeding from rage, bursting into fury.

But she couldn't lose face in front of her followers, so she took a deep breath and said, "Editing! It's malicious editing meant to smear me! Ever seen those meme videos? They're all fake! This must be jealousy of my talent and envy of my skills, driving them to slander me!"

Wanwan seriously asked: "What's a meme video?"

Ji Xiaoyu waved her hand dismissively: "Oh, never mind that. Come on, I'll take you out for some fun."

Wanwan whispered: "But I haven't finished my homework yet."

"Homework? What nonsense—forget it! Whoever made you do homework, I'll crush their skull!"

Ji Xiaoyu opened the window: "Come on, the restaurant is serving new desserts today."

Wanwan's eyes gleamed at the mention of desserts, and she quickly climbed out.

As a Fourth-Rank Mad King, Ji Xiaoyu effortlessly picked her up: "Don't tell your family. Speaking of which, I recently found some materials in the Qilin Immortal Palace. Might be able to refine an unparalleled Divine Pill—let's test it on some idiots first. If it works, we're rich."

She said excitedly: "Then you won't have to stay here anymore, with—"

Before she finished, whoosh!

A stone whizzed toward them.

Ji Xiaoyu reacted quickly, snapping her fingers, shattering the stone mid-air.

By the hospital entrance stood a fatty with a slingshot, accompanied by several mischievous kids.

They grinned and taunted: "Look, that Unclean One ran out again! Grab your stuff—go hit her!"

Wanwan turned pale and shrank back immediately.

Ji Xiaoyu's face instantly darkened, noticing the bruises on Wanwan's arm.

"They did this?"

She asked furiously.

Wanwan shook her head, whispering, "No, I got them accidentally."

Ji Xiaoyu, while not exactly a genius, wasn't entirely clueless.

She immediately put the little girl down, turned around, and raised her hand: "Bring me the rocket launcher."

Her gang promptly handed over a bazooka.

The mischievous kids turned pale: "What are you trying to do? I'm warning you, I'm—"

Boom!