

Ancient 371

Chapter 371 - 190 Youzhu: Tonight...

Su Youzhu was woken up by a phone call this morning.

She groggily sat up, rubbing the stray hair on top of her head. Her light aqua short hair was slightly messy, and the thin strap of her nightgown had slipped down to her arm. Her snow-white skin, bathed in sunlight, appeared smooth and delicate like fine jade.

Her dad had gone on a sudden business trip this morning, her mom was off meeting a client to get her nails done, and there was no one else at home.

The person she'd been thinking about the most had been cleverly sent away by her last night.

The house was very quiet, empty.

It gave her an inexplicable sense of unease.

She picked up her phone, her expression sharpening slightly upon seeing the caller ID.

"Hello, Sister."

Her voice carried a lazy, sultry undertone in the early morning, with a touch less of its usual coldness.

On the other end of the line, Su Youxia breathed a sigh of relief and mockingly snorted, "I sent you several messages last night, and not one got a reply. Hmm, were you too busy playing your sibling 'games'?"

Su Youzhu puffed up her cheeks, her voice turning colder. "I absolutely was not. Last night, I..."

Wait a second. She suddenly remembered something. Last night, she had indeed taken the Wandering Soul Secret Medicine and the Stone Heart Ink, preparing to endure through the side effects of the Yin Yang Twin Jade in her sleep.

She'd even been fully prepared to be jolted awake by excruciating pain.

Yet, her sleep quality last night was astonishingly good—she didn't even have a single nightmare.

There was only one explanation.

The side effects of the Yin Yang Twin Jade hadn't manifested.

"What's wrong?"

Su Youxia asked on the other side of the phone.

Su Youzhu looked around in confusion and suddenly spotted a silver silk-thread bracelet on her wrist. It sparkled dazzlingly under the sunlight, almost translucent in appearance.

She recognized with a single glance that this was an exceptionally rare antique—an Alchemy Weapon, no less.

On her nightstand was a note: "Keep this bracelet on for the next three days. Don't take it off."

It was Gu Jianlin's handwriting, the strokes straight and firm, as cold and rigid as he was.

He had been here last night.

Su Youzhu sat in silence for a long time. Gradually, a glimmer of understanding dawned in her eyes, tinged with confusion.

Gu Jianlin must have done something to help her bypass the backlash of the Mythical Weapon.

But how was he able to achieve something not even a Ninth-order Great God could?

"Why do I feel like you're acting strange?"

On the phone, Su Youxia teased with a half-laughing tone. "Don't tell me you're still hesitating about letting him in on your secret?"

Su Youzhu's lashes lowered, and she murmured softly, "He already knows."

She didn't mention that her doppelgänger had died and that she had barely escaped with her main body intact.

Since it was all in the past, bringing it up would only make her sister anxious.

"Huh? He already knows?"

Su Youxia's curiosity was clearly piqued. "When did you spill the beans?"

Su Youzhu thought for a moment. "Back in the Qilin Immortal Palace. To be honest, he suspected me long before that."

Su Youxia snorted through the phone. "I told you he'd figure it out sooner or later. After all, he's Uncle Gu's son. No matter how well you disguise yourself, you'd always slip up in front of him."

Su Youzhu stroked the bracelet on her wrist, remaining silent.

"For someone with your personality, taking such an initiative is rare."

Su Youxia teased, "It's obvious you like him a lot."

At the mention of the topic, Su Youzhu scoffed lightly and said calmly, "I've known him since I was nine. He's the man I've raised since childhood. Nobody in this world understands him better than I do. If I didn't make a move, he'd never like me. And with the curse hanging over us, even if he had feelings for me, he'd never date me."

No matter how chaotic the battles were in the Extraordinary World, life still had to be lived in reality.

She was also a normal young woman, yearning for love's response and companionship.

This was the most vibrant time of her youth, a time meant to be spent traveling, dining, shopping, watching movies, and curling up together on the couch to watch horror films, ending the evening sharing the same bed in the safety of a single room.

Only, with Gu Jianlin's personality, such ideas probably never crossed his mind.

His thought process was incredibly straightforward.

Protect family.

Break the curse.

Clear his father's name, then seek revenge.

That's it.

Simplistic and monotonous.

Su Youzhu had to work tirelessly to insert herself into his life, to scatter a little color into his world.

And since she mostly relied on seduction, that color often leaned toward yellow.

There was a brief silence before Su Youxia chuckled. "The man you raised since childhood, huh."

Su Youzhu donned a serious expression. "Is there a problem? When the teacher was away on trips, I was the one secretly taking care of him—tucking him in during winter and shooing away mosquitoes for him in summer. Do you know how hard that was for me?"

The sudden progress in their sibling relationship wasn't without reason.

It was because Su Youzhu understood him far too well.

If it had been anyone else, they would've remained distant and reserved.

Gu Jianlin was like an ice block.

If you didn't use the perfect temperature to melt him, all you'd get was his indifference.

Su Youxia quipped meaningfully, "I see now. You're quite the eager one."

Su Youzhu replied coldly, "After all, I promised the teacher I'd take good care of him."

"Sure, but Uncle Gu didn't ask you to become his child bride."

Su Youxia smirked. "If you like him, just admit it. Why come up with excuses?"

Su Youzhu: "I'm hanging up."

"Alright, alright, I'll stop teasing you."

Su Youxia's tone turned serious. "I just got some news: Master has returned to reality."

For a split second, a frosty glint appeared in Su Youzhu's beautiful eyes.

In that moment, she seemed to revert to the resolute and lethal Moon Princess.

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"But, he seems to have gone mad."

Su Youxia said perplexedly, "His mental state is extremely unstable. He keeps telling everyone the Qilin's Wedge isn't in his hands, then asks if you believe him. If you say you don't, he'll fight you to the death. But the problem is, he's been planning this for a full eight years, and even the Ether Association was outmaneuvered by him. How could it not be in his possession?"

Su Youzhu was slightly stunned. She suddenly recalled the experiences in the underground ruins.

The fragment of the Qilin's Wedge might actually not be with Master.

"Because of this, the Si Family's old ancestor has already stepped in to handle the matter. The other board members are all treating this as a dire threat. If possible, you should quickly become a candidate for Dusk Sequence. It'll be safer that way."

Su Youxia said softly, "Besides, the Ether Association is about to launch a full-scale suppression of the Dark World."

Su Youzhu's gaze deepened, her thoughts indeterminate. "Mm, I understand."

"If there's nothing else, I'll hang up now. Everything's fine on your end, right?"

Su Youxia asked one last time.

Su Youzhu replied, "It's fine. You, too, take care."

Su Youxia hummed in acknowledgment, and the call ended.

In the warm sunlight, Su Youzhu put down her phone and sat in silence on the bed for a long time.

She didn't know when it began, but that boy seemed to have grown up already, and he could even protect her now.

This feeling of being cared for and even protected—she couldn't deny it was incredibly addictive.

But she still felt a little out of place.

"Even though you're younger than me, by order of seniority, you should call me Senior Sister."

To be honest, though, it was mostly worry.

Watching him grow step by step filled Su Youzhu's heart with relief.

But at the same time, she clearly understood one thing.

There's no such thing as a free lunch in reality.

Becoming stronger always comes at a price.

No one is an exception.

As someone who witnessed his growth, Su Youzhu felt more heartache and concern than anything else.

Especially now that she realized that boy had visited her side last night.

It was as if she was transported back to the past nine years, only this time, the roles were reversed.

Su Youzhu experienced what it felt like to be silently protected by him.

For some reason, her heartbeat quickened.

She suddenly wanted to see him.

Supporting her chin with one hand, Su Youzhu stared at the figure on her phone screen before opening WeChat to send a message: "No one's home tonight. Remember to come back for dinner. I'll make pork rib soup for you."

After thinking for a moment, she added another line: "I'll wear black stockings for you."

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With a sudden twist in time and space, Gu Jianlin appeared in the base of Black Cloud City.

That apartment building, which had been destroyed twice consecutively, was profoundly unlucky.

After the last Returning Burial Forest incident, the Ether Association had evidently begun to take the matter extremely seriously. The base was now filled with Demon Hunters from the Judgement Court. Occasionally, nano warriors or investigators passing by would be scanned with crystal balls, likely for some type of specialized divination method.

Even the surveillance cameras in the alleys were rotating at full angles, monitoring every movement in real time.

Of course, this was only the most basic level of screening.

If someone were to be apprehended for a thorough investigation, it certainly wouldn't be this cursory.

Rumor had it that following last night's victory celebration, a special meeting was held at the Black Cloud City base. The details were later leaked onto the Deep Space forum.

The top ten from the first tier of the Omega Sequence had initially uncovered clues about the underground ruins and the fragments of the Qilin's Wedge during their pursuit of the Ancient Ancestors in the Living Burial Area.

The Golden Faction's leader, Ying Changsheng, and the Silver Faction's leader, Mu Qingyou—

The two had nearly managed to exploit dimensional rifts to enter the underground ruins first.

However, Black Iron Faction's leader, Li Hanting, was ambushed, and three of their companions betrayed them on the spot.

Even worse, a batch of nano warriors' lives was used as leverage.

As leaders, the three ultimately decided after deliberation to abandon the pursuit of the Qilin's Wedge fragments.

A portion stayed behind to protect their companions.

While the leading trio focused on eliminating enemies.

The investors cultivated by Master of the You Ying Group were nearly slaughtered to extinction by them.

But in the end, the fragment of the Qilin's Wedge was still lost.

This utterly infuriated the high-ranking members of the Ether Association, especially the Judgement Court.

Everyone knew that one of the nine Saints of the Judgement Court, Li Qingsong, whose life was nearing its final stage, had developed an obsessive desperation for the Qilin Immortal Palace, frantically seeking immortality.

Upon learning the Qilin Wedge fragment was lost, he flew into an uncontrollable rage.

He reportedly collapsed and ended up in the hospital on the spot.

"You won't believe this—Saint Li Qingsong got angrier the more he thought about it after returning last night. He even blew up his seaside villa and was admitted directly to the ICU that very night."

"Now the Judgement Court has issued a full-scale order to investigate traitors. Councilman Zhang uncovered twelve suspects overnight—nine of whom confessed, and two are still under interrogation. Another one resisted arrest and was killed on the spot."

"This is terrifying. I just hope my future teammates are free of traitors."

Heh, even the Judgement Court has moments of panic like this.

How fitting.

That said, even if someone obtained a fragment of the Qilin's Wedge, it wouldn't reveal any secrets of immortality.

All they'd gain would be a Candle Dragon Bone.

Which would, in turn, attract the unrelenting wrath of old monsters.

"B-rank investigator Gu Jianlin, upon receiving this message, proceed immediately to the Black Cloud City command center to collect your mission reward. Director Chen Bojun is waiting for you in his office."

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Taixu's sultry voice rang out.

Gu Jianlin was in a good mood today. Not only could he earn a hefty reward, but he could also enjoy the misfortune of the Judgement Court.

Suddenly, he remembered something.

He quickly took out his phone to check.

Among the twelve traitors reported by the Judgement Court, Lin Wanqiu was not listed.

"It seems this woman must have some sort of method to bypass regular scrutiny; otherwise, she wouldn't have lasted until now. But this is probably not a long-term solution. Sooner or later, they'll trace it back to her."

Gu Jianlin fell into thoughtful contemplation. It was time to decide whether to recruit this woman or not.

There were still many things he needed to do right now.

The immediate priority was to nurture the shadow behind him, to let it hatch as soon as possible and leverage the advantages of dual paths.

The shadow's advancement also needed to be scheduled promptly.

The Ghost Slayer Path was a profession with obvious strengths and weaknesses, emphasizing high output and speed with zero utility.

Its key transformation point was at the Fourth Rank, known as the Shura Rank.

Youzhu was currently at this Rank, mastering the ability of Space Freeze, significantly enhancing her instant-kill capabilities.

Gu Jianlin's main path was the Divine Path, which, at the Fourth Rank, granted the Power of Life and Death, essentially the Corpse Control Technique. Although it seemed like a relatively weak ability, it could play an immense role on the battlefield.

By then, these two professions would be enough for him to handle any battlefield situation.

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Rumble.

The glass curtain walls trembled, soundwaves shaking the walls as though the building floors were quaking.

"Zijin, I've already told you, before you reach the Holy Land, you cannot act rashly. You're still young and have the talent of a Divine General. Now is not the time to pick a fight with the Judgement Court yet."

"In as little as a month, or at most three months, I guarantee I'll ascend to the Seventh Rank. Now is the time. Besides, Xiao Gu's performance has exceeded our expectations and even earned the old teacher's approval. I think the timing is perfect. I've spoken with my father; he respects my decision."

"But there are still risks. The thing you did back then, secretly letting that little girl go – the Judgement Court is still investigating it. Rhein is very concerned about this matter. If they trace it back to you, you're finished!"

"That little girl has the Mythical Weapon Old Gu gave her; what's there to fear?"

"During this mission in the Returning Burial Forest, she showed up again. Wang Taisheng has his eyes on her now."

"Wang Taisheng, that idiot, doesn't even know who she is."

"One day, he'll figure it out!"

"Not listening, not listening—turtle reciting sutras!"

"How are you still so stubborn at your age? Why don't you try yelling even louder?"

"Anyway, you've already set up a barrier; no one can hear us."

Gu Jianlin had just reached the conference room door when he heard two big shots arguing inside.

He hesitated, unsure whether he should enter.

"You're here?"

The glass door of the conference room opened automatically. Chen Bojun sat behind his desk, frowning.

Middle age brings its struggles; his thermos was filled with wolfberry tea.

On the leather sofa, Lu Zijin held a cup of milk tea in both hands. As usual, her hair was styled in cute twin ponytails. She wore a black Lolita dress with lace edges, black stockings hugged her slender legs, and rounded leather shoes adorned her feet.

These two looked like they belonged to different generations.

"Director Chen, Minister Lu."

Gu Jianlin forced himself to enter, sensing the tension in the room had slightly dissipated.

"Come sit beside me."

Lu Zijin glanced at the empty seat next to her, smiling sweetly. "Come over and let big sis have a good look at you."

Gu Jianlin's scalp tingled. He glanced at the parrot perched on his shoulder and instead chose to sit across from her.

"What, are you afraid I'll eat you or something?"

Lu Zijin chuckled, letting out a delicate hum. "It seems your relationship with that little girl has progressed quite a bit in the past few days. As expected of young teenagers—after dropping their masks and being honest with each other, I can smell the stench of romance from across the coffee table. Got yourself a girlfriend and forgot all about sis, huh?"

Gu Jianlin was left utterly dumbfounded by her barrage of teasing. This woman seemed to know everything.

"Girlfriend? Romance? What are you talking about?"

He replied grimly, "I don't have one."

Sighing in resignation, Chen Bojun finally intervened. "No need to make a fuss. This matter has already spread everywhere. Yesterday, Mr. Jing took someone to Greenland. A Ninth Rank Great God, Judith Strick herself, resides there in seclusion."

Gu Jianlin thought about it and suddenly realized. "I know. My senior mentioned it to me."

Lu Zijin's expression turned peculiar as she snorted coldly.

Chen Bojun's face displayed a similar strangeness. Unable to resist, he explained, "Do you know that Judith announced her retirement five years ago? Since then, she's refused to treat anyone."

Gu Jianlin froze for a moment.

"Haha, back in the day, even when Judith's own grandson fell ill, she turned a blind eye and let him perish."

Lu Zijin sneered sarcastically. "What a person of principle she is."

Chen Bojun echoed her sentiment. "Indeed. Your senior has some serious cajones."

Gu Jianlin internally acknowledged that this must have come at a hefty favor cost.

"I see."

He muttered, "How on earth did my senior convince her?"

"Your senior straight-up put a knife to her throat."

Chen Bojun imitated someone's tone: "If the person I brought dies, then you, old hag, can follow them down to the grave."

Lu Zijin raised her thumb in admiration. "Respect for the seniors when needed; disrespect for the old hag when not. Bravo!"

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"..."

Gu Jianlin's vision went dark.

For some reason, he managed to find a thread of logic in such an absurd description.

Yes.

The senior brother might appear gentle and refined, but those who know him understand how ruthless he truly is.

Just like the teacher's esteemed reputation—it's not to be trusted.

Only Gu Jianlin himself genuinely wishes to be kind to others and practices it in earnest.

Gu Jianlin suddenly felt a bit exhausted.

People really can't trust each other anymore.

Unbeknownst to him, another hefty blame was placed squarely on his shoulders.

"Both Zijin and I know the inside story. We can probably guess who that little girl Mr. Jing brought along is. Your sister has been lurking around you for so long, and now she's finally revealing herself to you."

Chen Bojun reminded him, "The reason we called you here today is precisely because of this. Your sister's identity must be kept secret. No one can know she was your father's student; otherwise, this will

definitely alarm the Judgement Court. Last time you killed the Yan brothers and those squad leaders in Black Cloud City, that was just a minor incident."

"But if the Judgement Court finds out that Professor Gu's student is still alive, there's a high chance Saints will intervene directly. When that happens, your sister will inevitably be taken away, and no one will be able to stop it."

He paused. "Especially since she's now part of the You Ying Group."

Lu Zijin waved his hand dismissively, curling his lips and saying, "But there's no need to be overly anxious. Since the King of Qing chose you, he won't let anything happen to you or your family. Old Chen just likes to exaggerate."

Gu Jianlin snapped back to attention, a trace of cold glint flashing through his eyes.

"Understood."

He nodded slightly. "I'll be mindful."

"Don't rely too much on the King of Qing. After all, his time is running out."

Chen Bojun advised, "Bound by Heaven's Punishment, every time he intervenes, there's inevitably some cost."

Surprisingly, Lu Zijin didn't argue this point.

Gu Jianlin was a bit taken aback; the elder had never mentioned this to him.

"Speaking of which, there's another crucial matter."

Chen Bojun suddenly said, "Your previous request has been approved by headquarters. The Judgement Court will reassess the investigation into your father's case, including the case involving Mu Feng and his team, which is also being reopened."

"Though this might not necessarily be good news. Who knows what schemes they're cooking up?"

Lu Zijin curled his lips. "Due to the talent you've demonstrated, you've already caught the attention of various factions. If we can use this situation to strike a blow against the Judgement Court's faction, it would indeed be ideal."

Gu Jianlin raised an eyebrow. "So what?"

Chen Bojun fixed his gaze on him and asked, "Have you found any clues in the Living Burial Area during this mission?"

Lu Zijin narrowed her eyes as well, appearing quite eager.

The reason was straightforward.

The young man standing before them was Professor Gu's son.

No matter what Professor Gu did in the end, his lifetime of extraordinary achievements could not be denied.

Even the Judgement Court had to acknowledge it.

Now that Professor Gu is gone, the only one who could potentially take his place was his son.

Gu Jianlin recalled the matters involving the Order of the Hidden and responded with a hum.

"More or less."

He pondered for a moment. "It's tied to the traitor involved in the recent operations."

He couldn't say much more.

They'd have to wait for the other side to take the bait.

Chen Bojun and Lu Zijin exchanged glances.

"You know the stakes. If you're not sharing with us, you must have your reasons."

Chen Bojun nodded with satisfaction, saying, "We won't interfere too much with your actions, but if you need anything, feel free to tell us. We'll do our best to meet your needs."

"Mm-hmm, especially since the President takes the matter of the traitor very seriously, and you hold the crucial information."

Lu Zijin reminded him, "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The President's personality is such that if you prove useful to her, you can afford to be a bit more indulgent, as long as it's within her tolerance."

Gu Jianlin thought about the rewards from this mission, which he had already received.

"Can I be promoted to the first-tier squad?"

The two people opposite him fell silent at this remark.

Young man, you're only at Third Rank!

"That's not something I can decide; it depends on the President's judgment."

Chen Bojun chuckled wryly.

Lu Zijin glared at him. "Isn't the second-tier squad enough for you to cause trouble?"

Gu Jianlin replied earnestly, "The second-tier squad no longer poses any challenge for me. After all, the strongest member is Ji Xiaoyu, and even you've seen the viral video of her hanging from a street lamp."

As his words fell, there was a deafening boom.

A massive explosion shot into the sky, accompanied by a foul stench that surged inside through the window on the wind.

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Ugh!

Chen Bojun smelled the stench and immediately bent over, grabbed a trash can, and began vomiting.

Lu Zijin, her face full of disgust, blew out a breath of "immortal energy." A fierce wind swept through, dispersing the foul odor.

Gu Jianlin felt his heart skip a beat.

He had just bragged to his superiors about securing his footing in the second echelon and taming a devilish troublemaker. While it couldn't be called saving the world, at least he'd accomplished something noteworthy.

But the next second, he was smacked in the face.

He instantly recognized the stench; it was undoubtedly the handiwork of the Little Princess.

What sorcery is this? He'd confiscated the formula, yet the brat somehow concocted a new poison overnight!

Only then did he remember to fish out the crumpled little notebook and glance at it.

Good heavens, it was full of pinyin!

For some reason, a ridiculous thought struck him—the troublemaking kid probably didn't even know how to write.

In a family that big? Surely not.

But then he recalled the Little Princess's personality profile.

Alright, there's a 90% chance she's illiterate.

Just then, Taixu's soft, alluring voice came through: "Emergency report: A-grade investigator Ji Xiaoyu has suddenly fallen ill and illegally used biochemical weapons in the medical department. She's currently holding five hostages on the hospital rooftop. Right now, Instructor Zhu has led the security team to encircle the medical department, and tense negotiations are underway."

Gu Jianlin couldn't help but think this sounded suspiciously like a kidnapping case.

"Such sin," muttered the parrot perched on his shoulder.

"Taixu, check the identities of the hostages," Lu Zijin said calmly.

Chen Bojun wiped his mouth after vomiting and raised his head to look at the projection screen.

It showed five tied-up brats hanging from streetlights, their mouths stuffed with Poison Bags. They stank so badly tears streamed down their faces.

Unconscious.

On the rooftop was a sofa where the Little Princess, dressed in a pink Lolita dress, sat unruffled, calmly sipping iced cola. Beside her lay a rocket launcher, still smoking.

Her expression practically screamed, "Above heaven and earth, I alone reign supreme."

Her underlings stood reverently behind her, gazing in awe at her strength and domineering aura.

They even took photos to preserve the memory.

Gu Jianlin was dumbfounded because he found this scene eerily familiar.

Unexpectedly, the girl's ability to imitate was impressive. Within two or three days, she had recreated one of his iconic moments.

Except, the vibe was entirely different between individuals.

Gu Jianlin came off as indifferent, so the effect wasn't bad.

The Little Princess's display, though, only needed five more words to sum it up:

"I dare, what can you do?"

"Those who imitate me flourish; those who resemble me perish!"

The parrot squawked.

Chen Bojun rubbed his temple and sighed, "Can we have one peaceful day around here? Wait, Zijin, take a look— isn't that chubby kid Director Li's son from the Investigation Bureau?"

Lu Zijin raised her beautiful eyes for a glance and murmured, "Hmm. He has the same ugly face as Director Li. Speaking of, another batch of people has moved into the base. Is Omega replenishing recruits again?"

Chen Bojun nodded. "A few died on the last mission, so they brought in some replacements from outside. These folks were originally meant to serve as secret guards for the President. Their talent and capabilities are extraordinary."

Gu Jianlin glanced back at the two of them, his expression bewildered.

"Ahem, it's time to brief you on the Ether Association's power structure," Chen Bojun cleared his throat and began explaining. "You know, Ether Association is the largest Ascender organization globally and the only Extraordinary Alliance. Rather than calling it an organization, think of it as a union—a collaborative effort of major forces worldwide to maintain order. Makes sense, right?"

"You may have noticed Ether Association has plenty of flaws and internal issues. But in this world dominated by Ascenders, it's a rare source of order. Before Ether Association was established, the chaos in the Extraordinary World was beyond imagination."

He elaborated, "Where there are people, there's conflict. Some have their minds corrupted. Some have their thoughts diseased. And some scream 'Ahhh!' then lose their sanity. Even on the topic of maintaining order, there's constant division."

Lu Zijin added wryly, "Transcendent civilization till now is basically a contest for who's worse off."

Gu Jianlin pondered for a moment—take the Order of the Hidden, for example, a mysterious and eerie organization. If not for his immunity to mental interference, he might have unknowingly fallen for their tricks.

Unifying human thoughts is impossible, while individual abilities have grown immensely powerful.

Order has become a luxury.

"Faction struggles within Ether Association have never ceased. As you can see now, the Judgement Court, led by Vice President Rhein, has the largest influence. The other Vice President, in charge of the Night Watcher Department, goes by the codename Lin Dong. These two factions used to be the fiercest rivals, but the current situation speaks for itself."

Chen Bojun sighed, "Besides these, the Dawn Combat Sequence is an independent war department that rarely takes part in factional fights. Meanwhile, Omega Sequence is actually a talent-training program fed by various departments and elite families. If someone becomes a 'Catastrophe,' they've reached the pinnacle. If not, they return to where they came from."

"It's not just Rhein and Lin Dong feuding, either. Thirteen division heads, six Divine Generals, Hua Country's elite families, and ancient sects—they're all covertly competing for power."

His tone grew somber, "All of this stems from one reason—the President doesn't have much time left."

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Gu Jianlin's mind moved slightly, recalling the mysterious black-robed figures he encountered last time at the grocery store.

They had mentioned something about recovering the President's remains.

"But since the President is still alive, everyone is still holding back in their fights. The Investigation Bureau is part of her faction, and Director Li came to Peak City this time to review the cases of Old Gu and Old Mu. The Night Watchers and the Judgement Court are collaborating in the investigation and providing their own evidence."

Chen Bojun said, "The Investigation Bureau is not a combat department, but they are the President's trusted aides, so their stance is crucial. Director Li, as one of the five directors, holds significant power."

Lu Zijin spoke softly, "Unfortunately, something has already gone wrong."

Gu Jianlin pondered for a moment, "I'll go take a look now."

"Wait."

Lu Zijin suddenly called out to him.

Chen Bojun pulled out a metal box from behind the desk, "This is your mission reward. Take it with you before you go."

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"People on the rooftop, listen up."

"This is my final ultimatum!"

"Hand over the bio-weapon and release the hostages. This is your only way out!"

Instructor Zhu yelled into his megaphone at the rooftop.

The entrance of the hospital was packed with people, and passing investigators had stopped to watch the commotion.

Only Uncle Mu and Mu Qingge, the father-daughter pair, were anxiously waiting downstairs, sighing and fretting.

Meanwhile, on the rooftop, Ji Xiaoyu puffed out her cheeks, looking like an enraged little beast, and shouted, "Release them? How naive! Just because you want me to release them, I should? Wouldn't that be humiliating?"

A row of her underlings stood behind her as guards.

Wanwan was protected at the back, her pretty face pale with fear.

"Xiaoyu, stop being so stubborn!"

Ji Han, as the elder brother of the Ji family, said coldly, "Let Director Li's son down. He's just an ordinary person who hasn't awakened. If this goes on, someone might die. Be reasonable and apologize to Director Li."

Ji Ye crossed his arms and said irritably, "Hurry up and let him go; don't make me take action."

A thin, gloomy middle-aged man dressed in a neatly-tailored black trench coat stood nearby.

His expression was very unpleasant.

"Director Li, stay calm."

Nie, the Deacon, said beside him, "Five minutes, no more than five minutes, and your son will be let down."

Wang Taisheng chimed in, "Rest assured, with Ji Ye and Ji Han involved, there won't be any issues."

They turned back to give orders, "Dawn, prepare to rescue the hostage."

As the Fifth Rank Pope, Dawn was there to prevent any sudden incidents.

The Poison Master was also nearby as a precaution.

However, Ji Xiaoyu was not someone who cared about people's opinions. "Stop spouting useless nonsense! Did these little punks think about the consequences when they beat people up?"

She grabbed a rocket launcher and directly aimed it at the crowd.

Everyone's expressions changed dramatically; the power of the bio-weapon was too strong.

Ji Ye and Ji Han exchanged glances. "Grandmother is also at the base today; don't cause trouble."

Ji Xiaoyu was visibly startled upon hearing this.

But when she glanced at the trembling little girl behind her, she gritted her teeth and clung to the rocket launcher. "Don't try to fool me. I don't care! No one can make me release them today! You two are Fifth Rank, so what? Don't think I can't fight you. If you push me, I'll pull out my Mythical Weapon, and we'll all go down together!"

Ji Han and Ji Ye were dumbfounded. What had gotten into this little troublemaker today? Even Grandmother couldn't keep her in line.

The Investigation Bureau was, after all, composed of Grandmother's trusted aides.

The little princess causing such a scene was undermining Grandmother's authority.

As Ji family descendants, they absolutely could not let this go unchecked.

Director Li's expression flickered between anger and concern. Protective of his child, he said, "Since it's inconvenient for you two to act, I'll handle this. I'll ensure the little princess isn't harmed while rescuing my son."

Nie, the Deacon, and Wang Taisheng's expressions shifted subtly.

If a fight broke out, things would get ugly.

Just then, a calm, indifferent voice without any trace of emotion came from the staircase entrance.

"What's going on here?"

Everyone turned their heads.

Gu Jianlin had somehow already arrived on the rooftop, a parrot perched on his shoulder and a briefcase in hand.

Dawn and the Poison Master's eyes lit up slightly upon seeing this formidable figure.

This was someone who could deal with the little princess.

Ji Ye recognized him as well, noting the Golden Phoenix Feather he carried, and said gravely, "Xiaoyu is losing control. You have the Golden Phoenix Feather, right? As her team leader, this matter should fall under your jurisdiction."

"Indeed."

Ji Han nodded slightly, speaking solemnly, "Xiaoyu is a descendant of our Ji family, but she indiscriminately attacked Director Li's son and hung him from a streetlight. Her actions are unquestionably excessive."

At this, Director Li's expression softened slightly.

Nie, the Deacon, also let out a sigh of relief.

Though he disliked this young devil, he was undeniably useful at a time like this.

At least he could deal with the little princess.

Wang Taisheng's gaze flickered, fixating on the boy before him, his thoughts unclear.

"Nonsense!"

Ji Xiaoyu's expression shifted, and she shouted loudly, "What do you mean I indiscriminately attacked those bastards? It was clearly them who bullied Wanwan first! Half a month has gone by, and you people did nothing! Why? I just helped her get revenge; why are you all so urgent now? Double standards much—why don't you all go drop dead!"

Dawn and the Poison Master were stunned, finally understanding why the little princess had erupted today.

The Ji siblings exchanged glances, their expressions somewhat suspicious.

"Bullying Wanwan?"

Gu Jianlin frowned, recalling the bruises on the young girl's legs.

Under the protection of her underlings, Wanwan looked at him timidly, her gaze both fearful and aggrieved.

Gu Jianlin fell silent for a moment. She had previously claimed she had fallen herself.

"Kids roughhousing; it's all quite normal."

Director Li spoke slow and measuredly, "Let them down and apologize, and that will be the end of it."

Nie, the Deacon, and Wang Taisheng were even more dismissive—wasn't this just an Unclean being? A bit of bullying was hardly a big deal.

"Excessive? Why don't we talk about throwing rocks at someone's head; is that not excessive?"

Ji Xiaoyu shouted, "Want me to try throwing one at your head instead?"

The atmosphere dropped to freezing levels.

Ji Xiaoyu faltered slightly, mainly because she knew the people opposite her wouldn't dare touch her due to her status.

But there was one person who truly dared to deal with her.

And that was someone with the authority to do so.

When Gu Jianlin arrived, her tone softened noticeably.

Still, she firmly believed she wasn't in the wrong, so she straightened up and stubbornly refused to give in.

Yet she soon realized that all these so-called adults stood opposite her, their expressions harsh and cold.

She suddenly felt a bit wronged, biting her lip and clenching her fists.

For an instant, Gu Jianlin spoke coldly, "Apologize."

At that moment, a faint smile appeared on Director Li's lips, pleased with the young man's sensibility.

Nie, the Deacon, and Wang Taisheng also felt relieved, thinking to themselves that this boy still understood reverence. Offending the Investigation Bureau was equivalent to challenging the President's authority.

Ji Xiaoyu froze, her grip on the rocket launcher stiffening. She suddenly felt this place was entirely meaningless—these so-called adults were a bunch of idiots who might as well all drop dead.

Clearly, she wasn't in the wrong, yet they all pointed fingers at her.

The young girl's nose turned red as she felt an overwhelming sense of grievance, tears threatening to fall.

Wanwan quietly stepped forward from the crowd and poked her hand.

But in the next moment, a tall, poised figure stood in front of the two of them.

Gu Jianlin, with an expressionless face, stared coldly at the people opposite them, rolling up his shirt sleeves.

"Apologize."

His voice was icy: "Don't make me say it a third time."

Director Li froze, his face filled with disbelief. "Me... apologize?"

Chapter 377 - 192: The President's Tactics (4800)

Gu Jianlin was born with an indifferent personality, not fond of talking.

Moreover, his worldview was fundamentally different from normal people. He believed the ideological gap between individuals was as vast as heaven and earth, and the disagreements between people couldn't truly be resolved through communication.

Issues that could be resolved by communication inherently weren't real issues.

He said he'd repeat himself no more than three times, and that was final.

He just rolled up his sleeves.

"Eh?"

Ji Xiaoyu was originally sulking, but suddenly saw this Demon standing in front of her. Her childish and barren little brain churned for a moment before realizing—this time the one who needed to apologize wasn't her.

She lost her parents at a young age, and the elders around her were always occupied in the Extraordinary World, never bothering with her emotional needs. Everyone treated her like a little brat. A child's feelings were considered inconsequential.

Sometimes, she indeed made mistakes.

She got reprimanded.

But more often, she felt what she'd done was correct.

Yet in the end, she still got reprimanded.

So eventually, she gave up entirely.

One thing those people always overlooked.

They were once children too.

They too experienced joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness.

But as they grew up, their perspectives shifted irrevocably, and they forgot about it all.

Over the years, the Little Princess had heard plenty of the outside world's judgments about her. But she had long ceased to care. Whether she was obedient or unruly, those so-called adults wouldn't change at

all. So why not just be free and be herself? Occasionally, disgust those annoying adults—it gave her a sense of satisfaction.

It was her way of rebelling and expressing discontent.

The more she fought back, the more isolated she became.

No one had ever stood by her side and told her: You're right.

Even the President.

For the first time in 12 years, she was so surprised she couldn't speak.

"Sister Xiao Yu?"

Wanwan noticed the stunned expression on her little face, unsure if it was joy or astonishment.

"Gu Jianlin! What do you think you're doing?"

Nie, the Deacon, having experienced earlier incidents, knew this was a lunatic who couldn't be reasoned with. His face changed dramatically. "This is the base of Black Cloud City! You dare to lay hands on a superior? You've got to be insane!"

On the other hand, Wang Taisheng's mind started to churn. His son had been beaten into the hospital, prompting him to issue a warrant for the perpetrator's arrest. However, despite days of relentless effort, there had been no progress, leaving him both furious and fuming.

And then yesterday, he suddenly learned something.

This young man in front of him was intricately connected to the perpetrator!

Yesterday, he had returned to reality, planning to leverage connections to interrogate the culprit's whereabouts. But unexpectedly, this boy had been taken away by someone directly. Enraged, he had immediately reported the matter, requesting upper-level punishment.

Yet he hadn't anticipated that Director Chen would blatantly turn a blind eye.

Now, things seemed to be looking up. If he could provoke this young man into publicly assaulting a superior, there'd be no way to dodge accountability!

"Are you Ji Xiaoyu's guardian? If not, then this is none of your business."

Director Li's gaze gradually turned cold.

Of the people present, he was the only one unaware of what had transpired. As the President's confidant, he commanded respect wherever he went. Even though his Rank had just reached Superdimensional Level, he was not someone a mere young man could affront.

"Wanwan, come here."

Gu Jianlin suddenly said.

Wanwan now held the belief that any place where her big brother was would be a safe place.

So she wasn't afraid and obediently scooted over to his side.

Gu Jianlin crouched down, lifting her bangs to take a look. On her forehead was a small bruise. Her little arms hidden in her sleeves also bore several bruises, and there were countless more on her calves.

This little girl had been bullied for at least half a month.

"It's those scumbags who did this! They just love picking on the Unclean!"

Ji Xiaoyu huffed angrily, "Hanging them from the streetlamps would've been letting them off easy!"

Gu Jianlin grunted softly, noting the location of all her injuries, then turned around.

"Today, we're settling this with fists."

He said calmly, "Anyone who tries to intervene will get beaten up as well."

The timid Wanwan shrank back, suddenly feeling like she'd caused trouble again.

Ji Xiaoyu froze for a moment, then broke into a mad, savage grin.

Boom!

Black Ghost Fire ignited on Gu Jianlin's forehead, triggering full Ghost Transformation with maximum output!

Ghost Transformation meant the Divine was completely consumed by negative emotions—merciless, cold, and insane.

And this was paired with Berserk mode, signaling blood rage!

"You dare!"

Director Li was furious, immediately summoning the Qi stored in his body, entering Berserk mode, and throwing a powerful punch!

This was a Fourth Rank Mad King following the Ancient Martial Path!

For just a brief moment, Gu Jianlin stared at him impassively, as though a precise machine scanning from head to toe, using the exceedingly obvious external traits to profile the man in detail.

No calluses on his hands, posture not upright enough, even slightly hunched. A faint beer belly, reeking of alcohol, teeth slightly yellowed from smoke—clearly an office-bound worker.

All Rank, no substance—a bloated bureaucrat.

It's widely known that strength for those pursuing the Ancient Martial Path is determined by their level in Martial Arts!

Boom!

Their fists collided like cannon fire, sending chaotic ripples through the Void!

Director Li was shaken by an immense force that made his entire body tremble. Even his bones quaked violently. His footing faltered—had it not been for the Qi supporting him internally, he'd likely have collapsed!

This was impossible.

He was a Fourth Rank Mad King!

Chapter 378 - 192: The President's Tactics (4800)_2

"If you want to put your son down, fine."

Gu Jianlin clenched his right fist and said coldly, "You hang up there in his place."

Purely a contest of strength, a Third-tier Fate Master against a Fourth-Order Mad King, yet he was unexpectedly gaining the upper hand!

"Such audacity, to dare strike against a superior officer in public!"

Wang Taisheng roared, his thought energy surging outward as if it had solid form. He was a Third-tier Heavenly Master.

Only Nie, the Deacon, retained some semblance of rationality. He understood all too well how ferocious this young man was and retreated step by step.

They were all administrative officials, their talents perhaps not too lacking but hampered by bureaucratic duties over time.

Against a monster capable of challenging ranks above him, they had no chance of victory.

With a loud boom.

A cluster of pale ghost fire ignited out of nowhere, and four burning golden ghostly hands roared as they extended from the void. Innumerable dark particles quivered and danced wildly in their palms, coalescing into a black, invisible domain.

"I've long been sick of you."

Gu Jianlin turned his head, his gaze chilling. "Do I need your permission to leave Black Cloud City?"

Wang Taisheng only saw a flash of pitch-black light dart past his eyes.

Boom!

His thought domain exploded with a deafening roar, sending him flying backward and off the rooftop!

Crash!

Another earth-shaking explosion followed!

Nie, the Deacon, cursed inwardly. No matter how much he tried to stay out of it, he was still dragged into this mess!

As the darkness shattered, Nie made a quick decision in a moment of desperation and leapt off the building!

Director Li's brow twitched uncontrollably, and only one thought echoed in his mind.

Danger! Danger! Danger!

"Your son left twelve bruises on that little girl. I don't bully kids, so I came to you."

Gu Jianlin said coldly, "A son's debt is paid by the father."

The four burning ghostly hands roared as they circled furiously behind him, the pitch-black light converging sharply!

"All unrelated personnel, evacuate immediately!"

Ji Han and Ji Ye dared not intervene, nor did they have any intention of stopping him.

Because Ji Xiaoyu was charging towards them, hoisting two rocket launchers, with the barrels aimed directly at them.

The two Fifth-Order Realm Kings had no desire to wade into this stinking mess. Moreover, things had escalated to this point, and they certainly had no obligation to risk themselves. Even if they stood by, no one could hold them accountable.

Dawn and the Poison Master, slung over their shoulders, leapt off the rooftop together!

Boom!

Instructor Zhu stood below, staring at the intense explosion on the rooftop above, fuming like a boiled lobster.

"Why are you all just standing there staring?!"

He turned and roared angrily, "Go up there and apprehend the troublemaker!"

The nano warriors exchanged glances, their eyes flickering, and quickly replied, "Oh no, sir! Today, a traitor poisoned us in the cafeteria, and now we're all suffering stomachaches! We need to hit the restroom first!"

With a thunderous rumble, the nano warriors scattered in all directions.

What a joke.

The troublemaker was risking his life to lure away that monster, ensuring their survival.

And now they were supposed to capture that hero and protect that pack of power-hungry, good-for-nothing elites?

Ridiculous!

Instructor Zhu was livid and prepared to charge up there personally to apprehend someone.

Just then, a chubby young man vomited blood and collapsed right in front of him.

"Reporting, sir!"

Cheng Youyu convulsed violently, foaming at the mouth, "There's a traitor... who poisoned me!"

With a thud, Zhang Cheng also fell beside him, clutching his leg desperately, "Save... save me!"

Instructor Zhu's vision darkened, and before him, a schoolgirl in a sailor uniform stood dazed.

"What are you staring at?!"

He roared, "Go save them!"

Nie Xiangsi had never encountered such a terrifying officer before and was almost moved to tears in fright, helpless and fumbling!

"Useless. You're all useless!"

Instructor Zhu's blood pressure was about to hit 300 as he shouted furiously, "Where's the medical team?!"

Wang Taisheng and Nie, the Deacon, had already been blasted down, and the medical team promptly swarmed them.

Crash!

The relentless sounds of combat on the rooftop were unending!

The void rippled as if the battle was shaking its very fabric!

Bang!

A deafening crash sounded as a figure plummeted from the sky, smashing heavily into the ground!

Everyone turned to look at the figure, stunned and speechless.

Director Li!

—A Fourth-Order Mad King against a Third-tier Fate Master.

The winner was... the latter!

Everyone was shocked beyond belief.

Director Li crashed to the ground like a cannonball, leaving a massive crater, with cracks spreading out like a spiderweb.

Boom!

Gu Jianlin descended from above, smashing through the ground, landing with his legs on either side of Director Li's waist.

The ancient Soul Comforting Bell hovered above his head, vibrating suddenly!

Everyone felt dizzy, their minds briefly dazed!

Director Li spat out blood, utterly miserable.

He folded his hands defensively, trying to summon Qi Force in a panic!

In that instant, Gu Jianlin's hands shot out like lightning, tightly locking his wrists, forcing them apart!

The four burning ghost hands howled violently, smashing down with a single punch!

Boom!

Director Li's forehead caved in, blood spurting everywhere.

Then came the second punch!

Boom!

Director Li screamed in agony, his left arm snapped with the sound of shattering bones, horrifying to hear!

Then the third punch, the fourth punch, the fifth punch!

The heavy sounds of punches, like hammers striking, resonated like rolling thunder.

Each punch sent tremors through the ground.

Director Li's body was beaten to a bloody pulp, his limbs' bones utterly shattered, his screams like a slaughtered pig.

Instructor Zhu and the surrounding onlookers finally snapped out of their daze.

At first, they tried analyzing the extent of the injuries, but eventually, they gave up entirely.

Inside a single-apartment building, Uncle Mu stood anxiously, sweating buckets.

Chapter 379 - 192: The President's Tactics (4800)_3

"Dad, do you think it's going to be okay?"

Mu Qingge murmured.

"Do you know who that is? That's Xiao Gu."

Uncle Mu sighed and said, "Wherever he is, trouble is guaranteed!"

He was tall and had a better view of things.

Xiao Gu was about to replicate an injury report on the other party.

Hmm, a report that was dozens of times more brutal than expected.

Boom!

The final punch!

Gu Jianlin's last strike, with both hands and the four Ghost Hands from behind—six punches combined!

Six times the "kindness"!

With this punch, Director Li was instantly smashed into the ground, smoke billowing everywhere.

The entrance of the hospital fell into dead silence.

Gu Jianlin grabbed the unconscious man under him with one hand, turned around, and scanned the crowd coldly before saying in an icy voice, "Take a good look. If anyone's kid dares bully Wanwan again, this will be your fate."

Kids acting out—fine.

Adults take responsibility.

Among the crowd, there were some parents still hanging from the streetlights, but at this moment, none of them dared to speak up.

They didn't even dare to admit those were their kids.

Amid the dead silence, Instructor Zhu suppressed his rage and yelled furiously, "B-level investigator Gu Jianlin! Are you out of your mind? Do you even know who the man in your hand is? He's conducting official business!"

His roar sounded like muffled thunder, shaking eardrums.

Gu Jianlin glanced at him and said indifferently, "I know who he is. But is someone like him even qualified to investigate a case? If the President hasn't lost their mind, then they should replace him immediately."

Right as those words fell—

Boom!

Instructor Zhu's expression changed drastically as he suddenly jumped away!

A Poison Gas Cannon shot straight at his feet, unleashing a foul stench!

Instructor Zhu immediately doubled over, retching violently.

"What are you yelling for? Grandma has plenty of trusted aides; losing one isn't a big deal."

Ji Xiaoyu hoisted two rocket launchers, her face contorting into something feral as she shouted, "Where were you when they bullied Wanwan? And now they've been beaten up—serves them right! Grandma said that bystanders are equally guilty as perpetrators! You, taking their side, just adds insult to injury!"

Instructor Zhu was stunned. When did the President ever say something like that?

Meanwhile, the medical team arrived, bringing three stretchers.

Director Li, unconscious and in critical condition.

Nie, the Deacon, with a sprained back.

And Wang Taisheng, his face a bloody mess.

All lined up neatly.

Especially Wang Taisheng—his brain was almost completely befuddled.

"Help him! Save lives first!"

Instructor Zhu shouted while vomiting.

Lin Wanqiu sauntered over, leading the nurses.

Gu Jianlin glanced at her. This woman was as alluring as ever, though there was a trace of weariness in her expression.

"Are you hurt?"

Lin Wanqiu ignored the three injured men and actually checked on him, the perpetrator, first.

Gu Jianlin simply made a sound of acknowledgment.

Instructor Zhu was dumbfounded at the scene—this was even possible?

Meanwhile, a voice rang out over a broadcast from the medical wing. Director Chen cleared his throat and announced, "B-level investigator Gu Jianlin has openly disrupted base order, defied authority, and assaulted a superior, which is unforgivable. A-level investigator Ji Xiaoyu used banned biochemical weapons of mass destruction and kidnapped the family members of superior officers, which is highly egregious!"

Instructor Zhu listened, thinking, finally, justice was coming.

There's still rule of law in this world.

"One month of their bonuses will be deducted, and they must write a 30,000-word self-criticism, to be submitted by tomorrow night."

Director Chen finished and cut the broadcast.

Instructor Zhu: "..."

What the hell?

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At the entrance of Black Cloud City, a black Maserati slowly made its way into the base.

From far away, the rumbling noise could be heard.

The ground seemed to tremble.

"President."

The driver focused on driving, his irises pale and eerie as he said calmly, "Director Li is in critical condition—four limbs fractured, internal organs displaced."

Taihua sat in the backseat, flipping through a Buddhist scripture in her hands, unmoved.

"Who did it?"

She asked coolly, "Xiaoyu?"

The driver replied, "B-level investigator, Gu Jianlin."

"Him, huh."

Taihua gave a faint response, a cold smirk tugging at her lips. "Good job."

The driver froze.

Director Li was one of the six Investigation Bureau directors.

A trusted aide groomed personally by the President.

And now he's been thrashed by a rookie, yet the President praises his actions?

The driver couldn't wrap his head around it.

Taihua had no intention of explaining herself to a mere driver. She merely hugged the scripture in her hands, looking out at the distant sunlight, chuckling coldly, "Huai Yin's disciple turned out to be quite useful."

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Suddenly, Gu Jianlin turned his head, his eyes narrowing.

He saw Director Li, who was supposedly unconscious, subtly move his lips and reveal a strange smile.

It lasted only an instant, like an illusion.

If Gu Jianlin hadn't been alert, he might've missed it.

The three stretchers were pulled away, quickly vanishing from view.

"What is it?"

Lin Wanqiu noticed his expression had darkened.

Gu Jianlin lowered his head, seeing a black spider crawling across his hand.

It wasn't a living creature—it was a hallucination.

At the same time, countless eerie visions flashed before his eyes.

Corpses hanging from trees, dripping blood.

A pale little boy.

And an old, grotesque face.

It was Jing Shangxiu's face!

The Order of the Hidden!

After all this time, the ritual cast on him by The Order of the Hidden had finally started to take effect!

Gu Jianlin looked toward the hospital, realization dawning in his mind.

This Director Li was most likely sent by the President.

The purpose: to provoke him into taking action and eliminating this person.

The President must've known there was something off about him and placed him in Gu Jianlin's path.

To clean house using his hands.

And deliver clues in the process!

Chapter 380 - 193 Qilin Venerable: Can the Old Monster Do It?

In the standalone apartment near the hospital, Gu Jianlin was scrubbing his hands in the bathroom.

Staring at his reflection in the mirror, he felt a surge of emotion.

This Divine Path had its perks, no doubt.

But once he used Ghost Transformation, it was almost impossible to rein in his temper.

Unintentionally, it pushed him further away from the realm of being kind to others.

Suddenly, he saw a pitch-black spider crawling on his hand again.

Faint whispers of ghosts echoed in his ears.

If he were just an ordinary Ascender, he would likely succumb to these eerie hallucinations, leading to some uncontrollable actions. But for him, it had no effect whatsoever.

That was why he dared to take risks like this.

The secret control methods of The Order of the Hidden had no power over him.

"It's best not to spread this around; only reliable people can be informed. The Order of the Hidden's methods are extremely covert. Back then, Tang Zijing, and later Old Gu, must have encountered this as well."

"But the existence of The Order of the Hidden hasn't been exposed. Either they didn't report it, or they did, and the information was blocked. Between the two, I lean towards the latter."

"This organization has already infiltrated the upper echelons of the Ether Association. The President has clearly noticed something, deliberately sending the clues to me. What does that mean?"

Gu Jianlin murmured to himself.

In the living room, Uncle Mu sighed heavily and lamented, "What a tragedy, truly a tragedy."

Wanwan looked up with her innocent face and asked, "Did I do something wrong?"

"No."

Mu Qingge patted her on the head and said, "You're the victim; how could you have done anything wrong?"

In truth, having stayed in the refuge for so long, they had long since developed a habit of patience and didn't want to trouble others. Even after being bullied, they hadn't even mentioned it to the medical staff at the hospital.

"Alright, next time, if you get hurt by accident again, make sure to tell your sister in advance. How can Red Flower Oil compare to the Holy Light Skill? Your big brother specifically reminded me to take good care of you." Lin Wanqiu tidied up the young girl's clothes. After casting a Holy Light Skill, all the bruises on her body disappeared completely.

The strength of the Divine Path was evident.

First Order Physicians, Second Order Nuns, Third-order Prayer Masters, Fourth-tier Holy Mothers.

At the First Order, they gain skills like Self-healing Skill and Holy Light Skill.

The former grants extraordinary recovery abilities.

The latter sacrifices one's own life to heal others.

At the First Order, one also gains an active foreknowledge of threats.

The Second Order grants Holy Light Protection, offering immunity to mental interference.

The Third Order allows for numerous status-enhancing skills, significantly boosting combat and defense capabilities.

By the Fourth Tier, one can unleash the Merciful Domain, an immensely powerful support ability.

In team combat, any side lacking someone on the Divine Path would inevitably be crushed by those who had one.

"Thank you, Sister."

Wanwan beamed sweetly.

Lin Wanqiu ruffled her hair, her slightly fatigued face softening into a fond smile.

Then she prepared to leave.

"Sister, take care of yourself."

Wanwan suddenly spoke.

Lin Wanqiu froze, then pinched her little cheek and said gently, "Got it."

She ran her fingers through her hair, swaying her hips gracefully as she walked away.

"Tsk, no wonder Brother Lin is such a hit."

Cheng Youyu marveled, "He's the ultimate Sister Killer."

Zhang Cheng couldn't help but ask, "What's a Sister Killer?"

"Well, there are plenty of older-sister-type beauties in the Ether Association who have their eyes on him."

Nie Xiangsi pushed a tablet toward them. "Look, there's even a dedicated forum for it."

Ascenders were still human, and when idle, they liked hanging out online. Those shut-ins who spent their days doing missions or staying home, bored out of their minds, had created a website to comment on the looks of the male members.

Gu Jianlin was the latest dark horse, permanently gracing the website's homepage.

According to Taixu's analysis, his fan base was almost exclusively composed of older sister types. Over 95% were women above twenty-two, though there were some seventeen- or eighteen-year-old girls with dominant personalities as well.

The comments were filled with people wanting to hug him tight and make him call them sister.

It was, without question, a symptom of mass hysteria.

Especially with the recent bloody and violent incidents. Instead of being frightened, these fans seemed to have their obsessions deepened.

Uncle Mu skimmed through the comments and sighed, "Are young people these days really this wild?"

"Pretty normal."

Mu Qingge smiled. "Some people just can't resist someone cool and commanding. And the fact that he's only seventeen makes the urge to conquer him even stronger..."

Cheng Youyu suddenly remembered something. "Uh, Uncle Mu? We're not really in a position to comment on this. But overall, he needs to be cautious. Captain Lin, well, she's a bit... complicated."

Both Uncle Mu and Mu Qingge froze.

But Wanwan was the first to protest. "Sister Wanqiu is super nice!"

She's a green teal! (a manipulative, two-faced person)

Cheng Youyu hesitated for a while before saying, "Uncle Mu, maybe you're not familiar since you're not from Peak City. Years ago, among the Ascender Families of Peak City, there was a Lin Family. Lin Wanqiu was the foster daughter of Old Master Lin, deeply doted upon. But then, Old Master Lin's wife was accidentally contaminated, and in search of medicine, he secretly colluded with the Dark World."

"Oh, you mean the Lin Family extermination case from six years ago?"

Zhang Cheng remembered. "I recall the Lin Family was wiped out by the Judgement Court. A lot of people died, and Lin Wanqiu was the only survivor. So here's the question: how did she survive? There's a theory that the Lin Family was exterminated because Captain Lin betrayed them."