

Ancient 381

Chapter 381 - 193 Qilin Venerable: Can the Old Monster Do It? _2

"Although it hasn't been confirmed, everyone believes it."

Nie Xiangsi originally didn't want to badmouth people behind their backs, but since the topic had already come this far, she added, "My uncle also said that Captain Lin used quite a few methods to climb the ranks in the association. There used to be a Deacon Chen who was really close to her, and now he's sitting in prison."

Uncle Mu pondered for a moment. "I see."

Wanwan quietly said, "But I personally think Sister Wanqiu is really nice. She never discriminated against us. There was even one time at four in the morning when I saw her preparing an Alchemy Matrix for us."

Mu Qingge patted her on the head. "Alright, alright."

In the restroom, Gu Jianlin had heard everything loud and clear before stepping out.

When everyone saw him, he simply nodded in greeting and looked out at the courtyard through the window.

The people in the room stared at him, unsure of what to say.

Gu Jianlin's persona seemed to be just like that—beating up higher-ups didn't seem like a big deal to him, as long as the punishment wasn't too severe.

Ji Xiaoyu was crouching on a stone bench in the courtyard, daydreaming like a naughty monkey.

Her slender, petite figure radiated a hint of loneliness.

The Guardian beside her sighed heavily. "Oh, my little ancestor! What are you trying to do now? Do you have any idea what kind of trouble you've caused? That was Director Li from the Investigation Bureau—one of the President's trusted confidants! Now he's in the hospital, and his son is still on life support. Doesn't that look bad enough?"

With a loud thud, he knelt to the ground. "When we get to the Soul Skywell later, and the President starts pointing fingers, he'll probably end my life!"

Ji Xiaoyu continued to daydream, ignoring him entirely.

Smack!

Something was placed on the stone table forcefully.

Gu Jianlin sat down next to her and casually poured himself some tea.

"What are you doing?!"

Ji Xiaoyu was startled, and the moment she saw him, she immediately became defensive.

Gu Jianlin released his grip, and her notebook was lying unmistakably on the table.

Ji Xiaoyu froze for a moment. "What's that supposed to mean?"

Gu Jianlin, sipping his tea, calmly replied, "Returning it to you."

Ji Xiaoyu reacted quickly, fearing he'd change his mind, and grabbed the notebook before stuffing it into her pocket as if protecting a treasure.

Gu Jianlin glanced at her. "Is that notebook very important to you?"

Ji Xiaoyu paused.

"Because you can't remember prescriptions?"

Gu Jianlin roughly guessed.

"Who said that?!"

Ji Xiaoyu exclaimed, panicked, her eyes wide. "I can remember them!"

From her reaction, Gu Jianlin felt fairly certain he'd guessed correctly.

"How did you and Wanwan meet?"

He asked casually.

Ji Xiaoyu glared at him. "I was bored and playing outside."

Gu Jianlin acknowledged with a hum. "Do you know her identity?"

Ji Xiaoyu scoffed and replied, "Isn't she just one of those so-called Unclean? She's been saddled with a bunch of weird charges by the Judgement Court. So what? Who I choose to hang out with needs their approval now?"

Kids are pure-hearted, after all, unaware of the complex consequences.

Gu Jianlin explained, "That area is a quarantine zone. The Unclean need medication to suppress Deformation, and normal people aren't allowed near."

"Who am I? Is there any place in this world I can't go?"

Ji Xiaoyu was furious. "You look down on me?"

Gu Jianlin shot her a glance and said coolly, "Do you have no friends?"

Ji Xiaoyu's face flushed red again.

Gu Jianlin was spot-on with his observation. The little princess fit the psychological profile perfectly: most problematic kids lacked friends and familial care, which led to warped personalities.

However, he realized that the little princess wasn't inherently bad—she was just extremely unruly.

"Mind your own business!"

Ji Xiaoyu was about to lose her temper, but she hesitated upon remembering that, despite his infuriating nature, this guy was the only one willing to stand up for her.

In the end, she threw him an annoyed glare before quickly running off.

Only the Guardian remained kneeling beside him, looking utterly defeated.

Gu Jianlin stared after the girl's figure disappearing into the distance and suddenly asked, "The little princess doesn't seem like the type who'd bully others. Why did she bring people to attack me?"

The Guardian struggled to hold back his words before finally blurting out, "That's because everyone the President brings in to discipline her forbids her from making poisons. Everything else is fine, but this poison-making thing—she's obsessed. Whoever forbids her from doing it, she goes against them."

Gu Jianlin thought, so that's the reason.

If he were tasked with managing the little princess, he'd also ban her poison-making outright—no one could tolerate that.

"That's odd."

He raised an eyebrow. "Why is Ji Xiaoyu so insistent on making poisons?"

"The little princess wants to be an Alchemist, but she has no talent for it. So she kidnapped an Alchemist to brew potions for her. Calling it potion-making is polite, but isn't it just making poisons? That said, you really can't blame her."

The Guardian complained, "The little princess's parents became Fallen long ago and were killed by the President. That incident was a huge blow to her. For years, she's been hoping that if there were a potion that could save the Fallen, her parents might still be alive."

Gu Jianlin froze.

"The problem is, where in this world is there a potion that can save the Fallen? Ji Xiaoyu claims she found a formula on Buzhou Mountain, but in the past two years, all she's managed to produce are poisons. No one takes it seriously anymore, and they just let her be." The Guardian spoke casually.

Gu Jianlin's hand, resting on the table, jolted as if struck by lightning.

Because he remembered—Old Gu's files specifically mentioned the existence of a drug that could save the Fallen.

The formula might actually exist!

He turned sharply, staring at the girl's vanishing figure, his expression deeply conflicted.

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At this moment, Taixu's voice resonated from the broadcast.

"B-Rank Investigator Gu Jianlin, please prepare yourself. You will be guided into the Soul Skywell in ten seconds."

Meanwhile, she continued, "Former Night Watcher member, SSS-Rank Investigator Mu Feng, please mentally prepare yourself. You will be guided into the Soul Skywell in ten seconds. Please do not carry any sharp or lethal weapons. Thank you for your cooperation."

Gu Jianlin was shocked.

Uncle Mu also froze for a moment, not expecting that after so many years, he would once again enter the Soul Skywell.

The two exchanged a glance, seeming to understand immediately.

The investigation into the case from eight years ago was truly about to be reopened!

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At the Black Cloud City Base, a massive golden light descended from the heavens, shattering time and space, distorting dimensions.

When Gu Jianlin's vision was restored, he found himself in front of towering bookshelves, seated on a soft single-seater sofa, with a round wooden table beside him. The table held fruits and snacks.

Ji Xiaoyu had also landed beside him; clearly, this was specifically arranged according to team divisions.

A considerable number of Omegas from the second tier surrounded them in a circle.

Further back were members of the third and fourth tier, separated by the rotating, towering bookshelves.

The bookshelves scraped against the floor with constant rumbling sounds.

Ahead were fifteen round tables, reserved for members of the first tier.

At this moment, a familiar, ethereal, and icy voice spoke from behind, "Today marks the highest mobilization meeting. The President and two Vice Presidents will appear, so there's an air of ceremony."

Ji Xiaoyu suddenly felt herself being lifted and placed on the table.

The young girl was utterly dumbfounded.

Tang Ling sat in her designated seat, wearing her black sunhat, a white jacket paired with a black camisole, denim shorts hugging her long, sleek legs, and strapped sandals on her feet.

Her snow-white thighs were dazzlingly bright.

It had to be admitted—this girl's figure was truly striking: her chest was full and firm, her waistline finely sculpted, her long legs perfectly proportioned—slender yet voluptuous, with a look of springy vitality.

Youzhu's physique, on the other hand, was entirely different. She was naturally petite, with a small frame and short stature.

Nonetheless, her body proportions were nearly perfect, although she lacked a noticeable chest.

She exuded a girlish charm.

Gu Jianlin, being inherently indifferent, had no interest in beauty.

The women he interacted with the most were Thunder and Moon Princess.

Other than them, there was the old monster.

But the old monster's beauty had a kind of irresistible allure that could drive people mad.

Even though Gu Jianlin knew his mind was shielded from influence, she still made him uneasy.

"Why are you here?"

Gu Jianlin asked in mild surprise, "Aren't you part of the first tier?"

Tang Ling rested her chin on her hand, casually plucked a strawberry from the table, and popped it into her mouth. Frosty and expressionless, she replied, "I'm not close with them. I don't like being around them. It's better here with you."

Gu Jianlin raised an eyebrow, "But aren't the Sword Tomb people part of the first tier?"

"I'm only from the Sword Tomb, that's all."

Tang Ling chewed on her strawberry, "Doesn't mean we're on good terms."

Gu Jianlin was taken aback. No wonder people said this woman was similar to him.

Both of them shared the same solitary and antisocial tendencies.

What a pair!

Ji Xiaoyu felt like a kid dragged to a parent-teacher conference by her parents.

And she couldn't even fight back.

Helpless anger boiled, and she could only gnash her teeth in frustration.

"Because of the Qilin Wedge and the traitor incident, the association is taking this seriously."

Tang Ling said quietly, "You'll soon get to see the mugshots."

Gu Jianlin paused, "Mugshots?"

Just then, an ancient bell resounded within the Soul Skywell.

At the library's end, massive staircases rose as golden light cascaded down.

Faint silhouettes materialized, their aura surging upwards, nearly shattering the dome above.

It was the Ether Association's thirteen regional supervisors.

Lu Zijin was among them.

Chen Bojun, Wan Rentu, and Instructor Zhu strode boldly to the center of the staircases.

Councilman Zhang led the Judgement Court's deacons, his expression cold, moving to the staircase's right side.

Han Jing led the Night Watchers to the staircase's left side.

Meanwhile, at the staircase's summit, a massive Alchemy Eight Diagram shone brightly, spiraling in intertwined patterns.

Six volatile phantom forms descended into the scene, causing such dimensional distortion that turbulence erupted.

These were the six Heavenly Generals of the Ether Association!

The bell echoed. Above the staircase, darkness suddenly loomed, vast and deep like the Universe.

Countless planets hovered within the darkness, a galaxy sparkling brilliantly.

The first to illuminate was a faint, incorporeal radiance sketching out an imposing and frosty silhouette.

It was a woman of great authority and aloofness, donning a golden phoenix crown. Her frosty white hair was styled into an exquisite updo, wearing a dark golden, intricate palace gown. It felt as if time had shifted, bringing an ancient beauty into modern reality.

Yet her bearing carried an overpoweringly severe and cold intensity that outweighed her beauty. Her aged and detached gaze betrayed her true age, far from a youthful maiden—more akin to a century-old elder.

Her figure faded into the darkness, replaced by an enormous golden visage gazing down.

The President, Taihua!

The library's temperature dropped sharply to freezing levels, as bone-chilling gusts surged through the space. Within the cosmic void, countless blizzards coalesced, forming another colossal icy visage.

The Vice President, the Night Watchers' supreme leader—Lin Dong.

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The last to appear was a blazing golden radiance. Countless specks of gold gathered in the darkness, outlining a stern and majestic visage, eyes blazing with searing divine light, commanding absolute authority over the scene!

The Vice President, the supreme leader of the Judgement Court—Rhein!

Within the Soul Skywell, nearly all investigators were oppressed by their terrifying aura, trembling slightly.

"Such a show-off."

The parrot lowered its voice to grumble.

Gu Jianlin finally understood what it meant to have a truly dominant presence.

"No worries, once we reach the Seventh-Order Holy Realm, we can pull this off too."

Tang Ling scoffed disdainfully, her long, shapely legs crossed as she lazily kicked off her shoes.

These were the most central power brokers of the Ether Association.

Aside from the nine great saints of the Judgement Court, there were also the leaders of various prominent families and sects operating behind the scenes, as well as the Catastrophes themselves.

Nearly everyone of importance was present.

Within the silent Soul Skywell, an authoritative and detached voice rang out.

"This is a war between humanity and the Ancient God Clan, tracing back to the Ancient Times, extending into the future, spanning the river of history, composing an epic tale. We are the Guardians of the Human World, bearing the honorable mission of traversing between the two realms, sounding the clarion call of the Holy War, wagering our dignity and even our lives to defend the territory of the Human World and resist the invasion of the Ancient God Clan."

"Please remember, defending the order and stability of the Human World is your innate mission. Now, after two hundred and thirteen years of peace, the Human World is once again facing an unprecedented crisis."

"The Absolute Forbidden Level region of the Ancient God Realm, Buzhou Mountain, has reawakened."

"We have evidence proving that one of the five Ancient Supremes from the Ancient Times, the most powerful among them—Candle Dragon Venerable—has already returned to Buzhou Mountain. He has awakened the Candle Dragon Wedge, merged with it, and executed the Primordial Return."

"At the same time, we have observed an abnormal trace of Ancient God's Breath within the Qilin Immortal Palace. Through the prophecy from the Lishan Observation Tower, we can essentially confirm that Qilin Venerable was not annihilated but is instead in a highly active state. Therefore, the danger level of the Ancient God Realm's Qilin Immortal Palace will be elevated to Absolute Forbidden Level!"

Rhein coldly overlooked the Soul Skywell, his voice devoid of any emotion: "This marks the first time in two thousand five hundred years that humanity confronts two Ancient Supremes simultaneously. The dark era is about to dawn."

In the deadly silence, people seemed too shocked to speak, utterly dizzied by the news.

It was as if muffled thunder reverberated in their ears.

"The Holy War is about to ignite. The Ether Association will enter the highest state of military preparedness. As members of the Omega Sequence, you will become the backbone of this war. By decision of the highest council vote, you will be granted access to the Cloud Bright Secret Treasure. The treasures that have stewed in history for ten thousand years will reveal their enigmatic veil before you."

"The Ether Association will initiate the classified Solar System Plan. In preparation for the impending dark era, we will establish a worldwide countermeasure strategy to resist the revival of the Ancient God Clan and prevent their reentry into reality."

"I hope you will carry courage and hope, foster the determination to win against all odds, and bring forth your strongest state as you plunge into this Holy War. You will have the most advanced technology for support, the mightiest arms for weaponry, and the most extensive resources amassed over two thousand five hundred years to ascend in rank."

"This is a classified meeting. Please adhere strictly to the tenets and bylaws of the Ether Association. Swear on your faith and soul that you will not divulge anything you have seen or heard to the Ancient God Clan or the traitors of the Dark World."

"We share secrets and treasures, distribute power and strength."

"May we remain ever victorious, eternally indomitable!"

"—To combat... Candle Dragon Venerable and Qilin Venerable!"

Every word resounded powerfully, landing with the cold weight of iron.

Though the voice was so chillingly detached, it seemed to ignite the blood of everyone present.

The silence lasted only a second.

Thunderous applause exploded!

Yet amidst the deafening ovation, Gu Jianlin felt utterly lost.

"What's wrong?"

Tang Ling gave him a sidelong glance because his current expression was exceedingly peculiar: "The one who spoke is Vice President Rhein, the most powerful genius of the Human World in two centuries. A Ninth-Rank Demigod, though not a Catastrophe."

"Nothing, don't mind me."

Gu Jianlin had no words to articulate what he felt.

Hmm, the Ether Association had convened its highest classified meeting to deal with Qilin Venerable and Candle Dragon Venerable.

Right in front of him, Qilin Venerable.

Ha, could those old monsters pull this off?

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Amid the waves of applause, Gu Jianlin covered his face with his hand, his emotions complicated.

What kind of situation was this? The world's largest Ascender organization and the top Guardians of the Human World were now loudly conspiring against the Ancient God Clan right in front of an Ancient Supreme.

Before joining the Extraordinary World, he'd never imagined he'd ever witness this kind of spectacle.

In fact, given the Ether Association's scale and capabilities, it wasn't particularly difficult to trace the Qilin Venerable's activities. After all, he'd already used Ancient God Transformation multiple times out in the open and even created several Divine Servants. Not to mention, during the last battle in the underground ruins, he'd unleashed devastation under the cover of the Lock of Nonexistence and the Calamity Ruins.

Even the anomaly caused by the old monster indirectly confirmed that this Supreme was operating covertly.

The Ether Association couldn't possibly have failed to notice all this.

Yet for now, the design of the First Generation Qilin Venerable seemed highly effective.

As a human-Ancient God hybrid, he couldn't be pinpointed through methods like divination or similar techniques.

Otherwise, this group of Ether Association executives would have already dealt with him.

"What is the Cloud Bright Secret Treasure?"

Gu Jianlin suddenly asked.

Tang Ling, with cheeks puffed like a hamster as she stuffed her mouth with strawberries, mumbled muddily, "The treasure that Vice President Rhein brought back from Yun Mengze years ago. He used it as leverage to propel the Sword Sect Path forward single-handedly, even conducting transactions with the Sword Tomb. As for its specifics, I'm not sure."

At this moment, Ji Xiaoyu casually interjected, "The most valuable items would probably be the Breathing Technique and Forbidden Spells. Besides those, there would be ancient swordsmanship from the Sword Sect Path, blade techniques and footwork from the Ghost Slayer Path, archery from the Overlord Path, meditation methods from the Heavenly Master Path, soul control methods from the Divine Path, secret medicine formulas, and lots more."

Suddenly, she noticed two pairs of incredulous eyes staring at her simultaneously.

"Why are you staring at me?"

Ji Xiaoyu glared, "I heard it from my grandmother!"

Ah, if the President said it, then it must be credible.

Their trust instantly skyrocketed.

Gu Jianlin and Tang Ling internally felt enlightened.

Ji Xiaoyu bit her handkerchief and added, "Anyway, most of these are Superdimensional Level items, as they're vastly different from Transcendent ones. There's a distinct gap between those realms!"

Gu Jianlin calmly asked, "Then why can some Transcendents beat Superdimensionals?"

The parrot squawked, "Yeah, why's that?"

Ji Xiaoyu grew furious, biting her handkerchief again, refusing to respond.

Who the heck did you think was as monstrous as you?!

"Do you know what's in the Ghost Valley Secret Treasure?"

Tang Ling suddenly asked.

This sparked a thought in Gu Jianlin, finally realizing the value of this troublesome kid.

"I asked about it before. After all, why let benefits go to outsiders?"

The Little Princess hummed, "As a descendant of the Ji Family, how could I not get a taste of it ahead of time?"

"And then?"

"I got beaten up."

"I see."

This kid was still as unruly as ever.

At this moment, Gu Jianlin turned to glance at the frosty older sister beside him and asked, "Do you really like strawberries?"

"They're alright. If they're free, why not eat them liberally?"

Tang Ling raised her head to look at him, her bright eyes strikingly pure: "Outside, strawberries in this season sell for thirty to forty bucks per pound."

Gu Jianlin raised an eyebrow, "Are you short on money?"

Tang Ling nodded slightly, "I guess."

"But you made it rain cash pulling gacha before, didn't seem like you lacked money then."

Gu Jianlin teased faintly.

"Spending on in-game purchases in the Taixu servers can be refunded; they don't dare freeze my account anyway."

Tang Ling spoke with righteous confidence.

Gu Jianlin was floored, stunned by this clever freeloading strategy.

The next moment, a sheet of ancient sheepskin scroll suddenly materialized before everyone, densely inscribed with bizarre and eerie characters that squirmed like living snakes, exuding an unsettling aura.

Taixu's sultry voice reverberated through the library: "All investigators, please sign a blood oath on this Soul Contract."

The so-called blood oath required biting one's finger and signing with their own blood on the sheepskin scroll.

This bound them to a soul-linked contract, ensuring that they couldn't disclose what transpired here.

As to whether this would work on an Ancient Supreme, that remained uncertain.

Once everyone had signed their oath, the sheepskin scroll vanished into thin air.

At this moment, Chen Bojun stood on the high platform, hands behind his back, and began, "Ladies and gentlemen, I'll now explain the Solar System Plan. As the name suggests, the Solar System Plan is about

creating artificial suns. We intend to deploy numerous artificial suns at key locations in both the Ancient God Realm and the real world. These suns will reflect off each other, forming a Barrier."

He paused briefly, "Changsheng, you explain."

Within the silent library, the sound of shifting robes echoed faintly.

At the central roundtable of the first echelon, a young man dressed in a black-gold robe rose indifferently, his jet-black hair swaying like flowing ink, enshrouding the gaze of all present.

This was a sharp-featured young man, roughly twenty-five years old, with a tall and robust figure, emanating an aura of composed authority. From start to finish, he revealed no trace of emotion as he walked up the stairs with icy resolve.

Even the overpowering presence of the higher-ups failed to overwhelm him.

This was Ying Changsheng, the foremost of the current Omega Sequence, a descendant of the Pre-Qin Ying Family.

In the last Returning Burial Forest mission, he single-handedly slaughtered thirteen Ancient Ancestors, eliminated six peer candidates from the You Ying Group, and dragged fifty-seven critically injured nano warriors until reinforcements arrived.

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It's worth mentioning that the battle was fought without the aid of a Priest.

It is said that after this battle, he was infinitely close to the threshold of the Sixth Rank.

"The so-called artificial sun is a product of research by this generation's Golden King. It combines modern technology, alchemy techniques, and the power of the Heavenly Person's Wedge to create a weapon to counter the arrival of the Dark Era."

Ying Changsheng folded his arms behind his back, standing on the steps facing all the Omegas, and said calmly, "Its feature is the ability to encompass a wide range of the real world or the Ancient God Realm's territory, and remain hidden without being triggered!"

Hidden without being triggered!

Everyone was taken aback.

The executives remained expressionless, as if they had long been aware of this matter.

"In the past, the existence of the Heavenly Person Realm was more like a deterrent. Except for the Candle Dragon Venerable, almost no Ancient God Clan dared to step into it. However, we couldn't force the Ancient God Clan to enter the domain of the Heavenly Person Realm to be slain. But the Solar System Plan can completely avoid this flaw."

Ying Changsheng said indifferently, "Because the moment the Solar System Domain is formed, it is formless, colorless, and intangible. Even if the Ancient God Clan steps into it, they cannot feel the intense changes in the rules until they are repelled by them."

He lifted his dazzling eyes and paused for a moment: "At that moment, even the Ancient Supreme will weaken to an unprecedented state. As for the Ancestor Level and Ancestral Ancient Gods, or the Divine Servants and Ancient God Seeds, and even the humans in an evolutionary state, they will all suffer heavy damage within the domain, without exception."

In an instant, there was an uproar!

Everyone was silent for a second before bursting into thunderous applause once more.

The Omega investigators all expressed their respect for this research achievement.

Because it is a cross-era creation.

The greatest advantage humans have in resisting the Ancient God Clan is that they possess the power to move towards the future.

While the civilization of the Ancient God Clan has come to a halt!

"It hasn't been tested yet, but the success rate of the Solar System Plan is over ninety-five percent. We will conduct the first experiment targeting the Candle Dragon Venerable at Buzhou Mountain."

Ying Changsheng said quietly, "Please look forward to it!"

Having said this, he put his arms behind his back and swaggered down the steps.

From start to finish, he did not greet any of the executives, exceedingly arrogant and rude.

But no one said anything.

Behind the Ying Family is a Catastrophe, the contemporary Golden King.

This is the contribution the Ying Family has made to the Human World.

Creating an extremely powerful secret weapon for humanity!

Amidst the enormous applause, Gu Jianlin once again felt lost.

At this moment, there were only two words in his mind.

Lao Liu!

He couldn't help but think once more, how fortunate it is that he is amphibious, unafraid of your tricks.

Gu Jianlin rarely felt a sense of superiority.

Can the old monster do this?

His character is one that refuses to admit defeat, yet he must acknowledge the old monster's strength.

Strong enough that he sees no hope of defeating it.

Therefore, after discovering this advantage, even someone like him, who has no desires or pursuits, finds it quite gratifying.

If the old monster is still lurking in the dimensional rift of the Qilin Immortal Palace, he would like to show off a bit.

At the same time, Tang Ling unintentionally straightened her posture. This genius, who has mastered self-evolution, also felt a strong apprehension towards this so-called Solar System Plan.

Gu Jianlin suddenly felt a little itch on his thigh.

Tang Ling used a slender, jade-like finger to trace a line on his leg: "Aren't you afraid?"

Gu Jianlin was taken aback and imitated her by writing on her smooth, white thigh: "Afraid of what?"

Unexpectedly, Tang Ling slightly trembled, giving him a reproachful glance.

Gu Jianlin then realized that writing and drawing on a girl's thigh might indeed be inappropriate.

Only he is a pragmatic person who never thinks about these ambiguous things.

They are all comrades, even if one day they need to fight naked, he wouldn't think it strange.

And he wouldn't have any desires or fantasies.

Tang Ling continued to write on his thigh: "The Solar System Plan, you've also mastered Deformation. Aren't you afraid of being exposed?"

Gu Jianlin pondered for a moment, and indeed, he wasn't afraid.

But in the eyes of others, he should be afraid, so he nodded.

Tang Ling was silent for a second: "I couldn't tell."

She always felt that this young man in front of her was peculiar, facing everything with a calmness as if even if Mount Tai collapsed before him, he wouldn't flinch, as if he could withstand whatever occurred.

Then she remembered the words of her teacher, the Sword Tomb Master.

Perhaps everyone from the lineage of the King of Qing is like this.

When the applause faded.

The wind and snow howled, and Lin Dong's indifferent and imposing face spoke in a deep voice: "After the Solar System Plan is executed, each investigator will receive a top-secret map existing only in their minds, to determine the location of the Heavenly Person Realm. Within the domain, when facing ancestor-level Ancient God, you will have an unprecedented advantage."

Meanwhile, the golden face in darkness quivered once more.

Rhein spoke: "The Cloud Bright Secret Treasure will be opened in Dawn City. All geniuses in the Omega Sequence will subsequently receive an ancient token as proof to enter the secret space. I can guarantee with my character; this will be the highest quality secret treasure beneath the Ghost Valley Secret Treasure, without comparison."

Chen Bojun also said: "Providing you with so many resources is to inform you that currently, all forces, large and small worldwide, including the Ether Association and the You Ying Group, have already entered the Qilin Immortal Palace."

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"The arrival of the dark times also marks the dawn of the golden age. I hope everyone can shine brightly in the Qilin Immortal Palace, honing themselves in blood and fire... Money, status, prestige, glory, armor, secret treasures."

He paused for a moment: "All of this is right before you."

Applause thundered once more.

Even Gu Jianlin couldn't help but want to clap.

However, suddenly, Tang Ling's expression changed slightly, and she abruptly looked up at the dome.

Ji Xiaoyu was also stunned.

Because overhead, the dignified and composed face of the President, utterly emotionless, said indifferently:

"Rhein, have your people begin."

For a moment, the Soul Skywell fell into an eerie silence.

Suddenly, Councilman Zhang stepped out from the crowd, holding a roster.

The Demon Hunters followed behind him, their gazes stern and cold.

"As everyone knows, there have been significant issues within the Ether Association recently. As Vice President, Rhein bears unshirkable responsibility as the highest leader of the Judgement Court, and we, as subordinates, are also unable to escape blame."

Councilman Zhang lifted his cold face, surveying the audience: "After twenty-four hours of continuous investigation and high-intensity interrogation of the traitor, we discovered significant problems within the association."

He suddenly looked at the thirteen division ministers: "Next, I would like to ask Minister Zhou Xuanyi, where were you at 6:45 PM on April 28th? Whom did you meet? What did you do?"

For a moment, the atmosphere inside the Soul Skywell changed.

Only to see a man with a sinister face, a middle-aged man feel the gazes from all directions.

His expression suddenly changed!

Everyone was shockingly astounded; they knew a major purge was coming within the Ether Association.

But no one expected it to start with such a spectacle.

The Judgement Court directly targeted a minister!

Gu Jianlin's pupils contracted slightly; in his profiling gaze, the sinister middle-aged man's back grew infinitely tall, turning into an archer clad in armor, slinging a big bow, as if riding a warhorse, traversing the battlefield!

With a loud boom!

Zhou Xuanyi retreated half a step, the tumultuous waves gathering, he pulled a large black sniper rifle out of the void, using his left leg as support, the muzzle suddenly roared!

Boom!

The sniper rifle roared, at this moment, the Omegas' ears were buzzing from the blast.

Some even had blood seeping from their ear canals!

Zhou Xuanyi was the minister of the Fengdu branch, Sixth Rank on the Overlord Path, known as the Annihilation Master!

This shot seemed ordinary, yet the void suddenly trembled.

Councilman Zhang stood before him, squinting gravely, as time and space suddenly plunged into a swamp-like state of silence, a serene gray-white shade spreading as if freezing the world.

His figure also suddenly virtualized, like a ghost.

In just an instant, the domain of space freeze was shattered by the sniper bullet.

Ripples surfaced in the void, forcing out his ghostly virtual shadow.

At the last moment, a pale rift suddenly cracked open on Councilman Zhang's brow, eerie pupil light bursting out, suddenly illuminating the bullet coming from mid-air!

The bullet abruptly petrified, falling to the ground.

"Sorry, everyone, I had no choice!"

Zhou Xuanyi spoke coldly, but didn't choose to fire a second shot.

Because he knew how troublesome these deacons of the Judgement Court were.

Behind him, a massive black hole suddenly opened.

He turned around and jumped into it.

Boom!

The black hole suddenly collapsed, he didn't leave this space, instead staggered, nearly falling off the steps.

At that moment, he stood frozen like a sculpture.

Cold sweat pouring down.

For some reason, his Mythical Weapon used for time-space travel had failed.

"Minister Zhou Xuanyi, the Ether Association has treated you well, why betray us, colluding with the You Ying Group?"

An old servant appeared on the steps, sighed and said: "The President only gives you one chance."

Rhein and Lin Dong said nothing.

In front of a Demigod of the Ninth Rank, a mere Sixth Rank is laughably insignificant.

Inescapable.

Colluding with the You Ying Group is intolerable.

In the Ancient God Realm, encountering danger, you can temporarily collaborate with the people of the You Ying Group.

Even, if you are sufficiently open-hearted, you can maintain a tenuous connection with them.

Like Superintendent Chen Bojun.

He once took a blood oath, never to waver from his position.

Should there be a conflict of interest with his ex-wife, he would kill her without hesitation.

But colluding with the You Ying Association is a heinous crime.

This means you have betrayed the association, selling out interests and intelligence.

Betrayed your comrades.

Zhou Xuanyi let out a bitter laugh, looked up at that illusory face, and said: "President, do I have a choice? My son is almost deformed; I want to leave him a way out."

At that moment, everyone remained silent.

Only the President looked down condescendingly.

The old servant sighed: "Minister Zhou, your son is already deformed, his mind driven to madness, and there's no way out, even if he went to the Dark World, what would it change? Obtaining the Ancient God's Blood, would that save him? His aptitude wouldn't withstand the baptism of the Ancient God's Blood, and he would surely die."

In silence, Zhou Xuanyi looked up, meeting that indifferent face.

He suddenly sneered, laughed: "President, you also have children, would you just watch as your descendants are tortured by deformation, dying with sickness and madness?"

The atmosphere inside the Soul Skywell became exceedingly heavy.

The investigators looked at each other, not daring to speak.

Even the upper ranks broke out in cold sweat, simply because of the sharpness of the question.

The commanding President remained unmoved and said just one word.

"Yes."

An irrefutable word.

Because that is exactly what she did.

It was widely known that the President had killed countless of her own Ji family descendants.

In the Ji family creed.

If you fall, it's because you are weak.

Bring shame to the family.

If you don't dare to die, the family will send you to die.

Since you benefit from the Ji family's resources, you must bear the corresponding responsibility.

"Hahaha, hahaha!"

Zhou Xuanyi laughed mockingly at that emotionless face: "You speak of humanity, but in my view, you've lost your humanity. Sometimes, I even think the King of Qing and the Red King are right; we, generation after generation, exert our lives to gamble for a vague future, what is the meaning?"

These words caused the upper ranks to change their color drastically.

The President's eyes flared with fierce thunder.

Even the old servant's face turned sour, sighing, "Minister Zhou, I understand your feelings, but this is no excuse to risk the lives of your comrades and subordinates for personal gain through your position."

For a moment, a fierce thunder bolt struck down.

Ancient Forbidden Spell, All Heavens Divine Thunder!

Boom!

Within the endless thunder light, Minister Zhou Xuanyi watched himself being engulfed by the intense radiance.

Until his death, his face bore a mocking, unwilling expression.

The intense thunder light drowned everything.

He, a Minister Level, fell like an ant.

Gu Jianlin felt the overwhelming power, even the Black Qilin in his mind quivered.

A visceral instinct from the depths of his soul told him.

Endure, grow, don't act recklessly.

This is the President's power, comparable to a Catastrophe Level.

To kill a Sixth Rank, only a glance is needed.

"Are you scared?"

Tang Ling wrote on his thigh again.

Gu Jianlin thought, what is there to be scared of, after all, the man had already taunted.

But this incident also served as a reminder to him.

The Ether Association is currently investigating traitors internally.

The first to die was a Minister Level.

How many others are clean?

Even Lu Zijin secretly helped Youzhu behind the scenes.

"Truly insane."

Gu Jianlin whispered.

At this moment, even he couldn't tell who was right.

Perhaps, in this world, as long as one can bear the cost, right and wrong are irrelevant.

Only positions matter.

Chapter 387 - 195: Stand Higher, See Farther

The Soul Skywell was as silent as death. The investigators were struck dumb with shock, even overwhelmed by fear and dread.

A Minister Level figure had died just like that, leaving no trace of his body.

Even more shocking was the blazing thunderlight that descended from the skies. It was a power that did not belong to any Inheritance Path but originated from an Ancient Times' classified Forbidden Spell. Just a casual glance was enough to kill a Sixth Rank Ascender.

This was the power of the President.

The might of a Catastrophe Level individual!

This time, no one applauded—no one would be so tactless.

The higher-ups remained expressionless. They were all veterans who had clawed their way through blood and fire and were no strangers to such scenes.

Throughout the long river of history, far too many had succumbed to the allure of power and immortality, betraying humanity's cause, slaughtering former comrades, and sacrificing lives to strike bargains with the Gods.

Whether it was the Ether Association or the You Ying Group,

or any other organization,

this was nothing new.

"Minister Zhou Xuanyi will be dealt with as a traitor. His family will undergo a thorough investigation in the coming days. If no issues are found, they will be sent to a protected zone for supervision. Any descendants wishing to join the association in the future will require approval from the Highest Council."

The old servant scanned the surroundings, cleared his throat, and said unhurriedly, "Effective immediately, headquarters will hold a selection meeting to appoint a worthy and capable Sixth Rank Ascender as the new minister of the Fengdu branch."

Thus, the disposition of the deceased minister's affairs was formally announced.

"Finally, regarding the case investigation of the former Night Watcher, the SSS-level investigator Mu Feng,"

he paused slightly, "and his associates."

Gu Jianlin's hand, resting on the round table, jerked back like he'd been shocked.

It had finally begun!

He turned to the icy, aloof older sister beside him and said sincerely, "Thank you."

Tang Ling raised an eyebrow. "Thank me for what?"

"For insisting I join you on the Returning Burial Forest mission last time. If not for that, this case wouldn't have been reopened for investigation."

Gu Jianlin spoke calmly, "Truly, thank you."

"If you can unravel this case, then perhaps you can also uncover the truth about my great-grandfather."

Tang Ling cradled her chin in her hand. "A mutually beneficial arrangement, that's all."

Gu Jianlin had to admit—she was indeed a good teammate.

At the top of the Soul Skywell's steps, the old servant continued, "In light of the disputes surrounding these cases, we will meticulously review and re-investigate the events, providing corresponding evidence. The investigation will take one month, after which all evidence will be submitted to the Judicial Court for trial and public judgment."

As soon as those words fell, Councilman Zhang narrowed his eyes first, thoughts unclear.

The members of the Judgement Court offered no objections.

Han Jing's gaze flickered, though he expressed no emotion.

The Night Watchers present showed visible excitement and anticipation, all looking toward the back of the assembly.

At the very rear of the crowd, there was a wheelchair. Fu Qingxuan sat there, hooked to an IV. After extended medical care, he had finally regained consciousness, as well as his memory and sanity, though he was still very weak.

Fu Chaoyang pushed the wheelchair from behind. His small face remained stubborn as he scanned the crowd, searching for someone.

Meanwhile, a golden beam of light descended at the forefront of the steps.

Uncle Mu stepped out from within the golden light, his face full of emotion.

He wore training garb, and no shackles bound him—there was no need. In his current crippled state, anyone present could take him down single-handedly, so he was no threat.

Yet the demeanor of the once-super-elite remained. He stood there, neither groveling nor arrogant.

He looked around at the faces, familiar and yet unfamiliar.

Former colleagues and comrades-in-arms all stared at him with mixed emotions—some nostalgic, some moved.

Others looked wary, even hateful.

Above, on the ethereal dome, a majestic yet intangible visage gazed down at him, void of expression.

Lin Dong and Rhein also stared down from on high, their faces unreadable.

The old servant locked eyes with this former elite and asked with gravity, "Mu Feng, do you still insist that you were not bewitched by the power of the Ancient Gods, that you did not harm your comrades

during the mission, and that you were framed? Do you still assert that neither you, your daughter, nor your associates committed any crimes?"

Though just a servant, everyone knew he spoke as the President's proxy.

As for why the President herself did not speak.

It wasn't about maintaining an air of mystery.

Everyone understood—the President was just lazy.

And her temper was notoriously bad.

Back in her younger days, minor disagreements often ended with her resorting to violence and murder.

Especially when dealing with argumentative types or those who spoke out of turn.

If you pushed her too far, she wouldn't hesitate to kill you.

"Think carefully before you speak. If it's ultimately proven that you did indeed commit these acts, then everyone who has vouched for you will face repercussions. We reserve the right to question their true intentions."

The old servant's voice turned stern.

At this moment, Mu Feng felt the weight of countless gazes bearing down on him, an immense pressure.

However, when he turned around and saw the cold-faced young man in the crowd, he faltered slightly.

For a brief moment, it was as if he were staring at an old friend again.

He knew this was his old friend's son, who had wagered his life and future to buy him this chance.

Perhaps out of pride, determined to do what his father had failed to achieve.

Or maybe because he was simply too kind-hearted to tolerate such suffering, driving him to act out in righteous fury.

A stormy night in Black Cloud City came to mind—this young man, stepping over corpses, standing alone against a crowd of investigators, but speaking solely to him: Better to stand and fight than to bend and submit.

Chapter 388 - 195: Stand Higher, See Further_2

Mu Feng suddenly felt he had grown old, lost his edge, and was now useless.

He actually had to let a child stand in front of him.

At this moment, he could not afford to fail him anymore.

"I stand by my view."

Mu Feng said calmly, "I and my companions have all been falsely accused. I will fully cooperate with the Ether Association's investigation until the truth emerges. No matter what the conclusion of the investigation is, I will accept it."

His voice echoed throughout the venue.

Han Jing's gaze deeply landed on him and also shifted to the silhouette of the teenager in the corner.

Meanwhile, the Night Watchers looked at him with a surge of excitement.

Fu Qingxuan took a deep breath and said solemnly, "I will provide evidence for my former comrades. While investigating the anomalies in the Living Burial Area, we were affected by the Soul Loss Gu and

lost our memories. This fully demonstrates that during our class's mission, there was some unknown force secretly operating."

In the next moment, Fu Chaoyang hesitated briefly, then mustered his courage and said loudly, "In recent years, I've been alone in the West Port Forbidden Zone, taking care of my foster father. I've survived countless pursuits and attacks, large and small. I am willing to accept any form of investigation or interrogation from the Ether Association, as long as the case can be resolved quickly."

All the investigators turned their gazes toward this young boy, revealing expressions of astonishment.

The old servant looked at the boy and said, "Child, are you sure? This type of investigation is akin to interrogation and may be extremely painful for an Ascender of your age and rank."

Han Jing and the Night Watchers also stared at the boy.

Fu Qingxuan gently touched his foster son's hand.

"I'm sure."

Fu Chaoyang locked onto the teenager's figure in the crowd, his answer resolute and unwavering.

The old servant nodded slightly, then said, "In that case, the Judgement Court must also submit its evidence promptly."

With the nine great saints absent, Councilman Zhang was essentially the spokesperson for the Judgement Court. His expression remained impassive as he adjusted his glasses. "Our evidence will be submitted to the Judicial Court as soon as possible; you have my word."

Finally, the old servant spoke loudly, "Based on Mu Feng's case's investigation results, we will re-evaluate and investigate the Blood Moon Slaughter Incident. If this mysterious organization behind it truly exists, then all previous conclusions will be overturned, and we will seek justice for the innocent while ensuring the true perpetrators receive the punishment they deserve."

For a brief moment, all the investigators in the Soul Skywell turned their heads to look at a corner.

Even the high-ranking officials present directed their gaze there.

"Is this Professor Gu's son? He does look quite similar, although his demeanor is far inferior."

"Aside from his deadpan expression, I can't see much aggression. Is he really a madman?"

"Haha, back when he was at the First Order, who knows what tricks he used to kill an injured Captain Level, two bruised Deputy Captains, and several Second Rank investigators. Although those people had fallen, his battle strength is absurd. Did he start learning the Breathing Technique and Forbidden Spells while in the womb?"

"If I could do that during my Second Rank days, it surely wouldn't be as fantastic as the First Order managing that."

"Are we discussing combat strength here? Did you dare openly challenge the Judgement Court during your Second Rank days? That idiotic son of the Yan family had his head stomped into pulp by him; it was a truly bloody spectacle. And when he smashed someone's head with a chair—how did that nickname 'Chair Killer' even come about? Truly disgraceful."

"An undisciplined, unorganized madman. He's practically cut from the same mold as Thunder. No matter how talented such individuals are, they can contribute nothing substantial to our cause."

"Didn't he turn the tide in West Port? How could you say he hasn't contributed anything?"

"Without the Chair Killer and Thunder, would we even know of Qilin's Wedge Fragment's whereabouts?"

"After all, he's someone the King of Qing values. We need to provide him with ideological education."

"Unfortunately, he awakened too late and is only at Third Rank now."

"Luckily, he's only Third Rank. He dared to beat up his superiors publicly when at Third; imagine what he'd do after advancing further."

"What? Who got beaten? Quick, quick, tell me! My goodness, what a madman!"

"Severe punishment, we must enforce severe punishment!"

The twelve ministers discussed fervently.

Even the six Divine Generals were whispering among themselves when suddenly someone asked, "Heavenly Fire, what's wrong?"

The Heavenly Fire God General remained silent with a stern expression, appearing extremely displeased.

But he said nothing.

Gu Jianlin couldn't care less about their chatter. What he did notice was the gazes coming toward him from every direction.

At this moment, his emotions became rather complex.

"Don't overthink it, and don't thank anyone. This recognition and respect—you earned it yourself."

Tang Ling said softly, "The President once said that in this world, fairness and justice are the most useless things. Only when your fists are strong enough will the world hear your voice."

Ji Xiaoyu nodded vigorously like a little chick pecking grain. "Exactly. My grandmother said, too, that if you believe you're right, then keep going. Whoever opposes you, just beat them up hard!"

Gu Jianlin remained silent.

Though the case had only been reopened for investigation, not yet culminating in a final judgment.

In this moment, however, it meant the world had heard his voice.

At the end of the staircase of the Soul Skywell, Chen Bojun smiled at him, his eyes full of admiration and expectation.

Lu Zijin smiled gracefully and threw him a charming look.

Fu Qingxuan's gaze toward him was filled with gratitude, as he lightly nodded.

Fu Chaoyang stubbornly stared at him, then secretly gave a thumbs-up from behind.

Finally, Uncle Mu turned around to look at the teenager, his lips moving slightly:

"Child, you've done it."

Gu Jianlin understood their meaning.

The case had been reopened, and next, it would rely on his own efforts.

Meanwhile, Rhein and Lin Dong's figures disappeared into the dark.

Suddenly, there came a cold snort from the Soul Skywell.

"The meeting is adjourned."

A detached voice rang out, "This Vulgar Master doesn't have many years left to live. If anyone has the ability, don't hide it anymore. Step forward boldly so I can have a proper look."

With a loud rumble.

The ethereal illusion collapsed abruptly in the dark.

The Soul Skywell trembled violently.

Everyone could feel the overwhelming pressure, as if they had just returned from ghost gate.

The President's tone was odd—why did it sound so sarcastic?

Calling himself a Vulgar Master, too.

Ahem.

Gu Jianlin cleared his throat, pretending that nothing had happened.

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The ridges of the Pamir Plateau were perpetually surrounded by howling winds.

Huai Yin stood atop the summit with his hands clasped behind his back, gazing down at the boundless wasteland. This was an uninhabited region where tens of kilometers of barren land stretched endlessly, with only tempestuous winds mixed with gravel rising fiercely into the sky.

He suddenly sensed something and a faint smile appeared on his lips.

"After everything he's been through, the child has finally received the reward he deserves."

He chuckled, "But this isn't enough. He needs to climb higher, shine brighter."

Jing Ci gazed at the sky, resembling the primordial darkness of the universe. Amid the endless storm, he saw a heavenly pillar cutting through the sky and earth, entwined with infinite thunderclaps and streaks of lightning, heavenly fire rising amidst the clouds, scorching like molten lava.

"I hope he can achieve it."

The man in a suit murmured, "Don't repeat the second's mistake."

"Don't dwell on it, and don't blame yourself too much."

Huai Yin looked at the fractured Buzhou Mountain and sighed, "How much longer will it take for you to ascend to Demigod?"

Jing Ci pondered, "If you weren't suppressing me, I'd have ascended long ago."

"Suppressing you has its reasons; otherwise, ascending to Demigod would bring unfavorable attention."

Huai Yin chuckled, "At that point, stealth wouldn't be an option."

Jing Ci maintained a stoic expression, saying nothing.

"Tonight, visit the Dark World to gauge the strength of the Dusk organization. I hear that group reveres my junior brother fanatically and might be scheming in secret. Also, snatch a piece of Mythical Weaponry and gift it to the Su Family's little girl to save her constant yearning."

Huai Yin spoke indifferently.

At that moment, he suddenly seemed to sense something, raised his head, and sighed.

"The Lord has grown stronger again."

In the sky resembling the Netherworld, a blood-colored visage seemed to emerge.

It almost consumed the entire celestial dome.

Chapter 389 - 196: Going Home to See the Black Silk

The meeting at Soul Skywell finally concluded that evening.

For the past month, Gu Jianlin had steadfastly adhered to the principle of "being kind to others," embraced love and compassion, and engaged in heartfelt exchanges with his superiors and conversion of his enemies. His efforts culminated in impressive results.

Keep striving to be a good person.

Originally, Uncle Mu and the others planned to keep him for dinner today. After all, his arduous efforts over the past month were evident, narrowly escaping death multiple times, deserving some reward.

He initially intended to agree, until he saw the message on WeChat.

Farewell, until we meet again.

Goodbye.

He left the Black Cloud City base and caught a cab outside the Forbidden Zone.

"Hello, take me to Luodong District."

Through the car window, the night scenery glowed brightly. Along the coastline, the vast beach and rolling ocean waves came into view. Summer travelers gathered into street crowds, vendors selling balloons and glow sticks lit up the roadside.

Across the way, the commercial district bustled with young girls in breezy attire laughing by the snack stalls.

The sea breeze washed over him, invigorating and refreshing.

The Parrot Emperor rose proudly upon his shoulder.

"Young man's in good spirits, huh?"

The middle-aged driver joked.

Gu Jianlin indeed felt relaxed—perhaps the most he had since entering the Extraordinary World.

The weight on his heart finally lifted.

More importantly, he accomplished what Old Gu couldn't.

This proved that the son surpassed the father.

Ha, what even was Old Gu? Just second-rate.

So satisfying!

The cab reached his home. From afar, the rich aroma wafting from the kitchen's window gave away soy-braised ribs, fried chicken wings, and crispy fries.

Upon entering the house, sure enough, there were no outsiders present.

The dining table was piled high with delicious food—soy-braised ribs, carefully cooked bone broth, fries topped with ketchup, fried chicken wings, beef brisket stewed with tomatoes, a crispy roasted fish, and two bowls of rice.

Su Youzhu, reportedly once disinterested in cooking, learned from his mom with persistent dedication years ago, eventually mastering it beyond expectations.

Coincidentally, all the dishes she made were his favorites.

Even chores, which she once never touched, she eventually picked up.

Gu Jianlin understood—likely Old Gu had entrusted her to take care of him back then. Given her inherently serious and determined nature, she probably aimed to do everything perfectly.

Whether in the extraordinary world or daily life.

She genuinely took herself as his child bride.

"Why are you home so early?"

The bedroom door was slightly ajar, and a voice with a crystalline, ethereal quality came through—still as pleasant to hear as ever.

Suddenly, Gu Jianlin had the illusion of himself as a husband returning home from work, with a gentle yet fiery wife waiting alongside a table brimming with hot meals—a warmth blossomed inexplicably in his chest.

He quickly shook his head, dispelling such unrealistic fantasies.

Women only slow down his punches.

Yet, given his victorious haul today, his confidence soared while speaking.

"Didn't you call me back?"

He placed the metal case on the table and sat on the couch. "Come out, I need to talk to you."

Su Youzhu peeked half her head through the doorframe; her light teal short hair cascaded like water, her delicate features icy and flawless, her gaze skeptical. "Is it because I mentioned wearing black stockings that you rushed back so quickly?"

Gu Jianlin frowned, "What nonsense are you spouting?"

But when Su Youzhu stepped out of her room, she indeed stunned him.

The young woman wore a red camisole mini dress, revealing snow-white shoulders and slender collarbones. The pleats of her skirt barely covered her thighs while her long, elegant legs were wrapped in black stockings. Through the intricate weave, faint glimpses of her fair skin teased visibility—a tantalizing allure.

True to her word about the black stockings—she had actually worn them.

Youzhu's figure was petite, but her proportions left nothing to be desired.

Gu Jianlin only stole a glance before hastily averting his gaze.

The Parrot Emperor muttered solemnly from his shoulder, "Amitabha, form is emptiness, emptiness is form."

Su Youzhu plopped herself beside him on the couch, snugly positioned, and snorted coldly. "Hmph, even the Buddhist Sect has joyful meditation practices. Stop spouting unrelated nonsense. If I say I wore black stockings for you, I mean it."

She blinked her sparkling eyes, lifting her chin. "Is it to your liking?"

Gu Jianlin calmly picked up his chopsticks and started eating, refusing to engage.

Youzhu understood his demeanor; her mentor once described him as someone who only speaks after considerable prodding. She served him ribs and poured steaming bone broth into his bowl, mumbling, "I thought you'd be home closer to eight. I didn't even manage to put makeup on—just slapped on some primer."

Bringing up makeup irritated Gu Jianlin the most.

Several times, his mom had made him tutor her on schoolwork.

Yet he'd end up waiting outside for hours while she remained inside.

She claimed it was because she was drawing eyeliner.

Hehe.

"You need makeup just to see me?"

Gu Jianlin dryly asked while shoveling rice into his mouth.

"Hmm?"

Youzhu rested her cheek on her palm, her bright eyes swirling mischievously. "What do you mean? Are you saying our relationship is now close enough to skip such rituals?"

Gu Jianlin choked slightly.

Suddenly, he noticed something peculiar on the table.

It was a set of Extraordinary Secret Medicine produced by Pharmacists—all six vials were used, along with the packaging box.

In one swift motion, Youzhu snatched the items and stuffed them into a plastic bag, teleported to the yard, and tossed them into the trash bin outside.

Returning to sit on the sofa as if nothing happened, she clasped her hands formally on her lap, perfectly imitating the demeanor of a sweet and obedient maiden.

If you overlooked her flushed, crimson face, that was.

Evidently, she cared deeply about matters concerning her chest.

"Wait, weren't those the Pharmacist's breast enlargement secret medicines?"

Gu Jianlin paused. "You... used them?"

Youzhu glared playfully at him. "I didn't."

"If you did, what's the harm in admitting it?"

Gu Jianlin reminded her of the last time she was furious about the secret medicines he gifted.

She had even put on a vest to lecture him on where he went wrong.

Recalling her social faux pas, Youzhu covered her face, refusing to speak.

Gu Jianlin, equally embarrassed, continued eating.

"Oh, um... my parents are traveling these days."

After a while, Su Youzhu abruptly changed the subject. "I'll be staying home to recover, no filming ads or anything. So for the next few days, I can cook for you. What do you want tomorrow?"

Gu Jianlin thought for a moment. "How about the roasted pork chops from last time?"

Youzhu peeked at him bitterly through her fingers, her delicate fingertips parting ever so slightly. "Gu Jianlin, you really think nothing of it, don't you? Do you have any idea how troublesome it is to roast pork chops?"

Actually, Gu Jianlin's nature was simple—if he accepted your kindness, he wouldn't hold back on it.

But he'd repay that favor through other means whenever possible.

This was why Youzhu had initially tried to conceal her background.

This young man was already burdened enough.

No need to complicate matters with her family history.

Gu Jianlin placed the metal case flat on the table and opened it with a click. "Worth some pork chops?"

Youzhu froze upon seeing its contents.

"Huh, isn't this Master's Doomsday Pocket Watch?"

She blinked wide-eyed in surprise. "Why is it in your possession?"

The Doomsday Pocket Watch was a Mythical Weapon from the Candle Dragon Clan—a relic transformed through endless time and circumstance, eventually becoming a pocket watch that fell into the You Ying Group's hands.

Mythical Weapons had intriguing properties; their inherent essence remained constant, but their external form transitioned to various mediums—a fascinating dynamic.

Reportedly, a Holy Land-level expert's weapon that once controlled thunder transferred its essence to an inflatable doll.

The expert allegedly fell into depression that day.

The pocket watch's value was extraordinarily high.

Youzhu had taken numerous bounty missions to accumulate contribution points just to vie for this weapon.

In the end, it was swiped by Master.

"What Master? It's yours now."

Gu Jianlin examined the gold-trimmed gift box engraved with Latin text. "And this Creation Angel Secret Medicine—capable of reviving the dead and healing injuries. Keep it with you at all times."

"I also have an Alchemy Weapon Redemption Voucher here. My sources tell me the Ether Association just launched a nanotech fabric armor. It attaches seamlessly to your clothes, offering not only protection but also preventing wardrobe malfunctions."

He continued, "How much longer until you advance to the Fifth Rank? Are your materials and ceremony ready?"

Su Youzhu blinked her delicate eyes, staring intently at the boy right before her.

"Gu Jianlin, are you afraid?"

She asked earnestly.

Gu Jianlin frowned. "Afraid of what?"

Youzhu smirked knowingly at him. "Are you scared you'll lose me or that I won't be around to accompany you?"

Gu Jianlin fell silent again. Every question she asked was a trap.

"Is it so hard to give an honest answer?"

Youzhu teased icily.

Though her tone was indifferent, the emotions in her expression betrayed no trace of coldness.

The Creation Angel Secret Medicine's reputation preceded it.

A rare potion only top-tier Omega Sequence geniuses could redeem.

Even Minister-level individuals weren't guaranteed access.

The value of the Doomsday Pocket Watch went without saying.

"I've firmly established myself within the Ether Association now."

Gu Jianlin said earnestly. "You no longer need to grind yourself so hard. Leave many of those tasks to me—it'll be more efficient."

Youzhu gazed at his profile contemplatively and suddenly said, "Congratulations."

Gu Jianlin raised his eyebrows. "Hmm?"

"Minister Lu already told me."

Su Youzhu curled her lips, glancing sidelong. "You accomplished what even your teacher couldn't."

Then she abruptly climbed into his lap.

Her long, slender legs wrapped in black stockings tightly squeezed his waist.

Gu Jianlin instantly tensed up, teetering on the edge of a reaction.

"Congratulations."

Youzhu sat atop him with an air of superiority, like a little queen.

"Now tell me honestly."

She raised her wrist and dangled a bracelet made from Heavenly Silkworm Silk. "What is this thing?"

Chapter 390 - 197: Moonlight Gentle as Water

Gu Jianlin was already on the edge of his patience, his face tense as he said, "Can you come down and talk?"

"No way!"

Su Youzhu said coldly, "If I come down, you'll just find an excuse to brush me off."

It had to be admitted, the girl standing in front of Gu Jianlin was the person who understood him better than anyone else in the world. No exceptions.

"The Immortal Lock, as long as you wear it, can block your pain and offset the side effects of the Yin Yang Twin Jade. I specifically consulted the teacher, and he gave this to me."

He lied with a straight face, then quickly changed the subject: "Didn't you say the death of a clone has no side effects?"

Su Youzhu felt a bit guilty for a moment. To be honest, she didn't have a particularly strong concept of Catastrophes. Those figures standing at the pinnacle of two worlds seemed to know everything—so annoying.

"Even a Ninth-order Great God couldn't solve it, and you think an alchemy weapon can?"

She sounded skeptical.

"Of course."

Gu Jianlin had even hidden the master lock of the Symbiotic Lock in advance.

The art of lying was to mix nine parts truth with one part falsehood.

Although Su Youzhu had her doubts, she had no evidence, so she puffed out her cheeks and said, "Honestly, you don't have to worry so much about me. The teacher left me with quite a few things while he was alive. I even have a secret little warehouse. Besides the Yin Yang Twin Jade, there are two other Mythical Weapons."

She started counting on her fingers: "The teacher also left some coordinates in the Qilin Immortal Palace. I bet there's a lot of good stuff stashed there."

Gu Jianlin's mind stirred: "Secret outposts he left behind?"

Su Youzhu nodded affirmatively.

Gu Jianlin asked, "What are those two Mythical Weapons?"

Su Youzhu, sitting on his leg, pulled back her short pale-green hair, revealing her delicate, petite ears. Hanging from her earlobe was a teardrop-shaped pendant: "The Tear of the Abyss, a Mythical Weapon unearthed from Atlantis. Its effect is to evade all forms of divination and fortune-telling. The Ether Association has investigated our family many times but has never found anything on me."

She paused: "This item has a side effect; sometimes it makes you forget you're an Ascender."

Gu Jianlin nodded slightly: "Old Gu was a crafty man. Whatever he left for you must have a deeper intent."

No wonder this girl could conceal her Extraordinary Abilities from him whenever she wasn't using them. He wouldn't even sense her presence.

In the Extraordinary World, all her activity relied on Mirror Image Clones.

Aside from her growth in strength, she seemed like a slightly dazed yet aloof beauty.

You could sense she had secrets, but never exactly what they were.

Especially this side effect; it was an impeccable disguise.

"Absolutely."

Su Youzhu then pulled out a silver cross necklace from her neckline and remarked earnestly, "The Heavenly Holy Cross, a Mythical Weapon unearthed from the Dead Sea. Its effect is to neutralize all poisons and mental interference, but it requires monthly sacrifices of deeply sinful prisoners to function. That's easy enough to handle."

She paused: "You know about the Yin Yang Twin Jade already. Its effect is creating a Mirror Image Clone. The clone carries over all Mythical Weapons and rank abilities from the original body—extremely handy."

After pondering for a moment, Gu Jianlin admitted, "Indeed, the Mirror Image Clone is quite useful. As long as it doesn't encounter the barrier of the Red Qilin Ancestor, its safety level is significantly higher. Hmm... can it still be used in the future?"

Su Youzhu nodded: "Yes, once I've recovered from my injuries."

Gu Jianlin felt much more at ease hearing that.

"Oh, by the way!"

Su Youzhu suddenly looked at him intently and said seriously, "I need to ask you something."

Gu Jianlin raised an eyebrow: "What?"

"About the fragments of the Qilin Wedge."

Su Youzhu spoke deliberately: "Are you sure that thing isn't in your hands?"

Feeling a bit uneasy, Gu Jianlin shook his head.

If he wanted, he could give the Qilin Wedge fragments to anyone freely.

After all, the artifact had already returned to its place and was under his full control.

Even if he gave it away, he could summon it back anytime with a sword.

"Then how did you reverse the authority of the Red Qilin Ancestor?"

Su Youzhu furrowed her elegant brows.

Gu Jianlin replied with suspicion: "You didn't see it?"

He had felt pretty cool during that sword-drawn moment.

Su Youzhu curled her lips: "I was almost asleep by then."

After a pause, Gu Jianlin found the perfect scapegoat: "The teacher helped me."

Su Youzhu's eyes widened: "Catastrophe-level entities can reverse the authority domain of an Ancestor?"

The teacher had once explained it to him.

A Catastrophe-level being was defined as someone capable of confronting Supreme-level entities in the real world.

Some exceptionally powerful ones, with various supportive means, could even wrestle Ancient Supremes in the Ancient God Realm.

That said, the price for doing so was immense.

Ancient Supremes could afford countless mistakes, but a Catastrophe taking them on essentially got one shot at it.

Because after one battle, a Catastrophe's life was pretty much at its end.

Technically, Catastrophes could defeat or kill an Ancestor. It would be easier in the real world and harder in the Ancient God Realm. But outright domination was impossible in any scenario.

As for interfering with an Ancestor's authority, that was inconceivable.

Such powers were exclusively within the realm of Supremes.

"Other Catastrophes might not manage it, but the teacher could."

Gu Jianlin didn't actually know if the teacher could, but he figured he might as well brag.

Su Youzhu was visibly astonished: "So the King of Qing has already reached such heights? Does that mean he possesses power equivalent to a Supreme?"