

Ancient 391

Chapter 391 - 197: Moonlight Gently Like Water _2

"Almost, I guess."

Gu Jianlin replied perfunctorily.

Su Youzhu finally relaxed. As long as this young man had no connection to the Qilin Venerable, it was fine.

Getting entangled with an Ancient Supreme; the karma would be unimaginable.

He was already so exhausted. It was better if he didn't get drawn into such matters.

This was the boy she had raised since he was young, and she planned to keep nurturing him.

Although she felt afraid every time she faced that Venerable.

But for the sake of future happiness, she had to muster her courage and confront the Venerable bravely.

You can do it!

Suddenly, Gu Jianlin raised his hand and gripped her slender waist.

In an instant, the posture became more ambiguous.

For just a second, Su Youzhu's delicate body trembled slightly. Her snow-like face was tinged with an unnatural flush.

"W-what are you doing?"

She suddenly felt a little shy, while also harboring a hint of secret delight deep down.

Maybe this stone-faced young man had finally awakened to her beauty.

Gripping her waist effortlessly, Gu Jianlin lifted her up and placed her aside.

Su Youzhu: "..."

"Stay home and rest for the next few days. I can't use these resources anyway, so you can have them. But don't think for a second that last time's issue is over yet. I'm still not over it, so don't try to gloss things over."

Gu Jianlin said expressionlessly.

Su Youzhu's gaze turned cold: "Hmph, ditching me after pulling up your pants, huh?"

I spent four hours cooking dinner for you, even put on black stockings, which was already my apology.

What more do you want?

"If you want me to forgive you, just behave and listen to me in the future. Stop causing trouble."

Gu Jianlin glanced at her and said casually, "Advance to the Fifth Rank soon. Then I'll let this go. I heard from the Butcher that you guys provoked an unimaginable existence in the Ancient God Realm. Were they really planning to capture you as a Female Sacrifice?"

Su Youzhu's delicate face changed: "That big mouth!"

Gu Jianlin, rarely intrigued, asked, "So it's true?"

Annoyed, Su Youzhu puffed her cheeks and replied, "Ugh, it's fine. Stop worrying about it."

She raised her finely sculpted face, speaking with earnest seriousness: "I will never become a Female Sacrifice."

From the determination and resolve in her voice and eyes, Gu Jianlin felt his heart skip a beat for no apparent reason.

"Advancing isn't that big of a deal, right?"

Su Youzhu muttered: "I'll do it as soon as I can."

Gu Jianlin nodded in satisfaction, then suddenly recalled something.

Old Gu had mentioned before that the Candle Dragon Bone could help people comprehend Forbidden Spells.

And the teacher also said that observing the mythic forms of Ancient Supremes could lead to the same insight.

Now, in the depths of his consciousness, the Black Qilin had undergone a transformation after consuming the Dragon Bone.

If he replicated its form for her to observe, it might yield some effect.

"Wash the dishes, sleep."

Gu Jianlin gathered the bowls and utensils and headed to the kitchen: "Come help."

He hated washing dishes the most.

But Su Youzhu remained unmoved, resting her chin on her hand as she asked: "Together wash the dishes, or together sleep?"

Clang.

The bowl in Gu Jianlin's hand slipped and fell into the sink.

"Don't tell me you skipped your May Day homework?"

He took a deep breath and said coldly: "Do you want a beating?"

"Coming, coming."

Su Youzhu's beautiful eyes sparkled mischievously as she leapt off the sofa.

"Tonight, are we sleeping in your room or mine?"

Night fell, and the sea tide's sounds drifted on the breeze.

Gu Jianlin changed into his pajamas, collapsed onto the bed like a burden had been lifted, and stared blankly at the ceiling.

Ding-dong.

A message arrived on Deep Space Network.

Lin Wanqiu: "Director Li's injuries have healed and he'll likely be discharged tomorrow at 6:30 PM. Afterward, he'll leave the Black Cloud City Base for East Sea International Airport, heading back to headquarters. I've managed to get this info for you, but please don't act recklessly—roughing him up is one thing, but anything further would spell big problems."

Gu Jianlin glanced at the message, thinking to himself that this woman was indeed useful.

"Got it, thanks."

He replied.

Director Li was clearly someone from The Order of the Hidden, sent specifically to keep him under control.

The President probably knew about this.

From that perspective, it was plausible that the teacher and senior brother knew too.

Yet they hadn't expressed anything.

"Are they testing my abilities, or is there some unspoken complication? And didn't Director Chen mention before not to rely too much on the teacher's power? He's shackled by Heaven's Punishment and vulnerable to its effects."

Gu Jianlin murmured, "And the President doesn't have many years left to live."

The thoughts of these major figures were layered and obscure, too complex to fathom in a short time.

Gu Jianlin's nature didn't lean on elders' strength anyway.

Investigating the matter alone, however, might prove overwhelming.

After all, this was the real world.

And his knowledge of the Transcendent world was seriously lacking.

Youzhu was currently injured, unable to assist.

Gu Jianlin suddenly thought of another option.

He picked up his phone, sent out a message, and then turned off the screen.

The time had come.

He retrieved the master lock of the Symbiotic Lock from his drawer and strapped it onto his wrist.

Although the teacher recommended hunting down an enemy to use it on, such tasks weren't easy in the real world. Even if he caught one, subduing them and forcing the master lock onto them would be a hassle.

Enduring hardship wasn't so bad.

Being accustomed to pain created unimaginable advantages in battle.

Gu Jianlin closed his eyes, letting the darkness in his mind expand, consuming him.

For a brief moment, the searing pain caused him to curl into himself beneath the blankets, trembling slightly.

Chapter 392 - 197: Moonlight Gently Like Water _3

The iron rod at the head of the bed trembled, emitting a faint sound.

The moonlight was gentle like water, spilling softly across the smooth floor, casting the silhouette of a slender and graceful figure.

Su Youzhu stood silently in the doorway, wearing a pink nightdress, quietly watching him.

She covered her lips with her hand, soundlessly.

Her vision gradually blurred.

The mountain peaks shrouded in year-round blizzards vanished amidst the mist and clouds. A steep mountain path led deep into the snowy expanse, resembling a seemingly infinite road to the heavens—one wrong step would lead to eternal damnation.

Dimly, eagles could be seen circling within the wind and snow, their eyes blood-red, shimmering with streaks of crimson lightning.

Snow pines swayed among the cliffs, accompanied by the howling sound of sword wind.

Someone practiced swordsmanship between the cliffs, sword qi roaring across the air, shattering rocky debris.

Others soared through the blizzards atop their swords, resembling celestial beings.

In the Extraordinary World, Mythical Weapons came in many varieties.

The most common types were special-effect Mythical Weapons, such as the Lock of Nonexistence, the Tear of the Abyss, and others.

Rarer were Growth Type Mythical Weapons, which could grow alongside their wielder. Legends claimed that some even possessed self-awareness, harboring ancient souls within—terrifyingly powerful.

Then there was another type—not exactly rare, but unattainable.

Or perhaps, even if obtained, it would remain useless.

This type was called Space-Type Mythical Weapons.

Only Catastrophe-level Ascenders were qualified to wield such weapons, which came with their own intrinsic worlds.

For instance, the Forget Sorrow Grocery Store belonging to the King of Qing.

Or the Sword Tomb of the Silver King.

On the frozen, icy path, Tang Ling walked up the frost-covered steps expressionlessly. She wore a white wool coat and jeans hugging her long legs, along with tall black boots.

A massive instrument case was slung across her back, while her snow-white hair fluttered in the wind.

"So, she's the one who came back."

"Shh, don't pay any attention to that monster. Stay away from her, or you'll get beaten."

"What's there to be afraid of? Senior Sister Mu has returned, too. She won't just stand by and watch us get beaten."

"Fool! Don't forget, even though she's only Fourth Rank now, it's because she's been held back by Extreme Thunder. It won't be long before she advances to Fifth Rank. By then, Senior Sister Mu won't hold a candle to her. Aren't you afraid she'll bear a grudge?"

Soft whispers floated within the blizzard.

Tang Ling acted as if she'd heard nothing, coldly pushing her way through the snowstorm.

At the mountaintop lay a dojo blanketed in snow. Inside the dojo hall, two figures sat cross-legged on meditation cushions.

Between them was a chessboard with an incomplete game.

In this world, those who could step into this dojo hall were extremely few.

Other than its owner, the Silver King.

The most frequent visitor here was the President, Taihua.

The Silver King, fixated on the chessboard, replied nonchalantly.

As one of the Catastrophe-level entities, the Silver King was also a woman.

Her face was average-looking, and her age indiscernible. She wore a retro black-and-white Daoist robe, her long, snow-white hair cascading across the entire hall like a blanket of snow, its actual length immeasurable.

Just her presence sitting there prevented the blizzard from invading the hall.

The snowflakes were sliced apart by invisible sword qi, scattered in the winds.

Taihua pinched a black chess piece, her voice indifferent: "Avoid dealing with Huai Yin for now. No matter how grand his claims, don't interact with him. Don't answer his calls or meet with him."

The Silver King raised her head, her gaze growing colder: "What sort of trouble has that brat stirred up now?"

"Hmph."

Taihua only said three words: "Showing off."

A hint of suspicion flickered in the Silver King's eyes as she casually placed a white chess piece.

"Teacher, President."

Tang Ling stepped into the hall, shaking the snow off her hair, bowing deeply: "I've returned."

The Silver King raised her head and glanced at her student.

"Firm resolve, clear Sword Intent, vigorous Qi and spirit."

She commented with satisfaction, "Not bad. It seems the Qilin Immortal Palace has been fruitful for you."

Inheritance Pathways are a rather intriguing concept.

If the strength of the Ancient Martial Path depends on one's comprehension of Martial Arts,

then the Sword Sect Path emphasizes honing one's willpower beyond mere swordsmanship.

That is to say, one's Qi, spirit, and essence.

As for the Divine Path, it focuses on the interplay of madness and self-restraint.

Each is highly abstract.

Taihua shifted her attention from the chessboard, focusing instead on the white-haired girl before her, and praised: "Marvelous. It's a pity you were born ten years too late. Otherwise, after I pass on, the position of President would surely have been yours."

If anyone had been present, they'd be utterly shocked.

Everyone knew the President's time was running out.

Having lived over four centuries, she had nearly reached the limit of what Ascenders could endure.

The one originally slated to inherit the next presidency, Light, had ventured into the depths of Buzhou Mountain in pursuit of a Catastrophe-level breakthrough, taking extreme risks. Ultimately, he perished at the hands of Candle Dragon Venerable.

As a result, internal strife within the Ether Association intensified dramatically.

These last two centuries marked the most turbulent and chaotic era for the association.

And with just these words, the President revealed she'd long chosen her successor.

If the President managed to find a way to extend her life by another decade, it would set off massive shifts within the Ether Association, shaking all its factions and inevitably stirring malicious ambitions.

"You overestimate me."

Tang Ling responded calmly: "I'm not even the strongest in the Sword Tomb. How could I possibly lead the association as President?"

The Silver King smiled faintly.

"I've never been wrong in judging a person."

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Taihua raised an eyebrow. "Do they resemble me or not? That's something you can confirm at a glance."

Speaking of this, one has to critique the President's criteria for judging geniuses.

Like her—that's a genius.

Unlike her—that's a mediocrity.

How exceptional someone is depends entirely on how much they resemble her.

This sounds utterly unreasonable and domineering.

Yet no one in this world can refute her words.

If you're fortunate enough to step into the President's realm—also known as the legendary Tian Ding Temple—you'll see a towering stone stele piercing the heavens, standing at 8,900 zhang tall, inscribed with enormous Ancient God Clan characters.

Only those with outstanding talent can comprehend its meaning.

"—Unequaled achievements, daring to move even Heaven itself!"

If not for the President, this world would've been destroyed two hundred years ago.

After the previous President's fall and the life-or-death struggles between the Catastrophes, the Ancient God Clan launched a massive invasion of the Real World.

This seemingly unremarkable woman emerged out of nowhere, displaying unimaginable Rank and combat prowess. With the Human World's supreme artifact—the Heavenly Person's Wedge—she established a domain encompassing half the Earth and turned the tide.

Since her ascension to the presidency two hundred years ago, the Human World has not suffered a single defeat.

Even when the Fusang Divine Palace emerged and the Vermilion Bird Venerate attempted to return to the Real World, she successfully thwarted them.

The Ancient Supreme was ultimately swept away into interdimensional chaos, their whereabouts still unknown to this day.

No matter whether ancient or future generations, one thing must be acknowledged.

This is an accomplishment unparalleled in history.

"So, Master, are you saying Ling'er's talent surpasses Qing You's?"

The Silver King asked calmly.

Taihua retorted, "What else?"

Tang Ling remained silent; even she felt enormous pressure when faced with these two women of overwhelming strength.

"There's only one thing."

Taihua gazed at the young girl, speaking calmly. "Your heart is not here."

The Silver King's eyes narrowed, a peculiar light flashing within her pupils.

Tang Ling's hands were stuffed into the pockets of her wool coat, her bangs fluttering before her eyes. Her face was expressionless as she spoke coldly, "I was sold here as an ascetic when I was eight years old. I've said countless times that I dislike life here. Sword Tomb restricts my freedom, deprives me of all my hobbies and interests, as well as basic human needs."

She paused. "It even explicitly forbids me to marry or have children. It's sick."

The Silver King stared at the chessboard but said nothing.

Such were the rules of Sword Tomb.

"So you're saving up money to escape?"

Taihua commented indifferently. "How much do you have so far?"

Tang Ling answered candidly, "Six million. Once I've paid off the Tang Family's debts, I'll leave this place."

"Is that why your cultivation has been so negligent lately?"

Taihua observed dispassionately. "Extreme Thunder might hinder you, but not to this extent. Clearly, you've held yourself back. Otherwise, you would've already reached Sixth Rank."

The Silver King chuckled lightly. "More than that—the Holy Land is within reach!"

Tang Ling was silent for a moment. "Then I assume you'd go to great lengths to extend your own lifespan and force me to take up your mantle?"

She was twenty-two this year.

Awakened at the age of eight.

With her talent and the resources of Sword Tomb, it truly wouldn't be difficult to reach the Holy Land.

Taihua sighed. "What a pity."

The Silver King remarked, "If the child's aspirations lie elsewhere, what can be done?"

Tang Ling didn't waste time on this matter and calmly said, "I came here today to report something. I suspect that Tang Zijing's past madness was manipulated by someone."

Deliberately, she enunciated every word. "Debts have their creditors, grievances their perpetrators. You should seek out those behind the scenes to settle accounts. My years of service to Sword Tomb and the Ether Association should be reduced by five."

Taihua said nothing, placing a black chess piece with deliberate focus.

The Silver King frowned, sensing the unfavorable situation on the board.

"Is that so?"

She asked. "Evidence."

Tang Ling suddenly fell into silence.

Taihua and the Silver King continued their game without another word exchanged between them.

Tang Ling stood aside for a long while, then left in a fit of pique, turning away stubbornly.

Just then, her phone suddenly vibrated.

Chapter 394 - 198: Hey, Kill You Again

Tang Ling was in a foul mood, too lazy even to check her phone, and walked straight down the mountain path.

It had been fourteen years since she arrived at the Sword Tomb, with fifty-six years ahead of her destined to remain here.

Back then, her great-grandfather had sold her to this godforsaken place in order to pursue a breakthrough in Rank—sold for a full twenty years. Later, when he descended into madness and slaughtered his clansmen and fellow disciples, the debt deepened, extending her sentence to sixty years.

Though the Sword Tomb was hailed as a holy land for the Sword Sect Path worldwide, she simply didn't like it.

The people here were dull, every single one cold and unapproachable, like a block of stone.

It was the twenty-first century, yet they lived like people from ancient times.

No entertainment, no life.

Day after day, they sat cross-legged in meditation, eyes closed.

And then came sword training.

Endless, ceaseless sword training.

There were no slackers here.

Because if you slacked off, you would be expelled from the sect.

Tang Ling had tried to slack off once, but the price she paid was having her work obligation extended by a year.

Since then, she had learned her lesson.

At least she didn't dare to slack off openly anymore.

She had to do it secretly.

In short, the people here were truly Transcendent in every sense, freed from all material pursuits.

They no longer lived like humans.

Even the President and the Silver King placed great hope on her.

They even wished for her to carry the great mission of guarding the Human World in the future, but her heart was absolutely not set on this path.

Moreover, most of the people in the Sword Tomb disliked her because of her great-grandfather.

They despised each other mutually—why bother sticking together?

With her hands shoved into her pockets, she trudged down the snow-swept mountain path.

Mu Qingyou was ascending from the foot of the mountain, carrying a Sword Box on her back, her beauty striking, with frost-white hair cascading like snow, her expression equally indifferent. She was wearing a thick black coat, its hem fluttering lightly in the wind.

As they passed each other shoulder-to-shoulder.

"This month should have been your turn to guard the Sword Pool, keeping watch for the ancestral masters," Mu Qingyou remarked suddenly.

Tang Ling paused slightly, turning to look at the senior sister whose appearance, physique, and even talent fell short compared to hers. Calmly, she replied, "What does that have to do with me? Those are your ancestral masters, not mine. I'm just working for the Sword Tomb."

Her self-awareness was crystal clear—she was just a worker here.

Have you ever seen an employee pay respects to their boss's family?

Mu Qingyou chuckled coldly, expressionless as she said, "The Sword Tomb raised you—does it owe you a debt? If you dislike this place so much, why come to the sacred land of the Sword Tomb at all? Or are you waiting for the President to redeem you from here? Every time she visits, you're always eager to curry favor."

Tang Ling retorted coldly, "I don't owe the Sword Tomb a thing."

With that, she walked away without hesitation.

Mu Qingyou stared at her retreating figure and raised an eyebrow, saying, "I've seen the mission intelligence for the Returning Burial Forest. That blood mist's owner should be Tang Zijing, right? Do you have anything to say now?"

Tang Ling's steps faltered again.

"If you hate me so much, then come confront me head-on. Your cherished Extreme Thunder—it's nothing valuable in my eyes. But why did Master choose me to inherit it and not you?"

She paused before adding, "I suggest you get a grip on yourself. If it weren't for the fact that I dislike this place, not to mention I refuse to curry favor with the President, the title of Sword Tomb's contemporary best wouldn't even belong to you."

Mu Qingyou's eyes shimmered with a sharp glint of ice.

"One last thing—stop imitating my makeup. You're nowhere near good-looking enough, and it's a poor imitation."

Tang Ling glanced back at her, with a trace of mockery in her eyes, and then stormed off into the swirling snow.

Mu Qingyou stood silently for a long time, her generous chest rising and falling slightly.

"Alright, alright, Senior Sister."

"Don't get mad at Junior Sister Tang. She's still immature."

"Exactly, what's there to boast about being a criminal's great-granddaughter?"

Several fellow disciples practicing sword techniques along the mountain path noticed the scene and quickly came over to intervene.

Tang Ling ignored this flock of nobodies. It was then that she remembered the unread message on her phone.

"I've found traces of the Hidden Order. Meet me at East Sea International Airport today at 4:30 PM. Join me in taking someone out."

The familiar tone, imperious and unyielding, felt less like an invitation and more like a command.

For some reason, Tang Ling found these words far more pleasing to the ear than anything anyone in the Sword Tomb ever said.

With a soft beep, the device showed the mental fluctuation curve stabilizing.

Wanwan opened her eyes. "Sister Wanqiu, is it done?"

Lin Wanqiu wiped the sweat from her face, her delicate makeup smeared slightly. She leaned down to remove the wires stuck to the little girl's head and said gently, "Yes, it's done. You did very well today. This machine can at least now accurately measure a contaminator's mental fluctuations, stabilize the mind, and alleviate pollution symptoms."

"When your pendant's effects wear off, your dose of Heavenly Born Grass will decrease significantly too."

She smiled. "You might even live to sixty or seventy years old."

"Thank you, Sister Wanqiu."

Wanwan gave her a sweet smile. "Sister Wanqiu is the best."

Lin Wanqiu was silent for a moment, then patted her head lightly. "Only you would say that."

Wanwan asked curiously, "Sister Wanqiu, where did this machine come from?"

Lin Wanqiu hesitated briefly. "I developed it based on notes left behind by my teacher, with the help of some friends in the alchemy department. Originally, it was meant to save someone, but he probably doesn't need it anymore."

Chapter 395 - 198: Hey, Kill You Again_2

Wanwan let out an "Oh": "Then big sister, don't work too hard, okay?"

Lin Wanqiu smiled and responded with a soft "Mm."

"Big sister, where did my dad go? And why is big brother missing too?"

Wanwan asked again.

Lin Wanqiu thought for a moment before answering seriously: "Your dad has already gone to the Judicial Court. Since the case is being reopened for investigation and he is a key figure, they can't allow outsiders to approach him casually. But don't worry, his current living conditions aren't bad. His comrades and friends from back then are all looking out for him. He'll be fine."

That was a lie.

Because while Uncle Mu wouldn't be mistreated, he was undoubtedly facing round after round, countless times of interrogation.

The people from the Judgement Court would undoubtedly try to pry anything they could out of him during this time.

Or they might use words to induce and threaten him into admitting to something.

They could even present photos of his fallen comrades from the past to try and manipulate his psyche.

In short, his body might be unharmed, but his mental state would certainly suffer.

"Oh, then what about big brother?"

Wanwan blinked her eyes with curiosity.

"He's gone to gather evidence for your dad."

Lin Wanqiu stroked her hair gently: "He'll be back very soon, trust him."

Wanwan nodded softly.

In truth, Lin Wanqiu herself didn't know what was going on with her. Perhaps the ongoing investigations had worn her down recently, leading to restless nights filled with nightmares that constantly jolted her awake in fear.

Whenever she woke up, she couldn't help but feel that the only person who could bring her a sense of safety was that young man.

After all, the events at Black Cloud City were well-known to everyone.

He was the only one who dared to stand up for the contaminated and rage against injustice.

This was also the reason Lin Wanqiu wanted to become his Guardian.

It was because of that sense of security.

Knock, knock.

Just then, the door of the hospital room was knocked upon.

Li Yijie, leading the Divination Investigation Team, stood at the door with a faint, indiscernible smile on his face. "Captain Lin, we need you to assist with an investigation. Is it convenient for you?"

There was a brief flicker of surprise in his expression as he said this.

He hadn't expected this woman to have grown so close to the Unclean, and in such a doting way at that.

"Alright."

Lin Wanqiu quickly reverted to her cold, distant demeanor, not sparing another glance at the little girl.

She stepped out gracefully in her high heels, heading toward the door.

"What is it?"

"What else? Still trying to catch the traitor."

"Got it."

It was peak tourist season, and the waiting halls at East Sea International Airport were packed with people. Lines stretched long at every check-in counter, curving around like a bustling market scene.

Gu Jianlin emerged from a public restroom, adjusting his appearance in the mirror above the sink. Today, he was dressed in a black sweatshirt paired with jeans, wearing black sunglasses on his face, looking just like an ordinary trendy young man.

Due to the human skin mask he wore, the contours of his face had shifted significantly.

Amid the rushing sound of flowing water, he felt entirely invigorated.

From the toilet behind him came the sound of flushing. Over a dozen packaging bottles of Fallen Angel Blood were flushed into the sewer.

At present, he was already at the peak of Third Rank, only a final ritual away from reaching Fourth Rank.

It was worth mentioning that the Shadow's Ghost Slayer Path had also been elevated to Third Rank.

Now operating on a Dual Core Drive, both inheritance paths had reached the Third Rank.

Unfortunately, the Shadow had yet to fully hatch, so it was still temporarily unusable.

According to the Deep Space Official Website's information,

The essence of the Ghost Slayer Path lay in its spatial awareness abilities and mastery of sword skills.

First Order, Ghost: The ability acquired here is Virtualization.

As the name implies, it allows the user to become intangible, traverse freely through the material world, and avoid physical attacks.

Second Rank, Shadow Ghost: At this stage, one gains an ability known as Shattering Sky Slash.

The blade's edge could tear through space, ignoring most defenses in this world. Additionally, the spatial fissures it created would eventually collapse, burying large areas of void in destruction.

Third Rank, Ghost Slash: At this rank, one can master the ability of Space Jump, effective for both offense and defense.

This is straightforward enough—a pure spatial displacement ability.

However, it is superior to the Magician Path's Instant Teleportation Technique in rank, usability, and effectiveness.

Moreover, since Gu Jianlin had devoured the Candle Dragon Bone and inherited the power of that Ancient Supreme,

The Ghost Slayer Path had also undergone an evolution. With each rank ascended, the Extraordinary Abilities from previous ranks were significantly enhanced.

That meant that now the Shadow's Virtualization and Shattering Sky Slash were both upgraded!

He looked forward to the day the Shadow would awaken.

Meanwhile, Scholar, disguised as an airport staff member, walked over from the side and whispered, "Boss, I just discovered that five minutes ago, a private jet underwent a last-minute inspection and is being prepared for takeoff. There are a total of twelve crew members, nearly all of whom are Ascenders. Their exact ranks are unknown."

He added softly, "Our team lacks both a Spirit Medium and a Divination Master."

Gu Jianlin responded with a quiet "Got it."

Suddenly, he recalled something and asked, "Have you reached Fourth Rank yet?"

Scholar was visibly stunned. Reaching Fourth Rank was such a momentous event, yet Gu Jianlin spoke of it as casually as asking whether someone had eaten today.

Outrageous.

You are an Ancient Supreme.

I'm not even at the Divine Servant level. We're not in the same league at all.

"No, no, not yet."

Gritting his teeth, Scholar replied awkwardly, "My innate talent is lacking."

"Hurry up and complete the advancement—remaining at the Third Rank is still too weak."

Gu Jianlin said calmly.

Scholar pulled a long face. I'm sorry, but this humble servant really cannot do it!

"Didn't you find any other helpers today?"

Chapter 396 - 198: Hey, Killing You Again_3

He hesitated and asked, "If you reveal even a hint of your power, wouldn't that..."

The Ancient Supreme's main goal in the modern world was to adapt to its lifestyle and environment.

And then to understand the secret weapons humanity had been preparing over the years.

Currently, Peak City had the President holding the fort, and even a Catastrophe stationed there.

Even if the Ancient Supreme were to expose themselves now, it wouldn't be a wise choice.

What's more, the Supreme had only recently escaped confinement.

"There's backup, but they haven't arrived yet."

Gu Jianlin pulled out a newly purchased second-hand domestic phone, with a fresh SIM card inserted. After dialing a number, he quietly waited for it to connect: "Hello, where are you now?"

On the other end, Tang Ling's crisp and melodious voice rang out: "At the eyeliner."

What the hell!

Gu Jianlin was baffled. I called you to handle things promptly, and now you're telling me you're putting on makeup?

For a moment, he felt deeply agonized.

He even recalled the fear he once felt under Youzhu's domination.

"Oh, I thought you meant something else. I'm in a taxi, just two more minutes till I arrive. When you summoned me, I was at the Sword Tomb. That's my mentor's specialized dimension; it snows heavily all year round. Every time I visit, my makeup gets ruined."

Tang Ling replied, "Didn't you say we needed to disguise ourselves today?"

Only then did Gu Jianlin heave a sigh of relief: "What about Extreme Thunder?"

Tang Ling said, "I packed it in the suitcase."

Gu Jianlin nodded slightly: "Good, don't use it unless absolutely necessary."

The two shared their location info before putting their phones away.

"Boss, here."

Scholar obediently handed over a set of staff clothes.

Gu Jianlin changed his clothes expressionlessly and casually asked, "How's the Pharmacist doing recently?"

Scholar replied, "Not bad. The old bastard's been living quite comfortably and is currently looking for his next hideout."

Gu Jianlin looked satisfied: "Good, bring him to the Peak City District to meet me. His easy days are numbered."

It's time to lock him in the black room.

Scholar's eyes glimmered with enthusiasm as he said, "I'm eagerly anticipating that day."

Gu Jianlin donned the airport staff uniform, pulled his hat brim low, and passed through the terminal and security checkpoints. Following the escalator, he arrived at the waiting lounge, where he saw planes outside the massive glass curtain wall.

A black Range Rover was parked by the roadside, with a designated attendant opening its door.

Director Li stepped out of the car, wearing a bizarre smile.

He was dressed immaculately, holding a steaming cup of coffee in one hand. It was as if the person severely beaten and injured yesterday wasn't him at all. Gone were the embarrassment and humor of being beaten, replaced by the arrogance and poise of someone in power.

"Connect the call."

He turned and instructed.

The attendant respectfully handed him the phone.

Director Li spoke softly, uttering some kind of riddle-like phrases, as if he were reporting the situation.

Suddenly, a gust of wind swept through the airport, filling the air with flying dust that clouded vision.

Dark clouds rolled across the horizon, and the distant woods shook.

BANG! A gunshot!

The attendant's head burst open, and he collapsed to the ground.

Director Li was shocked, half of his face smeared with blood.

Countless silver-white chains crisscrossed mid-air, fading into the void.

A young man dressed in blue work clothes strode forward. His hat was blown away by the wind, exposing the shadow beneath its brim, revealing those pitch-black pupils. The whites of his eyes were consumed by dark hues, much like an Evil Spirit's stare.

A black Ghost Fire burned on his forehead, familiar yet eerie.

"Hey."

He whispered softly, "We meet again."

Chapter 397 - 199: The Traces Left by Xu Fu!

The underground of Black Cloud City is a restricted area. Here lies a secret underground laboratory used to detain and study living corpses captured from the Qilin Immortal Palace. There is also a tomb pit for sealing the Ancient Ancestors, surrounded by an Alchemy Matrix. This is an absolute forbidden zone. Lastly, there is a prison for holding high-security criminals, guarded with the utmost vigilance.

As a former elite member of the Night Watchers, Mu Feng, through the maneuvering of various factions, did not end up in the prison. Instead, he was provided with an individual supervision room.

It was roughly equivalent to an ordinary apartment, with both living and entertainment facilities guaranteed.

However, he was not allowed to have any contact with the outside world.

But Mu Feng himself knew that things would never be that simplistic.

A ringing sound echoed in the room.

Mu Feng opened his eyes from the bed and then walked into the living room.

This room had no walls; on all four sides were ultra-durable glass created through alchemy.

This arrangement made it possible to monitor him at any time.

Nie, the Deacon, stood outside the glass walls, holding a thick file in his hand.

Behind him were the Demon Hunters of the Judgement Court, each wearing a unique mask, their expressions sinister.

There was an intercom device on the table. Mu Feng sat down in a chair, clasped his hands together, and maintained a calm demeanor.

"Former Night Watcher member, SSS-level investigator Mu Feng."

Nie, the Deacon, who had recently endured a beating two days ago and still had issues with his waist, had an unpleasant expression on his face. In a cold tone, he said, "These are the pieces of evidence collected by the Judgement Court, including photos from the Returning Burial Forest showing the scenes where you, influenced by the Ancient God's power, allegedly massacred comrades in a frenzy. Although in the Transcendent world, such evidence cannot be considered definitive."

"However, the appearance of the Qilin Wedge fragments in the Returning Burial Forest significantly increases the credibility of these claims. The corpses of the survey team and their detailed autopsy reports have already been submitted to the Investigation Bureau."

He paused for a moment. "Do you still insist on defending yourself?"

This was already the third time that day. In truth, Mu Feng hadn't slept at all; he couldn't sleep.

The Judgement Court wanted him to immediately sign and fingerprint a confession, admitting to the crimes.

Thus, they unleashed a barrage of psychological assaults, aiming to break his mental defenses.

When Nie, the Deacon, laid out all the photos one by one on the table,

Mu Feng saw the blood-soaked images, the faces that had haunted his dreams countless times, smeared with gore.

Their deaths were extraordinarily tragic, their wounds horrifying.

Was this his doing?

He didn't know.

Because he had amnesia and had been afflicted with the Soul Loss Gu.

He couldn't remember anything.

"Based on the results of divination, the killer points to you. Of course, you can argue that divination is not omnipotent, but then tell us — where is the real culprit? There are traces of Qi at the scene, and it's incredibly potent. From the analysis of the victims' wounds, they also match your Martial Arts Realm and combat techniques."

Nie, the Deacon, stared at him, speaking word by word: "Is your amnesia truly due to your inability to face what you've done? Did you deliberately use the Soul Loss Gu to erase those sinful memories?"

Mu Feng's breathing became erratic, his head splitting with sharp pain.

Before his eyes, it was as if the world was tinged with a blood-red hue, a vision of carnage engulfing his senses.

Memories from eight years ago seemed to come alive, a chaotic spread of horrors that brought him unbearable agony.

"You are allowed to retain the right to defend yourself. We'll even provide the best lawyer for you, because if the true culprit of this case is indeed someone else, it will undoubtedly pose a tremendous threat," Nie, the Deacon, said in a grave tone. "But at the same time, if all of this turns out to be your ploy, then you must know the consequences. This isn't just about your case; it will escalate into factional power struggles within the Ether Association. Everyone who supports you will be implicated."

Mu Feng clutched his violently aching head and said nothing.

"You know the President's temperament very well," Nie, the Deacon, added.

Mu Feng certainly understood the consequences. If it was ultimately proven that he had committed these acts, then all those who stood by him would be implicated with far-reaching ramifications.

At that time, the power struggle between the Lin Dong and Rhein factions would come to an end.

The former would no longer have any chance of making a comeback.

Rhein, along with his Judgement Court, would ascend as the next rulers of the Ether Association.

And all those who had lent their aid to him would undoubtedly face retribution.

This could be perfectly understood if one likened it to the ancient struggle for succession among princes.

The Transcendent world was just as merciless.

It had to be said, the Judgement Court had indeed struck at his weakest spot.

Mu Feng had always been soft-hearted. Coupled with the trauma from the Living Burial Area incident and his subsequent eight years of hiding, his youthful vigor had almost been worn away.

But at that moment, Mu Feng suddenly remembered the words of his old friends before he came here.

Back then, Deputy Team Leader Han Jing had visited him once. Though Han Jing said nothing, he patted Mu Feng on the shoulder.

Chen Bojun also told him, "No matter what happens, hold on. We're willing to take a chance with you on this."

Finally, there were the words of Lu Zijin.

"Although Old Gu is no longer with us, he left behind an outstanding son.

We trust your character.

And we trust Xiao Gu's capabilities.

Even if the entire world says you're a sinner, as long as Xiao Gu says you're not, then you are innocent.

Even if you doubt yourself,

You must believe in the young man in Black Cloud City who clenched his fists for your sake."

Uncle Mu suddenly felt at peace.

Everyone was working so hard — why should he give up?

Even if he truly was a sinner, he had to win this case.

Chapter 398 - 199: The Traces Left by Xu Fu!_2

As long as the Judgement Court's errors are proven, Xiao Gu will have the chance to vindicate his father.

As for what happens afterward, he'll end his own life.

"I insist on defending myself."

He raised his eyes, his gaze deep and resolute: "Continue."

At East Sea International Airport, blue work caps were thrown about violently in the raging wind.

Gu Jianlin clutched the Desert Eagle with its smoking barrel, tossing it aside casually, his eyes brimming with murderous intent.

"Who are you? No, it's you! It's actually you!"

Director Li recognized the pitch-black flames. Clearly, he couldn't comprehend why this young man would attack him here, but the unmistakable determination to kill him was evident—otherwise, such a distinctive feature wouldn't have been exposed.

"You actually dare assassinate a superior here!"

Shock and confusion flickered in his eyes for two reasons.

First, just because that little girl was bullied, this young man had decided to kill him!

Second, despite being cursed, the boy should already be on the verge of losing control.

"Still pretending, are you?"

Behind Gu Jianlin, pale Ghost Fire ignited. Four monstrous and horrifying Ghost Hands materialized in the flames, emitting anguished roars akin to evil spirits. In their palms, pitch-black Spell markings swirled, gathering countless black particles!

Dark energy converging!

He raised a finger, and black light coalesced at its tip.

The four Ghost Hands behind him helped gather dark energy!

Black light seemed to engulf the entire airport!

Director Li had witnessed this young man's strength before, so his first instinct was to flee.

But suddenly, the ground beneath his feet turned to sand, and streams of it climbed his ankles like vines.

Imprisonment!

From afar, Scholar pressed his hands against the ground and revealed a sinister smile.

At the same time, twelve crew members rushed out from the cabin. All of them were Third Rank, with varied Inheritance Paths tailored for handling emergencies.

Scholar immediately underwent Demigod Servant Transformation, assuming a serpentine posture full of eerie grace—Mind Shock!

Bang!

The twelve individuals were caught off guard and blasted away by a massive surge of psychic force.

In this instant, the black light Gu Jianlin had gathered surged forward!

Boom!

The immense black flash exploded, engulfing Director Li's enraged expression.

His figure seemed to disappear into the darkness.

For a brief moment, Gu Jianlin's facial expression shifted, sensing something peculiar—while Director Li's Life Rhythm hadn't vanished, it had undergone a strange transformation, like a gentle melody abruptly going out of tune!

He plunged into the thick smoke, clenched his fist, and struck out!

A muffled sound echoed; his punch was solidly blocked!

"Bold. But do you truly think I couldn't beat you yesterday?"

The smoke cleared to reveal Director Li gripping his wrist, his lips curling into a sinister smile.

Gu Jianlin's pupils contracted sharply.

Director Li's finely tailored suit had been blasted apart, leaving his upper body bare. Strange, expansive totems had appeared across his skin—depictions of Child Boys and Girls. Some meditated, cultivating Immortal Energy; others knelt in worship around a Pill Furnace.

Each Child Boy and Girl displayed eerily inhuman features.

Some had grown Dragon Scales, others mutated snake-like eyes.

Some even sprouted horns!

When Director Li spoke, his tongue bore an ominous black character.

Wu!

Crack!

Gu Jianlin felt the immense force emanating from the other man's grip, as though it would crush his right fist entirely!

In pure strength, his Ancient Martial path endowed with Qi had no rival within the same rank.

Pale Ghost Fire flared violently—Priest!

Thinking victory was assured, Director Li felt his Life Force draining uncontrollably, his shock giving way to fury!

Simultaneously, the four horrifying Ghost Hands burned with pale flames and descended with a roar!

Director Li abruptly released his grip and retreated, leaping into the air. His right leg swung out like a battle axe!

A clash of sheer power; the four Ghost Hands were sent flying!

Gu Jianlin retrieved the Soul Comforting Bell, releasing waves of black light that rippled outward—shock!

Boom! Director Li landed, briefly dazed.

His combat prowess had undergone a staggering transformation compared to yesterday.

Fundamentally, he was still someone who neglected Martial Arts.

Yet through some sinister means, his raw power had inexplicably surged.

This foe would undoubtedly prove arduous!

"Penglai Ascension Array!"

Scholar snapped out of his daze and, upon noticing the totems on Director Li's body, exclaimed, "That's the Penglai Ascension Array!"

Penglai Ascension Array!

Gu Jianlin didn't know what kind of monstrous thing it was but raced to analyze it mentally.

There was no doubt: Scholar was weak, with the only advantage being his exploration deep within Qilin Immortal Palace.

Moreover, their team possessed "Xu Fu's Record"!

The record left by Xu Fu was a tome detailing the secrets of Qilin Immortal Palace.

It was likely this record contained references to such things!

Without hesitation, Gu Jianlin took advantage of the moment, advancing swiftly. The four Ghost Hands behind him gathered Negative Energy once more!

But at that moment, Director Li regained clarity and erupted with ferocity.

His target... was no longer the youth standing before him.

It was Scholar!

This move confirmed the truth of Scholar's earlier statement.

Director Li intended to kill and silence him!

Meanwhile, the twelve crew members returned to the battlefield.

Four raised sniper rifles.

Four recited incantations, channeling psychic force.

Chapter 399 - 199: The Traces Left by Xu Fu!_3

The last four people erupted with surging Qi Force, charging forward together!

In the critical moment, Gu Jianlin flashed and blocked their path. The ancient Breathing Technique resonated like a deep echo across millennia, aligning with the natural laws of heaven and earth, instantly raising a dazzling domain!

Breathing Technique—Realm of Freedom!

The cool moonlight cascaded down like a waterfall, eradicating all supernatural abilities within the domain!

The attacks of the twelve individuals were thoroughly purified!

Gu Jianlin downed a bottle of Blue Blood with a reverse hand grip but didn't rush back to intervene in the fight.

A sudden explosion of Qi echoed in the Void.

Director Li leapt into the air, descending like a meteor!

Even in his Divine Servant Transformation state, the Scholar didn't dare take the hit head-on, his spiritual Thought swirling wildly!

At the same time, a crack appeared in the domain of the Lock of Nonexistence.

The crisp sound of sandals striking the ground resembled a playful melody.

A red-haired girl dove toward them, her high ponytail tied neatly, her white off-shoulder casual attire fluttering in the wind, revealing her long, snowy, rounded legs as she bent and lept into the air.

The Iron Sword abruptly unleashed a fierce Sword Qi, swirling around its blade like a raging storm!

Sword Tomb Secret Skill—Broken Sword Style!

"Careful! That one's combat power isn't normal!"

Gu Jianlin suddenly warned.

But it was already too late.

Tang Ling hadn't put her full strength into her sword strike.

In mid-air, Director Li reacted and launched a burst of Qi Gong Wave with a ferocious punch!

The erupting Sword Qi tore through the Qi Gong Wave, but the remaining force still surged forward.

Tang Ling had to place the Iron Sword horizontally across her chest as her snowy skin turned coldly steel-like.

Sword Body!

With a thunderous impact, she was sent flying backward!

Gu Jianlin, quick on his feet, moved behind her and caught her steadily, but the shock forced him to retreat five steps!

"What is with this guy?"

In her red-haired state, Tang Ling's personality grew much bolder. Her vermillion eyes flashed with anger: "I thought he was just a resource-pumped loser. How's he so fierce?"

"Not sure, he seems to be using a special Alchemy Matrix to boost his combat power."

Gu Jianlin shook his head, his eyes cold.

Meanwhile, the Scholar released spiritual Thought, sending an invisible ripple suddenly blasting outward!

Boom!

Director Li launched another punch, forcefully dispelling the incoming spiritual ripple.

He only slid back a few steps, effortlessly composed.

His bare upper body was covered in bizarre images of child boys and girls, seemingly alive, twisting violently.

An intense white aura emanated from them.

Gu Jianlin's pupils contracted slightly. At this moment, even profiling techniques were useless.

What kind of ghostly thing was this?

"Can you use Extreme Thunder?"

Tang Ling frowned unhappily.

Gu Jianlin shook his head.

"Boss, this guy seems to have obtained some form of power within the Qilin Immortal Palace, and it's related to Xu Fu! Right now, all major factions have entered the Immortal Palace, but so far, no one has found Xu Fu's whereabouts!"

The Scholar retreated to their side, speaking quickly: "I've read descriptions like this in 'Xu Fu's Record.' This was originally supposed to be something Xu Fu created to control Evolution Power, but somehow, it's under his command now!"

At these words, a flash of killing intent once again passed through Director Li's eyes.

"Interesting. You even know about the Penglai Ascension Array. Looks like you've discovered our tracks?"

He cracked his knuckles. "Then stay here."

He actually intended to take on all three!

"Hey."

Tang Ling suddenly said, "Evolve. Make it quick; the Judgement Court's reinforcements will arrive soon."

No one wanted to bear the guilt of murdering a superior officer.

Gu Jianlin remained silent for a second. "How do we evolve?"

He understood what the girl meant.

Ancient God Transformation and evolution were not the same concept.

The former involved his entire life form shifting from human to Ancient Supreme.

The latter only activated a portion of the power belonging to the Ancient God Clan.

"You don't know how?"

Tang Ling widened her eyes.

Gu Jianlin hesitated for a second. "I do, but I tend to lose control and overdo it every time."

Tang Ling took a deep breath, then decisively grabbed his hand, preparing to synchronize.

"Give me one second; I'll teach you!"

In the next moment, Director Li crouched, poised to attack, as the violent Qi Gong Wave trembled!

The earth shuddered slightly.

Fierce winds converged, stones rolled across the ground.

Amidst the chaos of flying sand and rocks, killing intent filled the air!

Chapter 400 - 200 An Old Acquaintance Seems to Arise

Sometimes, a single second in consciousness can feel incredibly long.

In the instant Gu Jianlin's spirituality connected, he glimpsed the memories belonging to the girl. It was as though she stood alone amidst endless wind and snow, her heart filled with hesitation and vigilance, much like a stray cat.

In a world that did not belong to him.

Within the blizzard stood an ancient stone tablet, engraved with eerie symbols of the Ancient God Clan. Staring at it too long made one feel like an ancient god, draped in a sacrificial robe of antiquity, gazing down at all living things—whether human slaves or members of the same race—with gigantic stone formations surrounding them.

It felt as if a trace of the Ancient God's Breath had invaded his body.

Yet it did not distort his mind; instead, it blended with his spirituality.

He exerted all his effort to control the mutated spirituality, integrating it into his own life force.

He could distinctly sense his life evolving!

A kind of... pitifully weak evolution!

There's no other way about it. Having experienced the power of the gods, this petty and insignificant evolution seemed like child's play—fragile, laughable, and utterly unworthy.

Though it was conveniently suited for his current stage.

Meanwhile, he quickly steadied his mind and tried to refocus on something else.

Spiritual synchronization is mutual.

To divert his attention during the synchronization, he instinctively picked a memory to recall.

What did he remember?

It was exactly one second ago—Tang Ling's long, shapely legs.

The synchronization ended.

He opened his eyes.

Director Li had entered berserk mode, unleashing a Qi Gong Wave that surged like tidal waves, reverberating violently through the Void, tearing apart the raging winds, and splintering the ground into fragments before sending bits of stone floating into the air!

Taking this attack head-on would guarantee pulverization!

Tang Ling's bangs fluttered, and an unusual expression flashed across her beautiful vermilion eyes. During synchronization, she'd seen her own legs. She wore denim shorts today—light and breezy.

"Enough!"

Gu Jianlin raised his gaze, merging a trace of the Ancient God's Blood within his body with his own spirituality.

He guided it into his body's cycle rather than waking the Black Qilin lurking in his mind.

For a split second, his pupils glimmered golden, and black Qilin Horns appeared atop his head—a symbol of nobility and power. Strange, pitch-black patterns spread across his face, leaving no other distinct features.

This was Evolution Power: spirituality boiling over!

Weak compared to giants, but sufficient.

The duration could last long, and it wouldn't provoke rejection from the rules of the real world!

Thanks to Tang Ling's experience, the evolution proceeded smoothly—though embarrassingly weak, without overexertion!

Unnoticed, Tang Ling now had a pair of snowy white horns extending from her head. Phantom wings seemed to spread behind her, derived from the Bai Ze Clan's Evolution Path, perfectly complementing her Sword Sect path.

She strode forward, sword qi erupted like countless trails of lightning!

A lethal sword dance!

With the deafening sound of thunderous explosions, Tang Ling unleashed countless overlapping bursts of sword qi, violently tearing open a massive gap in the surging Qi Gong Wave!

Seizing the chance, Gu Jianlin charged forward, the four grisly Ghost Hands behind him rapidly swelling. Once more, they condensed bursts of chaotic Negative Energy Particles, culminating at his fingertips as a terrifying black flash!

Post-evolution, his combat strength surged tremendously, spirituality seething like molten lava.

The grandeur of the Dark Shock was immense—its black radiance engulfed the entire airport!

Boom!

The magnificent black flash exploded outward—it might as well have been a high-level Divine causing a dimensional reduction strike.

Director Li's gaze froze in disbelief; he hadn't imagined this pair of vile lovers could wield the Ancient God Clan's Evolution Path—a forbidden art!

The horrifying blast detonated, sending a mushroom cloud of smoke billowing into the sky.

Director Li, his body reduced to a bloodied mess, was flung far into the park outside the airport!

"After him!"

This was an ideal opportunity. Gu Jianlin had to kill him and use the Soul Comforting Bell for soul-binding!

The Barrier formed by the Lock of Nonexistence collapsed, returning to chains that wrapped around his hands.

"Hurry, the Judgement Court will be here soon—I spotted their helicopter earlier."

Tang Ling spun around, grabbed her suitcase, and followed closely behind.

This Ancient Martial Path was truly troublesome, known for its resilience and durability.

At Zero-tier, practitioners already possessed strong self-healing capabilities and mastery of special energy manipulation, commonly referred to as Qi.

By First Order, they could effortlessly deploy Qi in tandem with various ancient martial techniques—like something out of a wuxia novel.

At Second Rank, practitioners gained Qi Circulation—Qi cycling endlessly within their body, creating impenetrable defenses.

The Third Rank ability, known as the Immovable Body, granted temporary immunity to all negative effects.

At Fourth Rank, Berserk mode massively boosted all aspects of their abilities.

Finally, Fifth Rank introduced the Qi Realm, signaling the true peak of the Ancient Martial Path's dominance.

If Director Li had reached Fifth Rank through the Ancient Martial Path, they wouldn't stand a chance.

Even if Gu Jianlin and Tang Ling wielded Evolution Power, they would turn and flee without hesitation.

Unless Gu Jianlin underwent Ancient God Transformation and Tang Ling activated Extreme Thunder.

But doing so would draw far too much attention.

They couldn't afford for the Judgement Court to discover their actions this time.

Even if they killed Director Li and secured evidence of The Order of the Hidden's existence—it wasn't an option.