

Ancient 441

Chapter 441 - 217 Butcher: Who is this messy old man?_2

Huai Yin looked up at the sky and said softly, "The red Heaven's Punishment is indeed impressive. Although I've successfully freed myself from its constraints, I've only managed to block it with a portion of my power. Before I die, I don't have to worry about it, but it still makes me the weakest I've been in two hundred years."

Gu Jianlin was worried, and then he heard his teacher's next words.

"You also know that the Candle Dragon Venerable has returned to Buzhou Mountain, the Vermilion Bird Venerate is said to descend again, Bai Ze Venerable is about to awaken from slumber, and the whereabouts of Xuanming Venerable are unknown, yet there's a Qilin Venerable nearby."

Huai Yin said seriously, "If a Supreme comes to kill the teacher, you must protect him well!"

"Are you serious?"

Gu Jianlin was silent for a long time, beginning to question whether his choice was correct.

Huai Yin chuckled, "Don't panic, there's still some time before these guys revive, enough for you to grow. Actually, do you know? This world, it's been meticulously designed."

Gu Jianlin frowned, "Including the Extraordinary World?"

"Yes, you only need to remember this sentence, because to this day I haven't found exact evidence, it's just that the higher I search, the more I feel the sense of design. Chi and I are the only ones who discovered this because we think everything humanity has today was prepared for us in advance."

Huai Yin smiled.

Gu Jianlin's pupils trembled. Though the old man's tone was as casual as ever, it left him exceptionally bewildered.

Absurd, eerie.

A chill even crept into the depths of his heart.

"Just keep it in mind; we don't have concrete evidence right now."

Huai Yin said, "Chi and I won't start a revolution over this. Although we've both discovered The Order of the Hidden's existence, what they truly intend is still unknown. We can't prove whether they're beneficial or harmful to humanity. We just intuitively feel they must be pests."

Gu Jianlin pondered.

"Back then, their methods were more secretive, not keen on expanding their influence. Perhaps only people on the level of Tianzhou and Xingye had the qualifications to join them. Councilman Zhang was barely adequate, while Director Li was nowhere near qualified. As for Jing Shangxiu, he was just a disposable pawn."

Huai Yin sneered, "At that time, there wasn't an obvious mark like the Penglai Ascension Array. Even if you knew someone was a member of The Order of the Hidden, there was nothing you could do about it."

Gu Jianlin understood, "So you turned against this world because of that."

"Yes, I want to kill them because they provoked me first. Just like how you found out your father was framed because of The Order of the Hidden. I can't stand this; I refuse to live in a cocoon of information woven by others, to have my life controlled."

Huai Yin's eyes grew reminiscent, "But the more I resisted, the more I investigated, the more terrifying it became. The Order of the Hidden's infiltration is dreadful, reaching almost every corner of this world."

He paused, "It's not just a simple game of catching traitors; it's a process where you must stand alone against this world."

"Let me ask you, if one day you discover that Youzhu's father is a member of The Order of the Hidden, what would you do?"

"If, while investigating, you find that Lu Zicheng is actually a member of The Order of the Hidden, what would you do?"

"If, in the end, you find out your senior brother is the mastermind behind The Order of the Hidden, what decision would you make?"

Gu Jianlin was struck with horror.

"Don't panic. It's just a metaphor."

Huai Yin waved his hand, "But you should understand what I mean."

Gu Jianlin was silent for a long time and suddenly understood his teacher's difficulties.

With a simple sentence, he spoke of the joys and sorrows of this world, the pain and struggle of being toyed with by fate.

"If you keep investigating, there will come a day when you will face the same situation I did back then. It might not be Youzhu, but someone else; even your beloved family or brothers."

Huai Yin said, "And you are destined not to be understood, for that is the price of clarity, the burden of bearing the weight of the world. You were born different, destined to endure the gaze of others."

Gu Jianlin said softly, "I've learned."

"I know with your character, you'll never back down. I just hope you can do better than I did back then, find a different solution, and not suffer like I did," Huai Yin said self-deprecatingly.

"I understand."

Gu Jianlin felt inexplicably complex, and asked, "To this day, you still can't let go?"

"What are you saying? I'm human too. I have loved ones, brothers, comrades-in-arms,"

Huai Yin sighed, "But after killing so many, I can't stop anymore."

Gu Jianlin never experienced his teacher's life.

But from his eyes, one could glimpse the struggles and choices.

No wonder this old man never rushed to formally take him as an apprentice.

Previously, he only taught him some skills, using his own prestige to watch over him.

In fact, the King of Qing was also hesitating about whether to let him walk this path.

"No matter what, I will keep investigating."

Gu Jianlin said word by word, "Black is black, white is white."

Huai Yin smiled slightly, "Not bad, it wasn't in vain to hand you the Lock of Nonexistence and Soul Comforting Bell."

Crack.

Gu Jianlin's footsteps halted, his eyes full of astonishment.

"Why so surprised? Didn't the Joker tell you, before he died, someone saved him?"

Huai Yin smiled faintly, "The Ether Association still has no idea how the Joker obtained the Lock of Nonexistence and the Soul Comforting Bell. Just a first-order Magician, surprisingly inept. In fact, I specifically retrieved them from the Qilin Immortal Palace and handed them to the Ether Association. At the time, these two Mythical Weapons hadn't been identified yet."

Gu Jianlin was taken aback, hurriedly asking, "Teacher, were you present at the Blood Moon Slaughter Incident?"

Huai Yin gave a sound of assent, "Yes."

Inside, Gu Jianlin's heart was a storm of emotions, choked with unspoken words.

"I can tell you very clearly, the culprit who caused the Blood Moon Slaughter Incident was exactly like your father, and also possessed the abilities of a Sixth-tier Sky Master. Even I was stunned then."

Huai Yin knew what he was thinking and said with emotion, "It was just that when I was puzzled, I suddenly felt the aura of the Vermilion Bird Clan. It was the Ancient God's Breath emanating from the Ghost Car Ancestor."

He continued, "Your senior brother and I intended to save your father."

Gu Jianlin, overwhelmed by fierce emotions, murmured, "And then?"

"In that instant, a dimensional turbulence occurred, preventing us from manipulating space-time anymore."

Huai Yin said expressionlessly, "We were just five minutes late, the battle was already over."

Much later.

Gu Jianlin gradually accepted reality, taking a deep breath, "So when the Ghost Car Ancestor appeared, he had already accounted for you and your senior brother's existence. It was premeditated, wasn't it?"

"Yes,"

Huai Yin shook his head, his eyes filled with an indescribable mix of regret and reflection.

"So, you've always been watching over me?"

Gu Jianlin asked.

"Except when Li Changzhi happened, we were dealing with other matters, otherwise we were watching."

Huai Yin gave a nod, "The Lock of Nonexistence and Soul Comforting Bell were specially prepared for you."

Gu Jianlin felt an unexpected emotional stir, realizing his teacher had planned everything.

At this moment, two shadows appeared in the grocery store ahead.

"Boss, where the hell is this? Why can't we get out?"

Butcher wasn't too flustered, rummaging through the store and even finding a bottle of beer and a bag of sausages, eating and drinking without worry, "Gu, not coming back, got caught up in something perhaps?"

Su Youzhu sat obediently on the chair, hands folded over her dress, coldly saying, "Shut up, don't mess with the store's things, are you mad? You won't even know how you die later if you do."

"What's wrong with eating something?"

Butcher, ever the nerve, "Not like I'm not paying."

Gu Jianlin wheeled himself into the store.

Huai Yin's smile broadened.

Su Youzhu, seeing the teacher and student return, slapped the sausage out of the brute's hand and stood up respectfully.

"Yo,"

Huai Yin chuckled, "Xiao Lin, you have quite a few girls by your side, haven't you? How long has it been and you've already switched to a new one?"

"..."

Gu Jianlin felt his scalp tingle, questioning how this teacher could speak in such a manner.

What an ominous educator.

Clearly, upon hearing this, a frost spread across Su Youzhu's face, and her gaze towards him grew cold.

Butcher scratched his head and said casually, "Brother Gu, who the hell is this old man?"

Chapter 442 - 218 The Prophecy of the Red King

The Butcher's remark shattered the composure of three people.

Huai Yin was dumbfounded. He had lived a whole two hundred and thirteen years, reaching a realm far beyond Catastrophe. Even though he had fallen out with the world, no one ever dared to show him the slightest disrespect, let alone call him a senile old man.

"Outrageous!"

"Sigh."

Su Youzhu couldn't help but cover her face, already contemplating where she should bury this reckless brute.

Gu Jianlin was shaken. Has this reckless fool always been this bold?

If this keeps up, you'll definitely be crowned as the King of Recklessness.

Luckily, the parrot wasn't here. Otherwise, things could really get out of hand.

Wait a moment.

He suddenly sensed a familiar trace of Life Rhythm.

"Who said I wasn't here!"

The parrot burst out from the darkness, perched on his shoulder, and surveyed the world with disdain:
"Who's the senile old man?"

Fine.

You're the King of Insolence.

BOOM!

A massive mushroom cloud erupted on the deck of the Bren Hill, with blazing fire illuminating the pitch-black night. Violent Elemental Turbulence converged in mid-air, and troll-like dark shadows roared within the flames.

Chaos reigned to an unimaginable extent.

Tonight was destined to be a sleepless night. After the King of Qing announced the Evolution Path to the whole world while enduring Heaven's Punishment, people realized there was no way to deal with the strongest Catastrophe. Left with no other options, they turned their focus back to vying for the Ancient God's Blood.

Though it was a blow to their pride, they had no choice.

Gu Jianlin seized the chance to lower his voice and asked, "Why did you bring the parrot here?"

Su Youzhu, her face stiff, muttered, "I thought it might come in handy, so I stuffed it into the bag."

What a disaster.

Huai Yin's face turned dark as he gazed at the flickering flames outside the window: "The battle's quite intense, though."

At this moment, the Butcher had an epiphany and said, "Old man, don't worry. With me here, they can't harm you."

Those words made Gu Jianlin's vision turn black.

Su Youzhu's face remained cold as she delivered a swift kick to the brute's behind and said sharply, "This place is already secured. Go support Third Master. Stop lingering here; you irritate me just by being around."

The Butcher was kicked out of the room and, to his delight, discovered he could finally leave this grocery store. Ecstatic, he charged toward the Bren Hill. After all, his favorite pastime was fighting.

Huai Yin watched the reckless brute's departing figure and chuckled, "He must be a Divine Servant, right? Qilin Venerable's Divine Servant."

Su Youzhu was startled.

Gu Jianlin subtly patted her shoulder, signaling her not to panic.

Given the teacher's level of expertise, failing to discern this would indeed be questionable.

After all, ever since Gu Jianlin stepped into the Extraordinary World, this elder had always watched over him.

While shielding him from storms, he also silently observed him.

The only uncertainty was the matter regarding Qilin Venerable.

He wanted to ask but didn't dare to.

Huai Yin sat in his wheelchair, leisurely commenting, "Qilin Venerable does seem to have an eye for talent. Though the Butcher may lack in intellect, he possesses a heart of unwavering loyalty and rather

decent patience. He's perfectly suited for the role of Divine Servant. Compared to that Scholar who merely nods and scrapes by, he's far superior."

He suddenly turned around and said, "A Divine Servant must remain hidden, but from now on, your Evolutionary State can be shown to outsiders. Be it the Ether Association or the Youying Group, there's no need for restraint."

Gu Jianlin asked, "Even in the Dark World?"

That lawless domain was nothing but a jungle of chaos, devoid of order or rhyme.

Su Youzhu explained, "The Dark World already has people possessing this power."

"Indeed."

Huai Yin remarked, "Evolution, for young talents like you, is quite straightforward. But for some others, it's as difficult as ascending to heaven. This is the trump card I've devised for the Human World in preparation for the impending apocalypse, even though those corroded fools mistakenly believe it marks humanity's descent into the abyss."

He sneered, "Little do they know, what they disdain is actually the ultimate crystallization of human civilization. For the so-called Evolution Path is derived from the research endeavors of humanity's pioneers."

Gu Jianlin and Su Youzhu exchanged glances, conceding that as younger folk, they weren't qualified to judge the older generation's affairs.

"To prepare humanity for the imminent apocalypse, Chi You and I advocated differing approaches, yet both of us agreed that humanity's current methods are insufficient to confront the coming catastrophe. Even if the Inheritance Path reaches its conclusion, it cannot surpass the Ancient Supremes, while the Heavenly Person's Wedge... there will always be ways to crack it."

Huai Yin spoke thoughtfully.

Gu Jianlin fell silent, realizing his teacher was right.

The Heavenly Person Realm was not unbreakable.

His existence itself proved this.

"My mentor also discussed this matter."

Su Youzhu suddenly recalled something and murmured, "He said that humanity, believing it has triumphed over the Ancient God Clan, is gravely mistaken. For the Ancient Supremes never regarded humans as rivals, and their civilization is far from stagnant."

Huai Yin chuckled softly.

"Gu Ci'an, that lad, is one of the rare clear-headed minds in the Human World."

He paused briefly: "Thus, I believe humanity's path forward lies in evolution. Yet, this road remains incomplete. At least with my current capabilities, I am still far from rivaling the Ancient Supremes."

Su Youzhu felt a pang of unease at his words; she had previously experienced the overwhelming aura from beyond the sky.

It was practically akin to facing divine beings.

Chapter 443 - 218: The Prophecy of the Red King_2

If this isn't Supreme Level.

Then that Lord in the Qilin Immortal Palace, how terrifying must he have been at his peak.

Gu Jianlin felt a stir in his heart: "Teacher, do you know the Ancient Divine Language?"

The wheelchair turned, and Huai Yin raised an eyebrow: "If I knew the Ancient Divine Language, would I have to bow before Him?"

He raised his hand, pointing to the painting on the wall titled "Jiuyin": "This is the biggest regret. Even though I've reached this point on the Evolution Path, I still can't master the Ancient Divine Language. We are merely humans wielding Ancient God Power — humans, not Ancient Gods. We use Breathing Techniques and Forbidden Spells, but not the Ancient Divine Language."

"Similarly, the Supremes possess the Ancient God's Wedge, but we lack it. We don't have sufficiently long lifespans, nor do we have the Undying Body. After all, the Ancient Supremes were born by devouring the life forms of an entire planet."

He looked at the boy with a subtle smile and asked, "What's this? Don't tell me you know?"

Gu Jianlin remained silent for a moment before shaking his head: "No, no."

"I would hope you did."

Huai Yin turned his gaze toward the girl beside him, his eyes unexpectedly carrying a hint of nostalgia and emotion as he asked, "The young lady seems quite talented. Did Gu Ci'an teach you this Evolution Path, or was it your biological mother?"

Gu Jianlin was taken aback.

Su Youzhu's charming face remained expressionless: "My teacher taught me. I have nothing to do with that woman."

Huai Yin took a deep look at her and sighed: "You do look remarkably alike."

Boom!

A scarlet lightning bolt pierced through heaven and earth.

Time and space shattered like a mirror as Jing Ci emerged from the flickering blood-red light. His suit was in tatters, his shirt stained with fresh blood, though there were no visible wounds. His expression was tranquil to the extreme.

His seemingly gentle face carried an overwhelming, surging murderous aura.

"How was it?"

Huai Yin asked lightly.

"Quite good, very relaxing."

Jing Ci's face broke into a slight smile as he turned to look at the teenager and girl in the shop, smiling again.

"Looks like everything went smoothly today."

"Indeed, it went quite smoothly."

Huai Yin sat in the wheelchair, his expression tinged with loneliness: "Though I always believed he would show up today. After all, I've never really believed he died. But if he were still alive, he would definitely appear tonight."

He sighed: "So lonely."

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A black Maserati drove through the bustling urban streets.

The driver and the old servant in the front seats didn't dare to breathe too loudly.

Because the car carried a true deity.

Just her mere presence was enough to make cold sweat bead down their foreheads. Being able to maintain composure was already quite commendable.

Taihua held a cup of chilled tea in her hand, her gaze fixed on the brightly lit lighthouse by the sea, her expression both commanding and indifferent.

Seated on the leather chair, she exuded an elegance and majesty as if she were perched on a throne. The corner of her eye bore a vivid crimson, as rich as blood. She spoke in a detached tone: "That student accompanying Huai Yin made quite the commotion today. Are you satisfied?"

Facing none other than the President, Tang Ling paid little heed, instead focusing on grooming her white hair in front of the makeup mirror. She retrieved lipstick from her cosmetic bag and applied it to her lips, replying nonchalantly: "Of course. This is exactly what I've always wanted to do; it's far more interesting than cultivating in the Sword Tomb."

Taihua commented calmly: "I did command you to stay away from that child."

Tang Ling adjusted her shirt, covering her rounded shoulders and black straps, and replied: "Every parent warns their children against falling in love early, but no one ever listens to that nonsense. You probably weren't an exception when you were young."

Anyone daring to address the President like that would normally have grass growing six feet deep over their grave.

Yet Taihua was unbothered, merely casting her a glance and sneering: "What's this? You fancy him? The most powerful Catastrophe's student? Mastering the Breathing Technique in ten seconds, learning the

Qilin Forbidden Curse in two days, and ascending to the Third Rank in a month? If anyone in this world matches you, it's him alone."

Tang Ling paused for a long time upon hearing these records.

After a moment, she seriously asked, "What's this? You approve?"

Taihua's eyes flashed with a hint of frost: "You really do like him?"

Tang Ling propped her chin with her hand, pondering: "Like might be too strong, but I certainly don't dislike him. He's an exceptionally trustworthy teammate. Being around him gives me a sense of security and excitement."

Taihua scoffed: "I reckon you think that once you're in his bed, you'll be useless to me in refining silver."

Tang Ling fell silent.

That was true.

Extreme Thunder wasn't just an ordinary growth-type Mythical Weapon; it held other secrets.

It also required virgin blood to unleash its greatest potential.

As a result, even her great-grandfather couldn't fully inherit this sword.

"The more stringently disciplined the child, the more rebellious they become."

Taihua said coldly: "Someone you don't dislike? There aren't many of those in this world. By extrapolation, isn't it practically a foregone conclusion that he's the one? Lucky for you, that boy is naturally aloof; he likely won't fancy you at all."

Tang Ling furrowed her brow: "Hmm?"

She straightened her back slightly, a little dissatisfied.

After all, she was a proud girl.

With this appearance, this figure.

Why not?

"If you showed up in sleepwear at his bed in the middle of the night, there's a nine out of ten chance his first reaction would be to call the cops."

Taihua paused: "Interesting. The entire world knows you're my successor, yet now your mastery of the Evolution Path has been made public. If you reach the Demigod Domain, you'll inevitably become a Catastrophe. And Catastrophes aren't allowed to hold power — that's a rule I established myself. Huai Yin, oh Huai Yin, what cunning calculations."

Chapter 444 - 218: The Prophecy of the Red King_3

Tang Ling's ruby lips curved into a smile: "I will make sure to honor him properly from now on."

"Heh."

Taihua gazed at her indifferently: "Have you ever considered the possibility that the rules are made by me?"

Suddenly, Tang Ling felt a sense of foreboding.

"And that I can abolish them as well."

Taihua said.

Tang Ling: "..."

"This is Huai Yin's true intention. You are my chosen successor, and to this day, I have not given up on the idea of you replacing Rhein. After all, you are the human in this world with the highest compatibility with the Heavenly Person's Wedge, bar none. Moreover, with your talent and by harnessing all the resources of the Human World, soaring to unimaginable heights in a short time is not an impossibility."

Taihua spoke coldly: "Huai Yin is forcing me to pick a side."

Tang Ling's face was icy, silent without a word.

"But it's a pity you are too impulsive. All because of your great-grandfather's matter, you insisted on throwing yourself into these murky waters."

Taihua paused: "Originally, the Judgement Court could have been at your disposal."

Tang Ling understood the President's meaning.

The Judgement Court and her, originally, had no conflict.

But after tonight, everything would be different.

The driver focused on his nose, his nose on his heart, pretending he had heard nothing.

The old servant took a call, then turned and respectfully said: "President Taihua, Minister Zhang wishes to meet you."

Taihua narrowed her eyes, saying nothing.

Tang Ling asked coldly: "Which Minister Zhang?"

She felt slightly familiar.

"The elder brother of the Councilman Zhang whom you people killed."

Taihua sneered: "I've taught you for over ten years, but it seems everything I've taught went straight to the dog's belly, didn't it? Killing people is fine. But what must you do before killing? And what must you do after killing?"

Her voice grew increasingly severe, like thunder rolling from the heavens.

Tang Ling's delicate face turned slightly pale, but she still forced herself to maintain a calm demeanor and replied indifferently: "Before killing, you must investigate the background thoroughly. After killing, you must eliminate anyone who might seek revenge—clean up thoroughly, root and branch."

Taihua glanced at her: "And how did you act, then?"

Tang Ling thought for a moment: "I forgot."

"If you weren't someone I personally watched grow up, I'd truly want to slap you dead right now. As for Rhein and Lin Dong, those two useless fools—if only Qing and Chi had been strangled as children."

A terrible golden light flashed in Taihua's captivating eyes, only to quickly fade.

"Enough. Let them keep fighting."

She paused: "A bunch of useless trash."

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At the top floor of the Peak City Intercontinental Hotel, the door to the presidential suite swung open from inside.

Beautiful female secretaries opened the door, lowering their heads and exposing shadowy abysses, respectfully saying: "Lord Youming, you have returned."

Lord Youming, his upper body bare and drenched in blood, flexed his knotted muscles rhythmically.

Blood trickled down the crevices of his muscles, as though seeping through rocks.

"Go prepare hot water."

Hel, dripping wet herself, ordered: "Lord Youming needs a bath."

Having just endured a brutal battle, Lord Youming bore no injuries on his body. After all, as the Ninth Rank Candle Yin God, despite not yet mastering the Evolution Path, at his level, even dying would be difficult.

Yet Hel, having followed this lord for many years, knew him far too well.

Lord Youming's faith was rooted in the King.

This evening's battle was a mere triviality.

The key was that Heaven's Punishment left by the King had been unraveled.

Though Lord Youming seemed calm, his heart was likely already consumed by fury.

Like the eerie calm before a storm.

Moments away from going mad, destroying the entire city.

With a clap, the bathroom door shut.

Lord Youming soaked in the warm bathwater, his black hair cascading down.

At this moment, his perpetually stoic face suddenly bore a strange smile.

"What a thrill. I truly can't wait for the day you step into the Demigod Domain."

He reached into the Void, retrieving a yellowed, ancient diary.

Then he opened the page marked with a bookmark, carefully inspecting it.

"May 4, 2022. The King of Qing unravels Heaven's Punishment, Evolvers step onto the stage of history."

The King had not yet lost.

Chapter 445 - 219: Why Soften the Heart?

The grocery store seemed to have returned to its former self.

Huai Yin lay on the reclining chair, leisurely enjoying the battles aboard the Bren Hill, watching with unrestrained delight.

Jing Ci had changed into a brand-new suit, opened a bottle of whiskey for himself, and stared at the fiery explosion in the distance. He said faintly, "Just for a drop of the Ancient God's Blood, they're willing to risk their lives. These people don't even know who created the Ancient God's Blood, yet they'd throw their lives away for it."

"If they've been infected, then their only hope lies in gambling everything on the Ancient God's Blood. For most people, they lack the talent for evolution. Compared to losing freedom, they're more terrified of death."

Huai Yin chuckled, "If that Supreme happens to be sleeping, then that would be blood well-earned."

"Wan Rentu, that fool, does have quite the strength. If he could let go of past grievances, he might still have a chance to ascend to the Holy Land. But for now, it seems that it's a long shot."

"This old geezer from the Si Family is as annoying as ever. Was he involved in the death of the second back then? If he was, I'll take the chance next time to teach him a lesson."

"Teacher, killing this old geezer might still prove difficult. Though his ability isn't particularly strong, his skill at escaping is likely in the top three globally, if not first."

"That impressive? Compared to Li Qingsong, he does seem to have some talent."

"A masterful move with Dragon Blood Eruption, paired with Slaughter Domain, perfected to the highest level."

"The old geezer from the Si Family, specializing in auxiliary pathways, sure is a rare oddity. How did he manage to dodge that?"

"Hmm, is this one of the Liu family's descendants? This fatty is somewhat amusing."

From this distance, no one knew how they saw it so clearly.

Anyway, Gu Jianlin could only see the fiery explosion ascending into the sky and feel the disappearance of numerous Life Rhythms.

"Is the fight still not over?"

His mood grew inexplicably complicated, and he didn't know who would ultimately gain the possession of the Ancient God's Blood.

This unlucky soul... no, wait.

This lucky fellow, who would it be?

Su Youzhu glanced down at her phone and said slowly, "Tonight it probably won't end. Even if someone seizes the Ancient God's Blood and escapes, it doesn't guarantee they won't be assassinated in the future."

Gu Jianlin raised a brow, "Third Master is also vying for the Ancient God's Blood? What's he after?"

"A Divine Servant."

Su Youzhu lifted her beautiful gaze and said seriously, "Even though the chances are slim, successfully creating a Divine Servant would carry immense research value. In this world, many people lack talent yet still yearn for the power of the Evolution Path, especially those in the Dark World. A living Divine Servant holds tremendous research significance."

She paused. "Of course, most people are simply fighting for survival. But if they truly become a Divine Servant, they would likely retreat to the Ancient God Realm and hide forever."

"Is the Ether Association also aiming for this?"

Gu Jianlin understood. It turned out the Butcher was still considered a rare and protected species.

"Not much worth watching anymore."

Jing Ci withdrew his gaze.

Huai Yin responded with a soft hum and snapped his fingers.

The scenes outside the grocery store abruptly twisted and distorted, and when they returned to normal, they were back in Luodong District.

Huai Yin turned around and asked, "Was Councilman Zhang's soul bound by the Soul Comforting Bell?"

Gu Jianlin was taken aback before responding affirmatively.

"Make good use of it."

Huai Yin remarked blandly, "Councilmen from the Judgement Court are weighty figures, especially with that fool Li Qingsong always valuing them highly. Councilman Zhang himself also has a significant network within the Ether Association. There are bound to be troubles to address ahead. But don't worry, your teacher has already planned it out."

Gu Jianlin suddenly thought of something. "Wait, what about Li Qingsong?"

Huai Yin chuckled, "Released."

Gu Jianlin was puzzled, "Released?"

"Yes, released. He's already a dying man, killing him would be pointless. Li Qingsong isn't a member of The Order of the Hidden and holds no real value. Better to use him for a small experiment."

Huai Yin waved his hand and sighed, "Old matters aren't yours to worry about. Starting today, the internal power dynamics of the Ether Association are about to change once again. This will be the biggest restructuring in two centuries. It's also an opportunity for you young people to emerge and revolutionize the world. Make sure to seize it."

The teacher had upheld the heavens.

The rest of the path, they would have to walk themselves.

As his words fell, Huai Yin slowly closed his eyes. His already weathered face seemed even older, his breathing and heartbeat faint to the point of being inaudible, as if asleep.

Rumbling sounds enveloped the entire grocery store, trembling as if about to collapse.

Jing Ci snapped his fingers, forcibly stabilizing the space.

"Teacher?"

Gu Jianlin was startled, his heart trembling inexplicably.

Even Su Youzhu widened her eyes in surprise.

"No need to worry, it's not that serious."

Jing Ci pushed the wheelchair and calmly said, "The teacher has spent his entire life fighting for the Human World, often clashing with Supreme-level beings. Ordinary Catastrophes usually collapse after two bouts with the Ancient Supremes. The teacher, however, has been in countless battles against them."

"The Red King and his Heaven's Punishment have caused significant strain on the teacher."

He continued seriously, "Next, I'll take the teacher to see a Priest. While he might live another two years, I hope his final years can be more comfortable."

For some reason, Gu Jianlin fell silent upon hearing this.

At that moment, countless images flashed through his mind—an elder handling Copper Coins in front of the grocery store, a towering figure akin to a divine presence, and the green Qilin soaring to the heavens.

This world was full of storms, yet there had always been an elder behind him holding an umbrella.

Shielding him from the wind and rain.

Many criticized the King of Qing for his myriad faults.

But for Gu Jianlin, this was the greatest teacher in the world.

And now, his teacher's days were numbered.

Gu Jianlin said nothing, silently tightening his fist.

Su Youzhu sharply noticed his mood.

Having been by his side for so long, she was the person who understood him best in this world.

Gu Jianlin was naturally indifferent and rarely emotional, with few people close to him. But when he truly cared about something, his feelings were evident, his emotions unmistakable.

Like back at the cemetery, his pale expression as he gazed at the tombstone.

Or in the underground ruins of the Burial Colors, where he held her tightly.

And now, his tightly clenched, pale knuckles.

Because he had so little.

When he finally gained something, he couldn't bear to lose it.

Su Youzhu quietly reached out, softly taking his hand.

Gu Jianlin froze, startled out of his thoughts, his mind momentarily muddled.

"In life, facing farewells head-on is most important."

Jing Ci gently covered the old man in the wheelchair with a blanket and smiled. "The teacher is human too, subject to birth, aging, illness, and death. But whether he passes without regret will entirely depend on you."

Space-time rippled.

Gu Jianlin paused for a moment: "I understand, senior brother."

Su Youzhu also solemnly bowed: "Safe travels."

The grocery store vanished like a reflection in water.

Only the two of them remained, standing in place.

The night was desolate; cicadas cried endlessly in the trees.

After a long silence.

"Don't worry too much; there are still more than two years left."

Su Youzhu spoke softly. "Your father said long ago that within this Transcendent world, there are many secrets of humanity yet to be unearthed. Perhaps there's a chance to prolong the King of Qing's life."

Gu Jianlin was quiet for a second, sensing the care in the girl's gaze, and responded with a faint hum.

He wasn't one to dwell on sentimentality; pragmatism was his forte.

Two years were enough to accomplish many things.

"By the way."

Gu Jianlin reached behind him, retrieving a box containing the Moonstone Heart from the Qilin Wedge's space. Handing it to her, he said, "I got this for you. Does this mean you can now ascend securely?"

Su Youzhu recognized the box's bloody aura, confirming it contained the Moonstone Heart.

She suddenly recalled she had planned to be upset today and vent her frustration at him.

But under the lamp's glow, seeing the boy's face.

She suddenly couldn't bring herself to do it...

How annoying.

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Northern Europe, Norway.

The rumbling sounds echoed faintly, an ancient grocery store emerging on the icy ocean shore lined with crashing waves.

Jing Ci pushed open the shop's door, letting the wind and snow rush in.

"Alright, we're here."

He suddenly spoke.

Huai Yin silently opened his eyes, the gaze within them dull and muddled, resembling that of a dying man.

Jing Ci said calmly, "Must you be like this?"

"What do you know?"

Huai Yin muttered softly, "If I didn't act like this, how could I make him feel sadness and sorrow? If he weren't hurt and upset, how would the girl soften her heart? If the girl didn't relent, wouldn't they end up arguing tonight?"

"Your junior brother is as stiff as steel, his thinking rigid and intractable."

He sighed, "It still takes a teacher to step in."

Jing Ci casually asked, "Which of the two does your junior brother seem to favor? One is the President's successor, the other... is his descendant, both quite intriguing."

Huai Yin pondered seriously, "That's his own business; both girls are excellent. Whoever can win over that blockhead depends on their own abilities. From my perspective, of course, I'd want both. But this kid just doesn't get it. If he had even a third of my skills as a teacher, those two girls would've gone on maternity leave by now."

With that, he began coughing heavily, spitting up fresh blood that stained the ground.

Jing Ci seemed hesitant to speak.

"My time is running out; this lifetime has left me without offspring. Occasionally, I too wish to enjoy familial bliss like ordinary folks. You're already hopeless, the second is gone too, so everything now depends on the third."

Huai Yin looked out at the ice layers beyond the shop, and his eyes brightened suddenly. Throwing off the blanket, he briskly rose from the wheelchair, his complexion vibrant and energetic. "Let's go, ice fishing!"

Chapter 446 - 220: Youzhu's Punishment

The dim corridor echoed with faint rustling sounds.

"I'll take care of it myself."

"Don't move. There's more here. Turn around."

"Uh... fine."

Gu Jianlin raised his hands high, resembling a clueless robber cornered at gunpoint by the police.

Su Youzhu stood on tiptoe, meticulously wiping away the dust and bloodstains on his chest with a damp tissue. Only after confirming it was spotless did she turn, unlock the door, and, without hesitation, pull him inside by the hand.

Helplessly, Gu Jianlin felt as though his very bloodline was subdued when facing this girl.

It forced him to admit one undeniable truth.

She had undoubtedly raised him single-handedly.

Su Youzhu indeed possessed the inherent demeanor of a poised older sister; even though she was a few months younger than him, her aloof and chilly disposition was entirely natural. Every look she cast his way inexplicably made him feel guilty.

Not even the majestic authority of the Qilin Venerable worked here.

It was akin to a child having done something wrong suddenly encountering a strict elder sibling — a suppression in the food chain.

"What have you two been up to again? Sick and still running outside? Went to watch the meteor shower, huh? Xiao Lin, you're just spoiling her! One day, you two will drive me to an early grave!" His mom spat irritably as she wiped the living room table, glaring at the two troublemakers who'd returned home.

The kitchen was infused with the heavy scent of herbal medicine. Uncle Su, busy simmering the concoction, chimed in: "You're back? It's good for the young to get some fresh air. Perfect timing, Xiao Lin — make sure she drinks her medicine."

The parrot seemed desperate to speak but had its mouth tied shut, unable to squeak even a peep.

Su Youzhu sat glumly on the sofa, her face dark as she stopped speaking altogether.

Gu Jianlin glanced at her; at home, she had the persona of a rebellious troublemaker who needed strict supervision.

The instant they stepped through the door, their social standings flipped upside down.

"How many times have I told you — keep this in the fridge! It's going bad now!"

"The fridge is so stuffed with your things there's no room left!"

The couple in the kitchen started bickering again.

Gu Jianlin set the herbal medicine on the table. "Drink it. Even though it doesn't really help, just see it as a way to keep things balanced."

Su Youzhu pulled a sour face. She loathed herbal medicine but, mindful it was prepared with care by Mom, braced herself, pinched her nose, shut her eyes, and gulped it down without complaint.

"Here."

Gu Jianlin retrieved a bottle of Yakult from the fridge and handed it to her, lowering his voice to ask, "Why'd you randomly run outside tonight? Didn't I tell you to stay home and rest? Do you realize how dangerous it was?"

Su Youzhu hugged the Yakult bottle and chugged silently, her face blank, only to retort: "You're one to talk! If I'm not mistaken, didn't you say you were going out today to buy me milk tea? Where's the milk tea?"

Gu Jianlin's heart skipped a beat, but his years of experience now made him unfazed. With composure, he said flatly, "If I'm not mistaken, weren't you supposed to be showering at home, wearing that see-through nightdress for me? And where's that nightdress?"

For a moment, the living room fell silent.

Su Youzhu raised her dazzlingly bright eyes and gave him a mockingly icy stare.

Without a word, she marched to the bedroom and returned with a silky black nightgown in hand.

It was transparent, freshly laundered, and carried the faint aroma of laundry detergent.

Oh crap.

Gu Jianlin almost had a reflexive meltdown, hurriedly snatching the garment and shoving it behind the couch cushions.

If their parents saw, it would be game over.

He had only made an offhand joke, never expecting to dig his own grave like this.

"I live up to my promises."

Su Youzhu's gaze was piercing as she coolly stated, "But you might want to explain something to me first. What's the deal with that red-haired woman? Why is it every time we split up, you end up with her?"

Gu Jianlin maintained his composure and replied firmly, "She's just a trustworthy teammate. Since you were conveniently injured, I couldn't team up with you, and she was the only reliable option left."

Su Youzhu stared at him quietly for a few moments.

"I see."

She mused thoughtfully, "Following your logic, if one day I ended up pregnant and you had biological needs to resolve, you'd go look for another woman, correct?"

Gu Jianlin's brain short-circuited instantly.

This mental leap was outrageous; once he processed it, he realized it was sheer absurdity!

"Stop saying nonsense."

He declared seriously, "We're siblings."

Su Youzhu huffed coldly. She had been holding the Moonstone Heart, feeling sentimental. But upon recalling it had been snatched together with another woman, the sentiment vanished in an instant.

"I suppose you really are growing up."

She grumbled, "Things were better back in school."

Gu Jianlin paused. "What do you mean?"

"In school, whenever another girl got ideas about you, I could just scare her away."

Su Youzhu replied wistfully, "Do you remember how, after you entered high school, quite a few girls confessed their feelings to you? And after your rejection, they'd never bother you again."

Gu Jianlin thought back and realized she was right; at first, there were one or two persistent admirers, but they eventually disappeared without a trace.

"That's because I had friendly and constructive dialogues with them, advising them against dating prematurely."

Su Youzhu said righteously, "Your peace and quiet were all thanks to my efforts."

Gu Jianlin was stunned, never imagining she had done such a thing.

"But I remember—there were still people leaving breakfast and snacks under my desk."

Realization dawned on him.

"Hmph, figured it out? That was all my doing! The school food was so bad even stray dogs wouldn't touch it. I was worried you wouldn't grow properly or that you might be malnourished. But looking at you now, you seem to have developed pretty well."

Su Youzhu scrutinized his face and physique, nodding approvingly. "My nurturing plan was a success. The only downside is that I've raised you too well, and now other women keep coveting you."

Gu Jianlin went quiet for a moment, then smiled softly.

Truthfully, he hadn't cared much for school before, nor was he sociable with his peers. Being overly mature meant there was little common ground. But in hindsight, he realized there were many beautiful moments he had let slip by unnoticed.

For instance, the girl in front of him.

"I do need the Moonstone Heart, but don't be so reckless next time."

Su Youzhu said seriously, "Otherwise, one day you'll drive me into an early grave."

Gu Jianlin was about to respond when he noticed her grimace in discomfort, breaking into a muted cough.

Startled, he instinctively steadied her shoulders, worried she was hurt.

Suddenly, a silvery glow flickered in Su Youzhu's beautiful eyes as she effortlessly activated the Divine Speed Force domain. Lifting her snow-white, delicate face, she pressed her soft lips against his.

The Ghost Slayer Path's perks manifested themselves boldly.

When striking, she gave no room for reaction.

Gu Jianlin felt a brief chill on his lips and instinctively leaned back.

But Su Youzhu moved faster, grabbing onto his collar and pinning him down.

No escape.

Gu Jianlin caught a fleeting trace of mischief and triumph in her illuminated eyes. Her lips were soft and icy, as if laced with Siberian frost — unskilled yet fervent.

The scariest part was, the couple in the kitchen were still arguing.

A simple glance their way and they'd see the two locked in an embrace.

Long moments later, Gu Jianlin watched blankly as she released his lips.

Like a little queen, aloof and proud.

"That's your punishment."

Su Youzhu leaned closer, whispering coldly in his ear, "Next time you bluff me, I'll bite you in front of them. Oh, and no see-through nightdress for you tonight...though, if you insist, you can come to my room."

Gu Jianlin felt her lingering warmth on his lips, his brain entirely wiped.

"So this is how you use the Ghost Slayer Path, huh?"

He murmured, feeling her schemes forever beyond his grasp.

"Not allowed?"

Su Youzhu lifted her chin. "Sweet or bitter?"

Gu Jianlin fell silent; he wanted to say it was sweet.

But her antics were too outrageous, and he didn't want her to feel victorious. So he nudged her forehead aside and said sternly, "I'm going to shower—we'll interrogate Councilman Zhang afterward."

With that, he turned and left without hesitation.

Su Youzhu watched his retreating figure, the corners of her lips curling into a faint smile.

She hadn't intended to be so forward initially.

But sensing looming danger, she had to act preemptively.

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Magic City, Deep Space Headquarters.

The expansive floor-to-ceiling windows reflected the city's radiant lights. Rhein stood like a silent sculpture, his tall, upright silhouette mirrored by the glass, his frozen expression unmoving.

Five minutes ago, he received the news.

Saints Tianzhou and Xingye were dead.

Two young Saints he had personally groomed, both irreplaceably vital confidants.

All because the so-called strongest Catastrophe, King of Qing, accused them of being members of The Order of the Hidden.

Thus, these Holy Sanctuary Level Saints were crushed like roadside ants.

There was no room for negotiation.

"What a pity."

He murmured softly.

Whether pity for them or something else was unclear.

To those unfamiliar with the Ancient Catastrophe, this might seem absurd.

Saints.

Holy Sanctuary Level Ascenders.

How could they die so inexplicably?

But Rhein, a man versed in that gory history, knew better.

During the Ancient Catastrophe, the deaths of Seventh Rank Holy Sanctuary Level Ascenders were utterly insignificant.

Not remotely surprising.

Too many Guardians of the Human World perished at the hands of those two brothers back then.

Blood soaked the earth.

Hell on earth.

Thankfully, Li Qingsong was still alive. That alone offered a sliver of good news.

In the silence, Taixu's voice rang out.

"Vice President Rhein."

Taixu spoke gently, "Minister Zhang Xuzhi requests an audience."

Rhein paused briefly; his golden dual pupils devoid of emotion. "Tell him to stop overthinking. Focus on advancing to Seventh Rank and securing the final Heavenly General slot. If Lu Zijin takes that position instead, he needn't bother coming to see me again."

Taixu responded, "Understood."

A shadowy figure dressed in black-lace maid garb flickered and vanished.

Approximately five minutes later.

Taixu's projection reappeared in the darkness, hesitant to speak.

"Minister Zhang refuses to leave?"

Rhein raised an eyebrow. "Losing just one brother made him lose his grip?"

Chapter 447 - 221: Is the Candle Dragon Venerable Coming?

Recently, Gu Jianlin didn't really want to stay at home anymore. The main reason was that ever since the two of them, as siblings, came clean to each other, it always felt like they were sneaking around behind their parents' backs.

Every moment was thrilling and forbidden, an intense excitement.

The main issue was that Youzhu kept teasing him, and her pajamas were far too revealing.

This kind of torment was unbearable for someone like him, who prided himself on being a gentleman.

"This Lock of Nonexistence is quite handy."

Su Youzhu lay on his bed, hugging a pillow and supporting her chin with her hand, grumbling, "As long as the Barrier is in place, no matter what we do at night, Mom and Dad won't hear a thing."

The girl was dressed in a black nightgown, her long, slender snowy legs provocatively visible. Her skin was as smooth as porcelain and gleamed under the light, while her delicate, fair feet swayed casually.

Gu Jianlin silently recited to himself not to look, toweling off his damp hair as he sat down in front of her.

"The Lock of Nonexistence is for preventing emergencies,"

he said seriously. "It's not meant for... for things like that."

The bedroom was already shrouded by the ethereal Chains, erasing their presence.

Su Youzhu slanted her eyes at him, her gaze sly. "I didn't specify what kind of things. Where's your mind wandering off to?"

Gu Jianlin fell silent. This girl may look cold and aloof, but she was full of tricks.

In a space for a hundred thoughts, at least two hundred of them were her schemes to mess with him.

The best way to deal with her was cold indifference.

Just then, he suddenly noticed that she was staring at his collar.

Gu Jianlin only realized then that his pajama buttons were undone and hurriedly fixed them.

"It's not like I haven't seen it all before."

Su Youzhu pouted. "Everything you wear, haven't I been the one to buy it?"

Gu Jianlin hesitated for a moment. "Hmm? I always thought..."

He had assumed that their mom had bought them.

But now it dawned on him.

Su Youzhu snorted and said bitterly, "What did you think? The clothes Mom gives you are actually the ones I picked out. Haven't you realized that the clothes you've been getting from her all these years always fit your taste? I even keep a memo. I know exactly what you like to wear in each season."

She waved her phone, her gaze growing more plaintive. "You're such a clueless and troublesome person. You catch a cold every season change, so when I return from the Ancient God Realm, I have to rush to buy you autumn and winter clothes. You won't wear turtlenecks, saying they're stifling, and you complain that coats are too heavy. Every year, I have to spend so long picking them out."

"Your favorite colors are so boring—always black, white, or gray. But the cut of the clothes can't look bad, and uncomfortable fabrics irritate your skin. Plus, you keep growing taller every year, so the clothes I buy only fit for six months."

She grumbled, "Sometimes, I feel like I'm raising a son."

Gu Jianlin stayed silent for a moment before unexpectedly laughing.

"What are you laughing at?"

Su Youzhu glared at him.

"Nothing."

Gu Jianlin shook his head. "Do you find it tiring?"

"Not at all. Raising you isn't so bad. At least you can fight for me."

Su Youzhu replied calmly, "Too bad if someone else takes you away."

Despite his single-minded intentions, Gu Jianlin tried to clarify, "I'm really just regular teammates with Senior Sister Tang. Our interests align—not whatever you're imagining."

Su Youzhu replied simply, "I know."

Gu Jianlin paused in surprise.

"But if she's not around, there will be someone else,"

Su Youzhu rested her chin on her hands. "So, I might as well strike first."

Gu Jianlin detected a mischievous gleam in her beautiful eyes, a playfulness that immediately set him on guard.

"By the way, that kiss was my body's first one."

Su Youzhu leaned in closer, asking seriously, "How does it feel?"

Gu Jianlin turned his head away silently, ignoring the last part of her question altogether. "That was also my first kiss."

As soon as he finished, he heard the girl let out a cold chuckle.

A sudden sense of unease welled up in his chest once more.

Sure enough, Su Youzhu remarked expressionlessly, "Your first kiss is long gone."

Gu Jianlin's mind buzzed. "When?"

Su Youzhu looked smug at first, but then a hint of indignation flickered across her face. "The night you killed the Joker, of course! Hmph. You didn't even ask which of my incarnations had kissed you—I was looking forward to seeing your jealous face."

Gu Jianlin instinctively covered his lips, feeling both defeated and powerless. "What else did you do that night?"

"You already guessed, didn't you? I stayed by your side, watching you sleep. And I took your first kiss while I was at it."

Su Youzhu suddenly gazed deeply at the side of his face and asked softly, "So, even back then, was I already that important to you?"

Gu Jianlin had risked his life countless times for her.

In Peak City's high school cafeteria, in the Returning Burial Forest of Qilin Immortal Palace, aboard the Bren Hill's Octagonal Cage.

Though she worried and didn't want him acting so recklessly, her heart had been sweet nonetheless.

"No."

Gu Jianlin's face remained stoic, though he wavered internally.

Even if he cared, he wouldn't admit it.

That night when he killed the Joker, he had slept soundly and remembered nothing.

Damn it.

"I've taken care of you for so long; I deserve some sort of reward, don't I? What's wrong with a kiss?"

Su Youzhu pressed on, relentless. "Gu Jianlin, when are you going to start dating me?"

Gu Jianlin's heart wavered slightly as he stared at the girl who'd been by his side for so many years. Suddenly, he asked, "What's going on with your birth mother? Why haven't you ever told me anything about her?"

For a fleeting moment, the girl was silent.

Chapter 448 - 221: Is the Candle Dragon Venerable Coming?_2

Su Youzhu hugged a pillow and puffed her cheeks: "Don't nosily meddle in a girl's affairs. If you really want to know, it's not impossible... but only boyfriends are privy to that, you know."

Meaningless, this was another trap she had set.

Gu Jianlin would not fall for it, he calmly said, "Then I won't date someone who keeps secrets."

The two of them were at a standoff for a moment.

Su Youzhu snorted coldly: "Then let's just wait it out. I don't believe you won't need someone to do laundry, cook, and have kids for you in this lifetime. Let's see who outlasts who. Where there's a will, there's a way."

"Suit yourself."

Gu Jianlin took out the Soul Comforting Bell, which imprisoned a shattered soul.

As the black aura was released, Councilman Zhang's soul hovered in midair, like a marionette.

Originally, Su Youzhu was sulking, but upon seeing this scene, she obediently leaned in close to observe carefully.

Gu Jianlin calmly asked, "Councilman Zhang, when did you join The Order of the Hidden? How many of your people are in the Judgement Court? What is your organization's true purpose?"

Councilman Zhang answered calmly, "I joined The Order of the Hidden during the Lin Family massacre six years ago. There are at least four intelligence lines in the Judgement Court, but I don't know their true identities because our organization does not share intelligence. We only need to complete our tasks or follow orders from superiors."

He said, "We do not know the purpose of our organization, only that we serve the Supreme Heavenly Venerate."

Supreme Heavenly Venerate!

Gu Jianlin and Su Youzhu exchanged glances; it was the first time they had heard this term.

"What is the Supreme Heavenly Venerate?"

He asked blankly.

Su Youzhu also shook her head, pondered for a moment, and replied, "Whether it's the Ancient God Clan or humans, there are few who can use the word 'supreme.' As for the term 'Heavenly Venerate,' it is rather ancient, generally appearing in mythical tales but not in real history."

It might be a human.

Or perhaps an extremely secretive Ancient God Clan.

It might even be an Ancient Supreme!

Councilman Zhang thought this question was directed at him and answered blankly, "We do not know who the Supreme Heavenly Venerate is, only that They are omnipotent and will bring true redemption to this world."

Gu Jianlin fell into deep thought.

The teacher entrusted him with the Lock of Nonexistence and the Soul Comforting Bell, intending for him to uncover the truth step by step.

To cultivate his ability.

If he guessed correctly, the teacher probably knew all about these matters long ago.

And had most likely come into contact with even higher-level secrets.

"Sounds like a zealot cult," Su Youzhu commented.

Gu Jianlin nodded slightly.

"When did The Order of the Hidden appear?"

"I don't know, but it should have a very ancient history."

"Does Li Qingsong know your true identity?"

"No, my main task was to use him to help The Order of the Hidden accomplish some things."

"Tang Zijing, Meng Hebo, Gu Ci'an, Mu Feng, their incidents are related to The Order of the Hidden, right?"

Councilman Zhang answered, "Yes, The Order of the Hidden hoped to develop them into our informants, but unexpected events occurred while recruiting these four. Therefore, The Order of the Hidden required all traces of these four incidents to be erased, especially Tang Zijing and Meng Hebo, who escaped organizational control by becoming Divine Servants."

He said, "My orders were to eliminate Tang Zijing and Meng Hebo without leaving any survivors."

Gu Jianlin understood the teacher's words now.

Often wading along the riverbank, how can one's shoes not get wet?

The more activity, the more likely flaws appear.

"How do you all communicate?"

Su Youzhu asked coldly.

Councilman Zhang answered, "Spiders."

Gu Jianlin was stunned; he had also seen a spider when he was under mind control.

Su Youzhu noticed his reaction: "You know?"

The next moment, Councilman Zhang explained, "The Order of the Hidden exists like a giant web covering this world, and the spiders are what move within it. As soon as we see the spider's illusion, instructions made of blood appear in our minds, which we must follow, or face erasure."

Gu Jianlin softly said, "This sounds eerie."

Su Youzhu responded affirmatively and then asked, "What about the incidents involving Gu Ci'an and Mu Feng?"

Councilman Zhang responded, "The covert level concerning Gu Ci'an's matter is too high, and it wasn't my responsibility. As for Mu Feng, he is among the rare few who can resist mental intrusion. The Order of the Hidden originally wanted to kill him, but his strength was too great, enabling him to escape our pursuit. Fortunately, Mu Feng was affected by the Soul Loss Gu, losing his memory."

"At that time, Meng Hebo hadn't yet defected, and he assisted us in handling these accidental incidents. We faked the scene and controlled one survivor as evidence."

He continued, "Although Mu Feng could not be controlled successfully, we hoped to utilize him to further suppress Lin Dong's factions and weaken the forces of the Night Watcher, thus achieving our goals."

So that's it!

Gu Jianlin knew Uncle Mu was indeed wronged.

Although he had long known this result, hearing it still brought him relief.

"Is there another survivor?"

Su Youzhu squinted her beautiful eyes.

"There's not just one survivor. One has already been controlled by us and will accuse Mu Feng of murder in court. He is tightly protected by the Judgement Court and secretly hidden in the headquarters of the Magic City, inaccessible to anyone."

Councilman Zhang said, "Among my assigned tasks from The Order of the Hidden, one was to find the other survivor."

"There's another survivor?"

Gu Jianlin was taken aback.

Su Youzhu also said, "I previously heard Third Master mention that the Judgement Court's Demon Hunters frequently operated near the Living Burial Area, seemingly looking for something, but they never found it."

"The second survivor is named Lin Lan, one of the Lin family's surviving orphans. The Order of the Hidden is uncertain of his status and cannot allow him to become a variable, so we must confirm if he is alive or dead."

Councilman Zhang stated, "This pertains to the final candidate spot for the Heavenly General title. Currently, the Night Watcher and the Judgement Court are competing, with the most competitive candidates being the branch director of Peak City District, Lu Zijin. Another is the branch director of the Coastal district, Zhang Xuzhi. Zhang Xuzhi is my elder brother and coincidentally also a Sixth Rank."

"As his younger brother, I have every opportunity to influence his promotion ceremony and develop him into a member of the organization. In this way, The Order of the Hidden can take advantage to encroach on the President's surrounding forces."

"Simultaneously, The Order of the Hidden's next plan is to also suppress the Lu Family, especially Lu Zijin, and find a way to eliminate her. We've already discovered that Lu Zijin has been assisting Mu Feng and others over the years. Once Mu Feng's case is settled, we will initiate plans against her, to control or eliminate her."

A chilling severity flashed in Su Youzhu's beautiful eyes.

Gu Jianlin's grip on the Soul Comforting Bell slightly tightened.

It's no wonder the teacher wanted to eradicate these parasites at all costs.

Their ambition was too grand.

"Now I want to ask you, what exactly is the Penglai Ascension Array?"

Gu Jianlin asked in a deep voice.

Su Youzhu was slightly stunned; when accompanying the Pharmacist Old Thief, she had also heard of this thing.

Only, the siblings never expected.

What Councilman Zhang said next was an earth-shattering revelation.

"The Penglai Ascension Array is related to the secrets of the Candle Dragon Venerable."

Councilman Zhang said, "Legend has it that over two thousand years ago, Xu Fu witnessed an unprecedented battle between the Candle Dragon and the Qilin in the East Sea. As a witness, Xu Fu was controlled by the Ancient God's Blood and became a Divine Servant."

His voice trembled visibly, betraying intense fear: "The Candle Dragon Venerable's Divine Servant."

Gu Jianlin's pupils quivered, indeed connected to the old monster.

Su Youzhu frowned, "Continue."

"According to our research and documentation, the so-called Penglai Ascension Array did indeed originate from Xu Fu. But it was not his original intention, rather an act of desperation. This is because it

was an order from the Candle Dragon Venerable, that supremely powerful and tyrannical Supreme, who wanted to use Xu Fu, the greatest alchemist master of humanity, for an experiment."

Councilman Zhang stated, "We don't know if this experiment succeeded or not. We are actively searching for it in the Qilin Immortal Palace. The Order of the Hidden attaches great importance to this because we believe Xu Fu's research results are now within the Qilin Immortal Palace. And the Candle Dragon Venerable will evaluate this result two thousand years later!"

Chapter 449 - 222 The Possibility of the Candle Dragon Forbidden Curse

Gu Jianlin was quite surprised by the outcome.

But when he recalled the altar he had seen aboard the Bren Hill, it all started to make sense.

"This time, I found a hideout of The Order of the Hidden on the Bren Hill. There was an altar there, known as the Penglai Ascension Array. Basically, it's a method of human refinement, treating people like alchemical pills."

He roughly recounted what he had seen and experienced earlier.

Su Youzhu rested her cheek in her hand and quipped, "Calling it a hideout is fitting. But with your understanding of the Extraordinary World, how did you recognize what was depicted in those murals? You even know about human refinement?"

Gu Jianlin cleared his throat. "Because I've been trying my best to study."

He omitted the parts involving Senior Sister Tang, mainly because that girl tended to get jealous easily.

Now it seemed that when the Candle Dragon Venerable left the East Sea back then, it was far from as simple as breaking and sealing the Qilin Wedge. She must have left something else behind, which required guardianship.

Xu Fu was precisely the Gatekeeper she had left behind.

Including the Kui Dragon Ancestor, which might have been the second layer of insurance she had arranged.

"Wait a minute."

Su Youzhu suddenly fixed her gaze on the soul trapped inside the Soul Comforting Bell, suspicion evident in her tone. "Why do you know such high-level secrets so clearly? Matters involving the Ancient Supreme are way beyond your capabilities to handle."

Unexpectedly, Councilman Zhang interjected, "The Order of the Hidden discovered this matter because of the Lin Family massacre six years ago. I was promoted from Deacon to Councilman after that incident and was recruited as an informant. The Lin Family was the lineage tasked with guarding this secret."

"Initially, when the Judgement Court started investigating them, it was because they were trying to find a method to evolve. But during my inquiry, I discovered that the Lin Family had secretly preserved thousand-year-old murals, confirming that their ancestors had entered the Qilin Immortal Palace and come out alive, bringing these secrets with them."

"I didn't report this matter but passed it on to my superiors. Currently, besides members of The Order of the Hidden, the Ether Association has no knowledge of this. Otherwise, they would have launched an investigation by now."

He added, "The current focus of The Order of the Hidden is to locate the Candle Dragon Venerable's inheritance."

Gu Jianlin nodded slightly. Everything aligned for now.

The Candle Dragon Venerable's inheritance wasn't the Dragon Bone, as it was useless to others.

During the Returning Burial Forest incident, what The Order of the Hidden was searching for was the Qilin Wedge.

Not something left behind by the Candle Dragon Venerable.

"Back then, Third Master and others from the You Ying Group also mentioned the Candle Dragon Venerable's inheritance. It's highly likely that The Order of the Hidden deliberately spread the rumor, leveraging the Dark World to search for it."

Su Youzhu mused thoughtfully.

Gu Jianlin's thoughts stirred. "Lin Wanqiu, she must be from the Lin Family, right? Is she a member of The Order of the Hidden?"

"No, Lin Wanqiu is an adopted daughter of the Lin Family. It was she who reported the Lin Family's secret experiments. The Judgement Court places great trust in her. This woman is incredibly shrewd and cautious, never trusting anyone. The Order of the Hidden originally planned to control her during her advancement to the Superdimension stage, but by then, she had quietly advanced to the Fourth Rank," Councilman Zhang explained.

"The Order of the Hidden's mind control must occur during the Zero-tier, Third Rank, or Sixth Rank stages. If they miss those stages, they have to wait for the next one. Currently, their stance on Lin Wanqiu is to observe and wait for her to make a mistake, so they can have an excuse to detain and interrogate her."

So that's how it was!

"Who knew Lin Wanqiu would be so cunning?"

Gu Jianlin reflected quietly. The five individuals who had appeared in the Ancient Tomb back then were indeed quite capable.

The Pharmacist was the strongest Alchemist at the Extraordinary Stage—a priceless asset.

To any Extraordinary Organization, such a person was critically important.

And he even possessed Xu Fu's Record.

The Moon Princess, needless to say, had both exceptional talent and power—an ice-cold beauty with a sweet voice and an aura of prominence. Underneath, she was his child bride, a legacy from his father with deep and complex familial ties.

The Butcher, although seemingly simple-minded, had unparalleled talent as a Divine Servant. Even the First Generation Qilin Venerable might consider giving him a chance. His only flaw was being overly naive.

Now it appeared that the Sea Demon was also no ordinary person. Not only an adopted daughter of the Lin Family but also a master of cunning and stratagem, capable of eluding even The Order of the Hidden. Truly someone deserving a second look.

The only ordinary person was the Scholar.

A man of no distinguishing traits.

Simply a tool to handle mundane tasks.

"To think Lin Wanqiu was that smart?"

Su Youzhu was stunned. "I never noticed."

Recalling his interactions with that woman, Gu Jianlin's initial impression of her was someone who clung to the powerful—a calculating and opportunistic individual. But The Order of the Hidden claimed she trusted no one and was exceedingly cautious.

So, this must've been her disguise for the outside world.

Most people regarded her poorly, deeming her a manipulative opportunist.

Only Wanwan ever spoke in her favor.

Gu Jianlin's mental profile of her was constantly being updated.

Su Youzhu asked coldly, "Back when we were at the Black Cloud City base, were the people who wanted to kill Gu Jianlin also yours?"

Gu Jianlin's heart skipped. He didn't expect her to remember that incident.

Councilman Zhang replied, "Yes, those were my men."

"Because of Gu Ci'an's presence, The Order of the Hidden's activities were greatly restricted. Although their methods of mind control are extremely covert and inescapable, the changes in behavior before and after control inevitably left discrepancies. Gu Ci'an's profiling ability was simply beyond reason, and there was no way to circumvent it."

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He said, "Over the years, he deduced the existence of The Order of the Hidden by noticing abnormal behaviors in some Night Watchers members who were being controlled. This was intolerable to The Order of the Hidden. When we realized his son also possessed this ability, we knew we had to find an opportunity to eliminate him."

Soul profiling!

Gu Jianlin suddenly understood: "Ah, so that's what it was."

Su Youzhu turned her head to stare at him: "What's wrong?"

"This is the real reason the teacher chose me. From the initial guidance during the Joker incident, to the events in Black Cloud City, and then later in the West Port Forbidden Zone. The teacher wasn't just helping me grow, but was making me experience the struggles and duplicity of human nature, training my profiling abilities step by step."

Gu Jianlin softly said, "What he wants me to see through is the human heart."

Su Youzhu was silent for a moment: "The King of Qing truly is a good teacher for you, isn't he?"

Gu Jianlin nodded softly.

Su Youzhu's beautiful eyes flickered with a fleeting complexity before it quickly vanished.

There wasn't anything valuable left from Councilman Zhang.

Because The Order of the Hidden's activities couldn't be too frequent; over the years, there were only a few directives.

But tonight's gains were already ample.

The key takeaway was—the Candle Dragon Venerable will descend upon the Qilin Immortal Palace!

Based on all current clues, the probability was nearly 100%!

Since the God of Returning Burial incident, Buzhou Mountain on the Pamir Plateau had revived, and horrifying phenomena could still be seen devouring dimensions in the west, with major networks scrambling to report it.

The Ether Association had also diverted significant attention to focus there.

The peak Candle Dragon is about to emerge.

The juvenile Qilin is still only at Third Rank for hell's sake.

What's the point of even fighting?

Gu Jianlin often wanted to smack himself, wondering why he had to provoke someone like that back then.

Now, great, that person is really coming.

He resolved to reflect deeply and planned his countermeasures in his mind.

First, advance!

Iron must be hammered while it's hot—ascending to the Superdimensional Level as soon as possible was a necessity; only improving his strength was the right path forward.

Second, build up his own power base.

The Ancient God's Blood is a treasure, and finding suitable candidates to develop into Divine Servants needed to be done urgently.

The best approach was to emulate The Order of the Hidden, infiltrating major organizations.

"As a dual-species being, I need to leverage my advantages, whether it's mastering the Breathing Technique or Forbidden Spells—learning them myself and teaching them to my followers as well. Only by raising overall strength can I speed up my recovery as a Supreme. And right now, I have an SSR five-star card to nurture."

Gu Jianlin suddenly turned his head, eyes blazing, toward the girl beside him.

"Why are you looking at me like that?"

Su Youzhu cautiously stared at him, feeling slightly embarrassed.

Gu Jianlin quietly moved closer to her.

Su Youzhu didn't resist as he moved closer, only noticing her heartbeat beginning to accelerate; her snow-white cheeks flushed with a faint pink.

She thought maybe he was finally enlightened.

Finally harboring amorous intentions toward her, preparing to do something to her.

Suddenly, Gu Jianlin picked her up by the waist, opened the door, and headed toward her room, walking straight to her big bed.

Su Youzhu was dumbstruck.

What was he planning?

Was this about to lead to... bed-sharing?

Why not in his room—and why not activate the Lock of Nonexistence?

This was her first time; what if she couldn't help but cry out and her parents overheard?

Moreover, she truly wasn't prepared—she hadn't made the necessary arrangements yet.

Her cheeks turned bright red, her whole body heated up, feeling light-headed.

Gu Jianlin placed her on the bed, pulled up the quilt to cover her, and softened his normally stiff tone to say, "Your injuries haven't fully healed, so don't stay up late tonight. Get a good rest. I won't leave—I'll be next door keeping watch. What would you like for breakfast tomorrow? I'll prepare it for you."

For a split second, Su Youzhu blinked her clear, beautiful eyes, feeling relieved.

Fortunately, he wasn't planning *that*, as it would've been far too abrupt.

Besides, she didn't want her first time to be so reckless.

But this blockhead seemed to have suddenly seen the light, his tone no longer cold and indifferent.

Unexpected warmth—and an understanding of how to take care of someone.

This was so touching.

"I'd like some pan-fried dumplings."

Su Youzhu wrapped the quilt over half her face and muttered softly.

"Alright, got it."

Gu Jianlin gently patted her hair and said, "Sleep early. Goodnight."

Thump thump.

Su Youzhu received a gentle head pat, as if she could hear her heartbeat echoing loudly.

She didn't know why he was acting strangely tonight; still, she couldn't help but enjoy this rare tenderness.

Watching his retreating figure with a trace of reluctance, her heart grew even sweeter as she reminded herself, keeping up appearances, "Alright. Goodnight. Don't you dare disappear tomorrow morning."

Gu Jianlin gave a soft grunt as he quietly closed the door.

The living room was pitch black.

He took a deep breath, resuming his cold and detached expression.

Sorry, Youzhu.

Starting tonight, the Supreme is going to put you through pain training.

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In the bedroom, Su Youzhu remained oblivious to the impending events.

She simply nestled in her bed comfortably and pulled out her phone, sending three quick messages.

"Sis, he carried me today in a princess lift."

"Sis, he tucked me in today."

"Sis, he said goodnight to me on his own today."

About a minute later.

Su Youxia: "Don't get too happy yet—the family matters haven't been solved. Don't forget the lessons from that woman and Dad. Time isn't on our side anymore; we can't keep going on like this."

The faint glow of the screen illuminated Su Youzhu's delicate features.

She suddenly fell silent.

Su Youxia: "This time in the Qilin Immortal Palace, you returned empty-handed and ended up injured instead. Did the advancement plans get delayed? Uncle Gu mentioned the Candle Dragon Forbidden Curse, but there's been no progress on that at all."

Su Youzhu glanced at the Moonstone Heart on her bedside table, sinking into quiet contemplation, retorting firmly, "That's not true. I've already obtained the Moonstone Heart. This week I'll ascend to Fifth Rank. As for the Candle Dragon Forbidden Curse, although..."

Suddenly, it felt like she heard a distant, ancient calling, the surrounding space fracturing like shattered mirrors. A crimson, waterfall-like radiance poured from the cracks, seemingly about to engulf her entirely.

Reacting quickly, she grabbed a mask from her drawer and covered her face, clutching her quilt tightly.

Though this looked absurd, she had no other option.

Not to defend against the Qilin Venerable but against others instead.

BOOM!

Heaven and Earth spun wildly—everything was breaking apart.

When Su Youzhu regained consciousness, she was no longer in the tombs of the Qilin Immortal Palace.

Instead, she found herself in a pitch-dark night.

Darkness enveloped in dense fog; within the fog lurked countless black holes as if revealing the primal abyss of the universe.

Accompanied by deafening roars, crimson vertical pupils ignited deep within the darkness, faintly shadowed by a Black Dragon ascending to the heavens. Its immense form overflowed with solemn beauty straddling life and death.

The world seemed to collapse into the Netherworld.

A dragon!

The Candle Dragon!

In the depths of the darkness, a breathtaking silhouette flashed momentarily, one glance seeming to tilt the balance of the world.

Su Youzhu was utterly awestruck, the quilt that had wrapped her fell to the floor.

She gazed at the towering Black Dragon, as though falling into an eternal nightmare.

Forbidden knowledge from Ancient Times flooded her mind, like whispers from billions of deceased souls.

She felt as though she had comprehended something, her thoughts resonating with dragon roars that pierced the skies.

"Moon Princess."

A dignified, ice-cold voice resonated from the depths of the darkness.

So calm, yet spine-chilling, pregnant with immense psychic waves.

Su Youzhu's delicate face, hidden beneath her mask, turned ashen pale; she seemed terrified beyond words.

She felt it—the Supreme's will.

If she didn't master the Candle Dragon Forbidden Curse within three days, she'd be seized and offered as a Female Sacrifice!

Wait, how did the Qilin Venerable manage to master the Candle Dragon Forbidden Curse?

In an instant, she felt as though falling into an abyss.

Her blood ran ice cold throughout her veins.