

Ancient 471

Chapter 471 - 231 The Looming Crisis

Currently, ninety percent of the map of the first layer of the Qilin Immortal Palace has been drawn. It's hard to imagine that the Ancient God Realm is such a magical place. Here, there are dried and cracked wastelands, swamps shrouded in toxic fog all year round, countless active volcanoes and ice fields covered by blizzards, as well as an endless sea.

The ruins of the Ancient God Clan are innumerable, along with ancient tombs that have intruded here over thousands of years.

Even the world's most outstanding geologists and meteorologists cannot explain the unique landscape here.

The transport convoy from Dawn City set off at nine o'clock tonight and has been traveling for three hours, currently reaching the Silent Wilderness. This is the hunting ground of the Ancient God Seed, with unpredictable weather and harsh environments.

"Silent Wilderness ahead, Ancient God Seeds may appear at any time. Please prepare for battle."

Lu Qingqing drove the vehicle, speaking into the intercom: "According to the divination results, there is more than a seventy-five percent probability of a dust storm ahead. Please close the windows and take precautions."

As an elite who has participated in pioneering tasks in the Fusang Divine Palace, she appeared much calmer, turned her head and said, "Even a genius from the Sword Tomb can get nervous at times?"

Zhou Yiming stroked his sword box, cold sweat oozing from his forehead, expressionless, and said, "If it weren't for the teacher's orders being more important than anything, I wouldn't want to participate in this mission at all."

Lu Qingqing raised an eyebrow and asked, "Why?"

"Your sister is hiding in our convoy, and you still ask why?"

Zhou Yiming said coldly, "If exposed, our convoy will become the most dangerous target."

Lu Qingqing looked at the dry wasteland ahead and said, "That also requires exposure first."

Zhou Yiming squinted his eyes, took a deep breath, and said, "It's not just that, there's also an Evolver in our team. I consider them extremely dangerous and liable to lose control at any time."

"Aren't you afraid your teacher will find out about what you just said?"

Lu Qingqing asked blandly, "Your teacher is a Catastrophe, and she has also mastered the Evolution Path. Including Thunder, your junior sister is also an Evolver, who is your fellow disciple."

Zhou Yiming kept his expression stern and said, "The teacher was forced to become an Evolver, and she was already a Catastrophe, inherently quite dangerous. The Sword Tomb isn't the ancient sect you imagine. In modern society, how many people adhere to the ancient rules? Instead of respecting the teacher, it's more like fearing the teacher."

He looked towards another transport vehicle, speaking quietly, "As for Thunder, the fear of Evolvers comes from her. You have no idea how many people she harmed during her rampages in the Sword Tomb."

Lu Qingqing was taken aback.

"And Thunder's great-grandfather, my own uncle, died at his hands."

Zhou Yiming said, "So asking me to trust an Evolver is out of the question."

This kind of worry is actually quite normal.

The two people from the Lu Family brought by Lu Qingqing also didn't know the true nature of this mission beforehand.

By the time they met Minister Lu in person, everything was too late.

Similar for Li Yijie and Wang Jingchuan from the Judgement Court Faction.

The reason for choosing this team was for one point only.

Because members of The Order of the Hidden are everywhere, there is no way to confirm who they are, so they tend to ignore this.

As for those from the Judgement Court, they are distributed among various sub-teams.

If trying to pick a small team with only our people, it's basically revealing the cards.

These two lackeys from the Judgement Court in the third sub-team are considered the weakest.

If they attempt any tricks, it would be easy to deal with.

"I am the captain of this operation. I can understand your distrust of Evolvers, but don't cause any trouble for me."

Lu Qingqing said faintly.

Zhou Yiming waved his hand: "I am not that foolish. If this mission fails, the teacher won't spare me first. But what about you? Don't you have any thoughts? Your sister, the person you trust most, is not you."

Lu Qingqing fell silent.

Lu Zijin indeed didn't choose her carriage, which is the best proof.

This made her very curious as well.

What extraordinary qualities does that young man possess to gain her sister's trust?

He also became the last student of the King of Qing.

It should be known that she was also recommended by her father back then but was not selected.

"Excuse me, Captain Lu."

Li Yijie suddenly said: "When a dust storm occurs, we need to camp and rest for a while. The map shows there's a cave nearby in the Silent Wilderness for shelter from sandstorms. The last transport team that passed by found traces of a temporary pollution-suppressing Alchemy Matrix there, and the Judgement Court's intention is for me to go and investigate it. There's suspicion that there's a Spiritual Polluter within the Ether Association."

Wang Jingchuan added: "Yes, since the traces there have been around for some time, and they were left before the pioneering, we suspect that someone from within the Ether Association entered there unaided through a dimensional rift."

The two of them exchanged glances, smiling at each other.

Zhou Yiming frowned: "Fine, but don't delay the mission."

Lu Qingqing said nothing, only replying blandly, "As you wish."

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Gu Jianlin heard a distant call, he knew something happened.

Before participating in the Sea of Eternal Life mission, he made ample preparations to deal with the threat from The Order of the Hidden.

On the side of the Ether Association, he kept a keen watch.

As for You Ying Group, he left it to his Tiger General.

Once any anomaly was found, an ancient token would be used to contact him immediately, transmitting messages in Morse code-like fashion in place of dimensional movements.

The foolish Butcher practiced these frequencies for a whole night before learning them and even had to rely on a little notebook to record them.

The meaning of this code is: You Ying Group is preparing to go to the Silent Wilderness to behead Minister Lu.

"It's not surprising that You Ying Group wants to behead Minister Lu. Considering both parties have already turned on each other, nor does the opposition wish to see the rise of a Seventh-Order Holy Realm or a Divine General. But the question is, how do they know we are in the Silent Wilderness now? Is there a traitor in the team?" Gu Jianlin said suspiciously.

However, the communications here are monitored, and everyone's actions are scrutinized.

Even The Order of the Hidden cannot achieve such stealthy and swift information transfer.

Otherwise, Director Li and Councilman Zhang would have already transmitted their messages.

Chen Qing was focused on driving, and Lu Zijin closed her eyes to rest, seemingly asleep.

Ji Xiaoyu was fiddling with formulas with her two unfortunate Alchemists.

Only Lin Wanqiu glanced around warily, subtly revealing a hint of anxiety, secretly observing the young man.

Gu Jianlin discreetly glanced at this woman.

Lin Wanqiu did feel a lack of security, considering she had once betrayed the Ether Association and joined the Pharmacist Old Thief's team, currently serving an Ancient Supreme.

Once discovered, she would have no place to stand.

Only this young man in front of her could bring her security.

Because he could very well be a person of the Supreme.

If true, then her safety would be guaranteed, and she wouldn't have to fear anyone.

After all, it's the chair-killing demon we're talking about.

She decided to give a signal, speaking softly: "The Alchemist is the old thief."

Gu Jianlin almost lost his composure hearing this, pretending nothing happened, ignoring her.

Instead, Ji Xiaoyu raised her head and, along with the two Alchemists, said, "Who are you talking about!"

Lin Wanqiu flashed an awkward but polite smile.

Wondering what's going on, why wasn't the signal reciprocated?

Rumble!

A muffled sound similar to thunder rumbled faintly, and a sweeping dust storm rose ahead.

Chen Qing quickly slowed down, her pupils flashing a peculiar pure white as she scanned the road situation ahead.

"Sister Chen Qing, be careful."

The shadow behind Gu Jianlin quivered slightly, ready to act at any moment.

"No need to worry, dust storms are common here, and they usually last about four hours. Although Ancient God Seeds inhabit this area, they aren't willing to stir during dust storms either."

Lin Wanqiu suddenly leaned over to his ear: "As long as we don't wander into the deep parts of the dust storm, we should be fine. Otherwise, there's a risk of being swept away to an unknown place, possibly an underground ruin or instantly transported elsewhere."

Her enchanting eyes fluttered, whispering softly by his ear, getting closer and closer.

But then, she froze.

Because a gun was pressed against her chest.

"Sorry, I'm not very comfortable being so close to others."

Gu Jianlin calmly pointed the gun at her: "Step back."

Lin Wanqiu felt so aggrieved. Are you just a block of wood? I'm so pretty!

In truth, Gu Jianlin's reactive stance had its reason.

Both Chen Qing and Lu Zijin opened their eyes, watching him through the rearview mirror with expressions of amusement.

Goodness, if Youzhu were to hear of this, things could get messy again.

Gu Jianlin was no longer an ignorant Wu underling. He wouldn't repeat such basic mistakes.

Although it's purely a sibling relationship, that girl's antics could be troublesome. He'd rather stay chaste.

Lin Wanqiu felt thwarted once more and had to obediently retreat.

Gu Jianlin holstered his gun, suddenly realizing something.

This woman seemed very familiar with the Silent Wilderness.

Meanwhile, a brief message came over the communication channel.

"Urgent report, the fourth transport team encountered a You Ying Group attack in the northern Silent Wilderness. Both sides are currently engaged in intense combat, requesting reinforcements. All teams, please be cautious, over!"

As expected, You Ying Group had already taken action.

But it seemed they didn't clearly know Minister Lu's exact location!

Gu Jianlin understood, it seemed at least his own team didn't have major issues.

The sandstorm ahead blocked the path, and the two transport vehicles turned westward, stopping at a large cliff.

After a long journey, with nerves taut.

Everyone felt a bit tired.

Once the transport vehicles were anchored by iron stakes on the roadside, the group proceeded directly into the rock shelter.

Lighting a fire, eating, resting.

Since no one was particularly acquainted, there wasn't much conversation, just watching the bonfire alertly.

Gu Jianlin silently gnawed on bread, observing those around him.

It was noteworthy that Lin Wanqiu appeared visibly uneasy upon seeing the rock shelter.

"We're heading inside for a bathroom break."

Li Yijie and Wang Jingchuan stood up, heading deeper into the rock shelter.

This rock shelter was large, with many branching paths, covering nearly half a football field in area.

However, it had already been probed by divination in advance, and no dangers had been detected.

"I'm also going to the bathroom."

Lin Wanqiu smiled gently, rising and heading out.

"Need company?"

Lu Qingqing suddenly asked.

The only healer we have should be coaxed.

"No, thank you."

Lin Wanqiu flashed a goddess-like smile, turning to disappear into another branch.

Once out of everyone's sight, her expression changed.

She looked solemn, her pace quickening as she headed straight to a dark corner, fumbling with a lighter and a portable Alchemy Burner, appearing extremely tense.

There were traces of an Alchemy Matrix in the corner of the rock cliff, with droplets of mercury even flowing.

Just then, a voice with a hint of amusement came from behind her.

"Captain Lin?"

Lin Wanqiu's body froze, turning around instinctively.

Li Yijie and Wang Jingchuan looked at her with smirks, their faces sinisterly pleased, laughing: "Sure enough, you're the Spiritual Polluter who previously snuck into the Qilin Immortal Palace through a dimensional rift."

Lin Wanqiu's face turned frosty: "What are you talking about? I don't understand."

Wang Jingchuan chuckled.

"Need me to elaborate?"

Li Yijie laughed: "When the previous transport team came here, they had already taken back the traces for identification. The reason you weren't exposed is that the person who identified them was me, and I covered it up for you."

Lin Wanqiu glared intently at him, a chill running up her spine: "What do you mean?"

"Heh heh..."

Li Yijie and Wang Jingchuan exchanged smiles: "We want to know how you managed to survive the Qilin Immortal Palace."

Chapter 472 - 232 Miss, you wouldn't want...

The firewood crackled by the bonfire in the rock cave.

"Emergency report: The Seventh Squad encountered a You Ying Group attack in the ruins of Baloo City!"

"Emergency report: The Twelfth Squad encountered a You Ying Group attack in the northern region of the Returning Burial Forest!"

"Emergency report..."

Static.

The sandstorm disrupted communication signals.

The two Guardians from the Lu Family fiddled with the equipment at the cave entrance, but no matter what they did, it couldn't be repaired.

Gu Jianlin listened to the reports coming through the communication channel. It seemed that the You Ying Group was carrying out indiscriminate attacks, purely as revenge for the Bren Hill incident, without knowing Minister Lu's precise location.

Yet, for some reason, he couldn't shake a sense of unease.

"There are no Ancient God Seeds in the vicinity, no spiritual fluctuations, and no one is following us."

Chen Qing's eyes slowly returned to their normal state, the pure white fading away. This was the advantage of divination for Fourth-tier Spirit Communicators.

Without such assistance, they would have to remain constantly on edge.

"Given the attacks by the You Ying Group, my suggestion is to wait for the sandstorm to pass before heading east to quickly cross the Silent Wilderness and reach the Sea of Eternal Life. There are four squads in the eastern region, and if we encounter danger, we can seek their help. Alternatively, we could use the pretext of seeking assistance to adjust our route and join with other squads."

Lu Qingqing pulled out her tablet and analyzed, "Our primary mission is to protect the chess master. We have no obligation to assist other squads. The only objective is to ensure my sister... Minister Lu, reaches the Sea of Eternal Life safely."

Zhou Yiming nodded, "Captain Lu previously participated in the exploration of the Sea of Eternal Life. Though she only conducted reconnaissance via drones from a distance, she's more familiar with the terrain here than we are."

"The eastern region is still contested due to the Ancient God's Blood, and top-ten Omega ranks are involved."

He added, "The more chaotic the situation, the better chance we have to fish in troubled waters."

Whenever this topic came up, Ji Xiaoyu would chime in, "What are you afraid of? If we're really attacked, we fight back! Are we scared of them? The new poison I've developed will make sure they never return!"

"Foolish child!"

Lu Zijin rolled her eyes and said coolly, "I'll just go along with whatever you all decide."

"Xiao Gu, come over here for a moment."

She stood up and beckoned to the young man with a finger.

Gu Jianlin, puzzled, followed her.

Lu Qingqing and Zhou Yiming frowned. Despite everything, the true leader of this mission was still Minister Lu.

This private conversation made them uncomfortable, as if they were being excluded.

"Minister Lu."

Gu Jianlin asked suddenly, "What's the matter?"

With a lollipop in her mouth, Lu Zijin glanced at him with a faint, teasing smile, "Do you know the relationship between your teacher and my father... the Family Head of the Lu Family?"

Gu Jianlin shook his head.

"The Lu Family is a relatively large Ascender Family. Previously, we were stationed in North America, but we were transferred when the threat level of the Qilin Immortal Palace increased. My father is the commander of the Dawn Battle Sequence First Army Group. He and your teacher were comrades back in the day. Their relationship wasn't friendly, but they shared common interests."

Lu Zijin narrowed her eyes and said softly, "Honestly, my preference wasn't to choose this squad... but if I had joined another, you and Xiaoyu wouldn't have chosen this one."

Gu Jianlin frowned, "What do you mean?"

"Even my sister would have followed me."

Lu Zijin added, "But the King of Qing was adamant that you be in this squad."

Gu Jianlin pondered briefly, "Zhou Yiming? I have no connection to him. Wait!"

Suddenly, he understood.

His teacher's target was the two individuals from the Judgement Court.

"Mmhmm."

Lu Zijin glanced at him playfully, her tone laced with amusement. "Though I don't know how those two provoked the King of Qing, there's no way he orchestrated their proximity to you without a reason."

Gu Jianlin thought for a moment and concluded: their purpose was likely to eliminate them.

Lu Zijin chuckled, "Go ahead. I'll keep watch."

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Lin Wanqiu had been uneasy the entire journey, primarily because she lacked a sense of security.

Her hands weren't clean, as she had a second identity.

A Sea Demon.

As one of the five people who had reached the highest tomb of the Qilin Immortal Palace, she sometimes felt like the daughter of destiny—the protagonist of a novel, blessed with immense fortune.

As a Fourth Rank, she even made contact with an Ancient Supreme.

But the reality was far from it. Not only did she fail to achieve her goals, but she also brought endless peril upon herself.

Back then, she had stumbled into a dimensional rift by accident. As a Priest with no combat ability, surviving in such a dangerous Ancient God Realm was a near-impossible task. It was inevitable that she

became infected. Fortunately, she found this stone cave to use as a refuge and temporarily suppressed the deformation with her alchemy matrix.

At the time, her mental state was unstable, so she didn't think too much.

And that left a massive vulnerability.

It wasn't until she staggered and escaped, ultimately regrouping with the Pharmacist's squad, that she realized the danger she'd left behind over the ensuing months.

When the Ether Association's exploration team eventually arrived, exposure became inevitable given that her alchemy matrix was still present in the cave.

"Based on our divination and investigation, this alchemy matrix matches the Ether Association's medical department's latest prototype for helping the Unclean suppress deformation and contamination. Yet, it's clear this matrix is very much incomplete. When I saw you treating the Unclean with it, I immediately thought of you."

Li Yijie tapped his temple, "I'm a Spirit Medium. My instincts are sharp."

Wang Jingchuan, stretching his limbs, was a Fourth-tier Dragon Slayer, exuding overwhelming pressure.

Lin Wanqiu backed away step by step, her voice icy, "Pardon me, but I don't understand. Please step aside."

"We mean no harm."

Wang Jingchuan sneered, "We're simply curious about one thing. How exactly did you survive the Qilin Immortal Palace? Or rather, what did you obtain there?"

Li Yijie chuckled, "I did some meticulous digging. The emergence of this alchemy matrix coincided perfectly with the time Xu Fu's Record went missing. Your teammates were presumably those traitors, weren't they? You found the treasure Xu Fu left behind, didn't you? And unless I'm mistaken, you're a descendant of the Lin Family!"

Overwhelming terror erupted in Lin Wanqiu's heart. She knew there was no talking her way out of this.

Once this secret got out, she would be utterly doomed.

"Don't panic. We won't harm you, nor will we put you in a dangerous position."

Li Yijie smiled nonchalantly. "We haven't even informed the Judgement Court. Isn't it obvious what we want? Sister Wanqiu, all we need is shared secrets."

Wang Jingchuan approached her, giving her shoulder a pat, and grinned darkly, "You wouldn't want your secret reaching the Judgement Court, would you? Best cooperate."

Their eyes roved greedily over her exquisite silhouette, alight with lust.

Lin Wanqiu knew struggling was pointless; her fatal weakness had fallen into their hands.

Even if she cried for help and brought others over, it would still mean her death.

Indeed, the risk of being a traitor was insurmountable.

Despite her caution, she had still been found out.

Her fists clenched tightly as she glared at the two men advancing on her.

She closed her eyes, her chest heaving ever so slightly.

She knew what might happen next—a life under coercion, akin to being trapped in Hell.

Her cards and tricks would be stripped away, piece by piece.

Until she'd lost all ability to resist and was left at their mercy.

Her mind raced, frantically seeking a way out. Her body had gone taut, a chilling cold running through her.

"That's more like it, Sister Wanqiu," one of them chuckled slyly. "Now, let's start—what's your secret...?"

But in that instant, Wang Jingchuan suddenly looked down. A thin red line had inexplicably appeared on his neck, spurting blood that stained his collar.

Clutching at his throat, he staggered back several steps, staring at his partner with wide, terrified eyes.

His gaze seemed to scream: You useless fool!

Li Yijie froze in shock at the sight. He had been maintaining his sensory domain at full strength; not even the faintest spiritual fluctuation should have escaped his notice.

How was this possible?!

As an icy wind howled, a fleeting, dazzling blood-red silhouette appeared and vanished. The figure bore majestic, menacing dragon horns on their head, cascading hair like a waterfall, and a celestial beauty so stunning it stole the breath. Crimson streaked their eyes like blood, and their gaze exuded an otherworldly disdain, as though overlooking the world from the clouds above.

Enshrouded in a faint mist, they seemed like a ghost.

One glance left one feeling as though plunged into an abyss of ice!

Despite that, Li Yijie reacted instantly, his eyes flipping white.

Mental interference!

As a Fourth-tier Spirit Communicator, his ability allowed him to manipulate others' thoughts and actions.

Force them to attack their allies!

Lin Wanqiu felt utterly cold, overwhelmed by the fear of imminent execution!

Crack!

Li Yijie looked down to find a dagger lodged in his heart, blood blossoming like a flower across his chest.

The phantom gazed at him mockingly, as if he were a fool.

Invalid!

Li Yijie couldn't comprehend it, even in death, as he crumpled lifelessly to the ground.

In mere seconds, two Fourth-tiers were dead just like that.

To be fair, it wasn't that they were weak.

It was simply that the Candle Dragon Sister was far too overpowering—absurdly so.

Especially when combined with the Lock of Nonexistence, she was undoubtedly the strongest assassin. Period.

This kind of unreasonable assassination required an opponent to be a battle-hardened warrior with extensive defensive measures and constant vigilance to even stand a chance against her.

Unfortunately, these two were neither adept at countering the Ghost Slayer Path nor sufficiently cautious.

And so, they were doomed.

After a brief moment of shock, Lin Wanqiu wasn't mortified by the two men.

Instead, she was utterly alarmed by the shadow. Her barriers shattered as she instinctively prepared to scream.

Out of nowhere, Gu Jianlin appeared behind her, his hand covering her mouth.

Lin Wanqiu stopped dead at the scent coming from him.

The young man's clothes carried the faint fragrance of his household's coldly beautiful maiden who did his laundry—a distinct and recognizable scent.

A pleasing and unmistakable aroma.

"Miss,"

Gu Jianlin said flatly, "Surely you wouldn't want your secret revealed to others, would you?"

Lin Wanqiu: "..."

Chapter 473 - 233: The King of Qing, Omniscient

Keep that in check!

Lin Wanqiu had already suffered greatly; she didn't know how many more times she'd have to hear this phrase. It felt as if she had just escaped a pack of wolves only to fall into the jaws of a tiger once again, leaving her on the verge of collapsing.

Yet, coming from Gu Jianlin's deadpan mouth, this phrase wasn't particularly repulsive. His tone lacked any warmth or earthly desire, creating an odd intensity that inexplicably quickened her heartbeat, casting herself as a delicate beauty subjected to the control of a cold and strikingly forceful youth.

Though unwilling, she found herself gradually succumbing.

In a fleeting moment, dozens of unspeakable scenarios bloomed in her mind, each one leaving her flustered and breathless.

"Shut up. Stop overreacting."

Gu Jianlin moved his hand away from her lips, which still bore the faint imprint of lipstick.

He had been lurking in the shadows for a few minutes and had a general grasp of the situation now.

This wasn't just about the crisis with the Sea Demon.

It was his crisis too.

The Sea Demon had met with the Qilin Venerable, and if her secret were uncovered, it would trigger a ripple effect.

If her secret spilled, Gu Jianlin's hidden truth wouldn't stand a chance either.

"Li Yijie and Wang Jingchuan being placed in this group was no coincidence—it was orchestrated by the teacher. Could it be that the teacher knows about the Sea Demon's identity? Wait, the existence of Butcher and Scholar, he knew about them too. And Youzhu's secret? He's probably fully aware of that as well." At this thought, Gu Jianlin couldn't help but draw in a sharp breath.

He was starting to suspect something terrifying.

Did the teacher know that he was the second-generation Qilin Venerable?

The thought was chilling.

Rather than living in constant fear, perhaps it would be better just to lay all the cards on the table.

Obviously, now wasn't the time to dwell on this, because Lin Wanqiu was looking at him in a way that changed completely.

The soft curves of her body were already pressing closely against him.

"What are you doing?"

Gu Jianlin almost flinched reflexively, immediately pulling out the Desert Eagle and pressing it against her smooth forehead. "Don't look at me like that. Keep a safe distance from me, or I'll expose your secret right away."

"..."

Lin Wanqiu spiraled into deep self-doubt.

When others threatened her, it was usually because they coveted her beauty.

This young man's way of threatening her was simply telling her to back off.

Well, fine.

She took a deep breath and composed herself.

"You must be sent by that person, right? Otherwise, there's no reason for you to save me."

Tears welled up in her beautiful eyes as she bit her lip. "We're all on the same side."

"I'm not on your side."

Gu Jianlin would never admit anything to her face. Right now, he decided to play the role of a villain instead, coldly replying, "You'd better figure out your own situation and focus on what you should be doing."

Lin Wanqiu froze for a moment, biting her lips timidly and saying, "As long as you don't reveal my secret, I'll do anything you want. I'm really obedient and useful."

Gu Jianlin glanced at the two corpses on the ground and then at her pitiful appearance.

Without another word, he pulled out a dagger and tore open her camouflage uniform.

Snap!

The fabric was shredded, revealing delicate, snow-white skin.

Lin Wanqiu was shocked, thinking: Maybe he doesn't like initiators but prefers taking control?

The images she had just drawn in her imagination resurfaced, making her face flush red and her body tremble slightly.

In the blink of an eye, however, a garment was draped over her shoulders.

"You're going to say that these two tried to assault you, and I killed them."

Gu Jianlin shot her another glance and couldn't help but add, "I suggest you take a good look at yourself now and quit wearing that over-the-top hormonal expression."

Lin Wanqiu instantly snapped out of it. She was a rather shrewd woman and knew he wasn't interested in her.

"Will the others believe it?"

She couldn't help but ask.

Gu Jianlin shook his head. "Whether they believe it or not doesn't matter. It's just providing a reason."

For now, the Sea Demon was highly valuable to him.

She was also a Cheater.

And this wasn't her first time in the Qilin Immortal Palace.

"Listen, I don't care who you work for, but I need you to confirm something right now."

Gu Jianlin asked calmly, "You are a descendant of the Lin Family. You're here because of Lin Lan, right?"

A fleeting look of deep seriousness and fear passed through Lin Wanqiu's eyes before she quickly returned to her usual coquettish smile, pretending to be innocent and clueless. "I don't understand what you're talking about."

Gu Jianlin's face remained impassive as he replied, "You don't need to understand. Just know this—I know Lin Lan is still alive. My purpose in finding him is to have him testify and resolve Uncle Mu's case. In this sense, our interests align. And I'm the only one who can help you."

He paused. "You'll have to trust me, because on your own, you can't accomplish anything."

At that moment, Lin Wanqiu's expression changed completely.

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Lu Qingqing counted the time, furrowing her brows. "Why aren't they back yet?"

Upon hearing this, Zhou Yiming suddenly opened his eyes, slung the Sword Box onto his back, and stood on alert.

"Don't worry."

Chen Qing glanced at them. "They're back."

Gu Jianlin emerged from the dark cave, wearing a fresh long coat and exuding a calm demeanor.

Lin Wanqiu followed behind him, draped in his clothing, her hair disheveled, and her eyes red and swollen.

Her appearance carried a subtle but undeniable hint of disarray.

The group froze, and anyone with sharp insight could figure out what likely transpired moments ago.

Chapter 474 - 233: King of Qing, Omniscient_2

Only Ji Xiaoyu looked utterly confused.

"You don't need to know."

Lu Zijin rolled her eyes at her.

Gu Jianlin glanced at the group, then calmly sat back by the campfire and said indifferently, "Li Yijie and Wang Jingchuan let their lust cloud their judgment, tried to assault Captain Lin, and I took care of them."

As soon as the words fell, Lin Wanqiu cooperatively sat beside him, her eyes brimming with tears.

Half-truths, half-acting.

Zhou Yiming instinctively felt something was off and immediately strode deep into the cavern.

Those two were his Guardians.

Though neither related by blood nor bonded by true camaraderie, they had a mutual interest-driven partnership he had to check on.

Lu Qingqing furrowed her brow, unable to hold back her question: "Where are they?"

"What else could've happened? They're dead, of course."

Lu Zijin waved her hand dismissively. "Trying to assault a female teammate during a mission? Such behavior can be summarily executed under the Ether Association's operational code."

Lu Qingqing, seeing her elder sister speak, chose not to argue further.

A moment later, Zhou Yiming emerged from the darkness of the cave, dragging two corpses in his hands, his face a picture of shock and horror. "Li Yijie and Wang Jingchuan are both dead, completely wiped out. Judging by the looks of it, they were instantly killed."

The reason for his panic was hardly unwarranted.

Two Fourth Rank operatives—a support and a warrior—eliminated without a trace.

Lu Qingqing fell silent as she turned her gaze toward the boy sitting by the campfire, her expression growing more and more astonished.

Even the two Guardians she had brought from the Lu Family also wore expressions of sheer terror.

The reason was simple.

Gu Jianlin had the ability to kill these Judgement Court Faction members without anyone sensing a thing.

That meant he also had the ability to kill them.

"Don't you think you owe us an explanation?"

Lu Qingqing couldn't help but grow wary.

Zhou Yiming stared straight at him, enunciating every word: "Indeed, even if Wang Jingchuan and Li Yijie planned to assault Captain Lin, they shouldn't have been killed outright. We should've handled it as a team. Moreover, these two had gone off to investigate traces of alchemy deliberately left behind here!"

He asked in a deep voice, "I noticed signs of fire burns earlier. What did you do?"

That question caused Lin Wanqiu's heart to clench.

The thing she feared the most had come to pass.

Lu Qingqing and Zhou Yiming would absolutely refuse to let this slide.

Not to mention, Minister Lu was right here!

Lin Wanqiu glanced nervously at the boy nearby, unsure if he would sell her out.

Gu Jianlin waved his hand dismissively, whether out of laziness to speak or sheer disdain to explain, no one could tell.

"Were you hurt?"

Chen Qing asked with concern.

Gu Jianlin shook his head. "No harm done."

Lu Qingqing and Zhou Yiming, the leaders of their respective teams, both looked visibly displeased.

Such a high-and-mighty, dismissive attitude was enough to send anyone's blood pressure soaring.

"Relax. Xiao Gu even beat down his superiors before. Do you really think he'd bother explaining things to you over something like this?"

Lu Zijin, sucking on her lollipop, watched the scene unfold like entertainment, sneering. "I mean, didn't you all hear about his reputation? Yesterday, he even killed off Councilman Zhang. Two Judgement Court dogs? Nothing to get worked up about. Besides, Xiao Gu never treated you like leaders to begin with, so don't expect him to follow your rules."

She chuckled. "Might makes right, after all."

She couldn't care less about anyone else.

Her words, however, were clearly meant for her younger sister.

A perfect opportunity for this naive little fool to learn what real talent looked like.

Lu Qingqing turned around to face the petite young girl, unable to help herself: "Sister, this involves your advancement and even your safety. Now the team's short two Fourth Rank operatives, and they were killed just like that. We've got a long road ahead. What happens if this continues?"

Lu Zijin smirked. "I was never counting on those two weaklings anyway."

Lu Qingqing was irked by her dismissive tone. "But this is **my** team to command."

Lu Zijin responded indifferently, "Oh, is that so? Did someone hand you a feather and tell you it's an imperial scepter? Don't go flaunting your experience at Fusang Divine Palace like it's worth showing off— the Ancient God Realm has been a ghost of itself for years now, like some overworked girl from a seedy parlor who's been exploited far too many times."

She snorted. "Why don't you try conquering something unspoiled for once?"

Lu Qingqing spat in irritation. What kind of thug analogy was that?

"You're far from being a real talent yet. Learn to observe and grow for now."

Lu Zijin casually dismissed her younger sister's efforts.

Lu Qingqing took a deep breath. She knew what her sister was implying.

Clearly, her sister believed the true talent wasn't her—but the boy lounging by the campfire.

"Well, it's your advancement, not mine anyway."

She huffed and walked off to the side, sulking.

Meanwhile, Zhou Yiming also stepped forward, speaking seriously: "Minister Lu, although your rank is the highest here, you currently lack combat capabilities and rely on us for protection. I'll continue guarding you to ensure your safety, but from now on, I can't trust this person. I'll keep a constant watch on him."

He didn't shy away from openly raising his hand to point at the boy by the campfire.

Lu Zijin smirked sweetly. "Suit yourself."

To be fair, she knew this wasn't exactly gracious behavior.

After all, the death of these two Judgement Court members would inevitably draw scrutiny later.

By then, both Lu Qingqing and Zhou Yiming would inevitably clash with the Judgement Court.

It couldn't be helped—this was faction rivalry at its core.

As for Lu Qingqing, well, she was from the Lu Family. If she got ensnared, so be it.

Chapter 475 - 233: King of Qing, Omniscient_3

As for the latter, it's just your misfortune to have chosen two people from the Judgement Court as Guardians.

"The sandstorm is estimated to dissipate in fifteen minutes."

Chen Qing touched the Crystal Ball in his hand and gave an accurate divination result.

Lu Qingqing said no more: "Pack up and prepare to depart."

Zhou Yiming went to check the transport vehicle with a cold face.

After such a scene, the atmosphere within the team became extremely tense.

However, Gu Jianlin knew in his heart that it was worth it.

Because within this team, Lin Wanqiu's value was immense—beyond imagination.

Compared to that, the harmony of the team was secondary.

Lin Wanqiu sat by the campfire, sneaking glances at him.

She had to admit that she felt a slight emotional stir just now.

Because he genuinely had no intention of betraying her.

Gu Jianlin sensed it too, but he remained unmoved.

In fact, he had already seen through it—the shrewdness, selfishness, and seductive demeanor Lin Wanqiu usually portrayed were merely layers of facade to protect herself.

Analyzing her personality profile, she was a woman with an incredibly strong inner self.

If someone crossed her bottom line, even controlling her with Ancient God's Blood might lead her to choose self-destruction.

Gaining her trust now was the best option.

"Tell me about the Lin Family."

Gu Jianlin suddenly asked.

Lin Wanqiu instinctively tensed up and was about to say something.

At that moment, Gu Jianlin's expression changed.

He once again sensed the distant summoning, but this time, the frequency was entirely different.

"Naughty monkey, stop digging in the mud over there and get ready for battle."

Gu Jianlin said calmly: "There's an ambush set up by the enemies to the east."

Ji Xiaoyu became alert: "Understood, Master!"

Bah, what naughty monkey, what Master!

The two Alchemists and the two Ancient Martial practitioners from the Lu Family turned pale.

"An ambush?"

Lu Qingqing instinctively gripped the two dark-red handguns at her waist, her sharp Eagle Eye piercing through the sandstorm.

Zhou Yiming asked, "Have you sensed anything?"

Clearly, they hadn't seen a thing.

Everyone looked at Chen Qing.

The last remaining Spiritualist in the team shook his head after caressing the Crystal Ball: "Nothing detected."

"That's because they're not within sensing range yet. We need to prepare in advance."

Gu Jianlin stood up with a solemn expression and said, "The You Ying Group is indiscriminately attacking all convoys until they confirm Minister Lu's location. These people may not attack us directly but will likely ambush us on our inevitable route, cutting us off from others."

He continued, "If we recklessly approach the east, we'll fall right into their trap."

The intelligence he provided was detailed.

All thanks to the Tiger General's messages.

Suddenly, he understood the joy of The Order of the Hidden.

If he could keep his Divine Servant's identity perfectly concealed...

He could even establish his own Order of the Hidden!

These words left everyone with one thought in mind.

How do you know that?!

Lu Qingqing narrowed her beautiful eyes and asked, "What if there's no ambush? According to what you said, if they're lying in wait to the east, we should loop around to launch a counterattack or take another route. But this is the Ancient God Realm—taking a detour here always means risk. What if we encounter other variables? What if they've set ambushes to the west too?"

"You're not in a support role, so how do you know all this?"

Zhou Yiming stared at the young man suspiciously.

They weren't fools; they wouldn't put their lives in someone else's hands so readily.

Gu Jianlin said nothing. He didn't know how to convince them.

Only Lu Zijin expressed complete trust in the young man, saying, "Listen to Xiao Gu. Prepare yourselves."

Lu Qingqing's face changed: "Sister!"

Zhou Yiming frowned: "Minister Lu, this isn't something to joke about!"

"I have my reasons."

Lu Zijin chuckled, "Behave, and listen."

It wasn't blind trust.

She clearly understood one thing.

The Moon Princess was currently within the You Ying Group.

They had an informant too.

Although she didn't know how the information was being passed, following this boy's lead wouldn't go wrong.

"Rest assured, everyone. I'll perform a divination ahead of time. If there's any issue, I'll sound the alarm immediately."

Chen Qing added an extra layer of assurance.

Gu Jianlin calmly said, "If there's no ambush, you can make all the decisions from now on."

Lu Qingqing's chest rose and fell slightly. "You said it!"

With that, she turned and walked away.

Zhou Yiming followed with a sullen face.

Outside the cave, yellow sand filled the skies, and the wind howled relentlessly.

Chapter 476 - 234: Gold Coins Galore!

The sandstorm raged in the wind, faintly revealing the sharp edges of desolate mountains, resembling the horns of demons.

Fleeting and indistinct.

Two heavy transport trucks drove side by side, piercing through the sandstorm.

"According to the original plan, we're supposed to head east to rendezvous with the other teams, then proceed another five kilometers to cross a canyon and reach an ancient ruin of the Ancient God Clan covered in ice and snow. The entire journey will take seven hours."

Chen Qing, perfectly playing the role of a seasoned driver, said, "Now it'll take us about twelve hours."

The longer you stayed in unexplored territory within the Ancient God Realm, the more dangerous it would become.

"Is it really dangerous?"

Lu Zijin turned her head, looking at the young man behind her.

Gu Jianlin simply responded with a hum.

To be cautious, he meditated in his mind for a moment before opening his eyes again.

At the same time, the compartment now included a middle-aged man with handsome features and a perpetual lighthearted grin, seemingly in his forties. However, his demeanor was far more kind and approachable, with an evident penchant for smiling.

Gu Ci'an once again briefly resurrected in his mind.

This time, it was still a hallucination pieced together using the imagery of a personality construct.

Suddenly, Lin Wanqiu spoke in a low voice, "If we really encounter danger, all we need to do is reach that ruin. The ruin shrouded in the snowstorm doesn't remain there twenty-four hours a day. You can only enter it during specific times. If you don't time it right, charging into the storm will reveal nothing. Isn't that quite magical? That city is called Balensa."

Gu Jianlin was momentarily stunned, and even the manifested Old Gu showed a look of surprise and admiration.

This version of Old Gu lacked comprehensive knowledge, but based on bits and pieces of hints, he could deduce the authenticity of the information.

"Balensa City is a transliteration from an ancient human tribal language, which translates to 'the City of Eternal Sleep.' According to legend, the Qilin Venerable once sealed sinners guilty of heinous crimes there, freezing their lives."

Lin Wanqiu whispered to the boy's ear, "It's a bit like a prison."

Gu Jianlin, now intrigued, didn't feel drowsy anymore and tacitly allowed the woman to remain close. "A prison?"

Lin Wanqiu nodded, "It's a staple of the Ancient God Clan's cultural customs. You'll understand when you see it. That place is peculiar, but it's not fundamentally too dangerous. Those same-clan beings buried there should be Ancestor-level Ancient Gods. After countless years of being sealed, they no longer pose much of a threat."

Gu Jianlin showed a flicker of understanding. "And you claim you're not a Cheater?"

Lin Wanqiu feigned an innocent look. "I really am not!"

She had finally grasped the knack for conversing with this young man.

What she shared had to be valuable.

Like earlier when she leaned in close, yet didn't end up having a gun aimed at her head.

"Hah."

Lu Zijin snorted internally. If it were that little girl instead, your head would've been chopped off by now!

Poor Moon Princess, why does she have so many competitors?

"What's taking so long? Where are the enemies?"

Ji Xiaoyu looked around restlessly.

The other transport truck followed closely behind them.

Lu Qingqing, as the captain, was not only dealing with her team members each doing their own thing but had also inexplicably been reprimanded by her sister earlier. It was impossible for her not to feel irritable as she kept glancing at the other truck.

Zhou Yiming remained silent, also staring at it.

The former gripped the twin dark-red pistols at his waist.

The latter had one hand resting on the Sword Box.

"If anything happens later, prioritize protecting Minister Lu."

Both of them harbored extreme distrust for that young man.

Amid the pervasive sandstorm, a transport truck with a blown tire became faintly visible up ahead.

The headlights flashed, signaling!

"Are they one of ours?"

Lu Qingqing squinted. She accurately identified it as a distress signal from the Sixth Squad.

"What are they doing here?"

Zhou Yiming instinctively sensed something was off. "Have the others stay back. Let's go check it out."

Lu Qingqing nodded and turned to address the two Guardians of the Lu Family. "You two stay and protect Minister Lu."

Even amidst internal conflicts, they had to be the first to rise to the occasion in a dangerous situation.

As for Minister Lu's safety, it wasn't a concern.

Judging by her calm demeanor, she probably still had some cards up her sleeve.

If she didn't, she'd simply be a normal person.

With Gu Jianlin's skills, he could kill her in less than a second before anyone could react.

If he wanted to kill, he would've done it long ago.

Two Fourth-Rank Omega fighters were the first to disembark, walking leisurely toward the transport truck.

"Hey, hey! Brothers! Sisters! It's me, Barton!"

A burly white man from North America stepped out wearing a short-sleeved camouflage outfit, with poker-faced sunglasses masking his expression. Laughing boisterously, he said, "Why are you guys coming from over there? I was just about to fix the truck and head to find you!"

He appeared to be one of the Omega Guardians, someone on the Ancient Martial path known as the Mad King, previously a Captain-level fighter.

"What's going on?"

Lu Qingqing used her Eagle Eye skill to scan, spotting five heavily armed individuals in the sandstorm.
"You're down some members."

Zhou Yiming shouted, "Report your situation!"

"We ran into an ambush by the You Ying Group along the way, and we've been separated from our Omega-fighter."

Barton walked closer, speaking in frustration, "We're heading east to regroup with them. Can you give us a lift?"

Lu Qingqing pondered for a moment and then prepared to retrieve alchemy equipment from her backpack to verify identities.

"We need you to drop your weapons!"

Chapter 477 - 234 Bursting Gold Coins!_2

Zhou Yiming shouted loudly, "Put on the Spiritual Suppression Bracelets and accept our investigation!"

Barton raised his hands above his head, braving the wind and sand, and shouted, "No problem!"

Boom!

In an instant, his entire body erupted with chaotic Qi, suddenly berserk like a wild beast. The explosive force shattered the parched ground beneath him, propelling him forward like a cannonball!

Enemy attack!

An actual enemy attack!

Zhou Yiming was caught off guard and was sent flying in an instant.

It was clearly a collision of flesh, yet it erupted with a metallic roar!

Had it not been for the Sword Bone protecting him, he would have been dead in an instant!

Bam bam bam!

Amidst the swirling sand, the consecutive blasts of three sniper shots echoed— the enemy's Overlords had already made their move!

At this distance, a sniper shot meant certain death if it hit. Lu Qingqing didn't think they would be water snipers, but she wasn't nervous at all. Because in that fleeting moment earlier, she had already activated her domain.

Rectangular Domain!

Three high-caliber sniper bullets roared towards her, moving so fast they couldn't be caught by the naked eye.

Yet, the closer they came to her, the slower they became—slow enough to clearly see the rapid rotation of the bullets!

This was the power of a Fourth Order Tyrant, capable of creating a force field that slowed down objects approaching the body by applying reverse counterforce, making them progressively slower.

Without hesitation, she drew the dual pistols from her waist, their barrels roared furiously, and she pulled the triggers!

Bam bam bam!

Scarlet energy bullets stormed out in a frenzy, bombarding everything!

"You're quite cautious, actually taking a detour to come here!"

Barton lunged forward like a ferocious tiger, wielding a massive serrated blade, sneering menacingly, "Too bad about the traps we laid on the path—otherwise, you'd already be trapped like beasts in a cage!"

Before his voice had even finished, the sound of Sword Qi screaming through the wind and sand tore the air.

Zhou Yiming, who had been sent flying moments ago, managed to swing a sword in time!

Barton had no choice but to turn back and block, channeling a Qi Shield!

Boom!

The sound was akin to the tolling of an Ancient Bell, resonating with life.

In the midst of rapid, nimble footsteps, Lu Qingqing darted and maneuvered, gripping her guns tightly as she began to charge up.

Arrow of Destruction!

Scarlet blood light flared up from her dual pistols and surged forward explosively!

This strike could dismantle even the strongest defenses.

Barton remained completely undeterred, sneering, "Go, kill Lu Zijin!"

Lu Qingqing and Zhou Yiming's expressions subtly shifted!

Boom!

The parched wasteland exploded as a pitch-black figure emerged from beneath the ground, rushing straight toward the transport vehicle!

His right hand charged up with power, Qi Force erupted, roaring like thunder!

"Roaming Root!"

A small shadow shot upward into the sky, delivering a savage Wave Motion Fist with unstoppable momentum!

Bam!

The clash between two Fourth Rank Ancient Martial warriors in berserk states sent waves of Qi Force rippling through the air, shaking the atmosphere!

It was as if two martial artists were exchanging blows mid-air, frozen momentarily in mid-air!

A stalemate.

The assassin's eyes lit up the moment he saw the little girl!

Ji Xiaoyu, however, pulled out a scorched fire stick from her pocket, grinning widely: "Sir, times have changed!"

Boom!

Raging flames erupted wildly, akin to a Fire Dragon roaring!

Caught off guard, the assassin was sent flying, shrieking miserably!

Ji Xiaoyu landed gracefully and turned her head, only to find four more assassins rushing toward the transport vehicle!

At the critical moment, the assassin that had been sent flying shouted, "Kill Lu Zijin directly!"

Suddenly, the four assassins simultaneously turned their heads toward the Little Princess, charging at her!

Ji Xiaoyu froze in shock: "Your target is Lu Zijin, so go kill her! Why are you coming after me?!"

Unbelievable!

This bunch probably thought she was the target due to her petite, loli-like appearance.

Outrageous!

Lu Zijin was a filthy mage wielding spells.

Ji Xiaoyu—a brilliant Ancient Martial artist—was completely different!

The four assassins, all Fourth Rank warriors, were uniformly Ancient Martial practitioners.

This team consisted of Ancient Martial warriors and Overlords.

The former were for stalling and gathering intelligence.

The latter specialized in long-range lethal sniping!

At that moment, the four assassins aligned briefly on the same line from a certain angle.

A dense black cross flashed through the swirling sand and dust, followed by a massive black gleam that flared and dissipated instantly!

Boom!

The four Mad Kings were caught off guard and were blasted away by the enormous black gleam, their bodies ruptured and drenched in blood.

If it weren't for their protective Qi, they would have already died!

"Xiaoyu!"

Gu Jianlin stepped out from the vehicle, a flickering black Ghost Fire adorning his forehead!

With searing flames slicing like knives, Ji Xiaoyu roared as she slashed with her weapon!

Qi Force exploded, flames howled!

With all her might poured into the attack, countless explosions of fire erupted amidst the swirling dust!

At that moment, an elegant and radiant silhouette flashed, gathering power for a decisive strike!

Boom!

The void shattered and fractured like a mirror, exposing the primordial darkness of the universe through interwoven cracks.

Finally, the space collapsed and crumbled amidst vibrations, leaving no traces of the four Ancient Martial practitioners!

Meanwhile, on the other side, the heads of three Overlords burst violently, penetrated by the bloody energy bullets!

Lu Qingqing holstered her pistols, their barrels emitting thick smoke.

As for Barton, he was torn apart by fierce Sword Qi, freshly spilling blood everywhere!

Zhou Yiming strode forward, stabbing his sword directly into the heart!

Crack.

Barton was pinned to the wall, the communicator in his hand sliding to the ground!

No one had expected an enemy attack—hidden within their own ranks!

Lu Qingqing and Zhou Yiming panted heavily, clearly seeing terror in each other's eyes.

Had it not been for Gu Jianlin's warning, their transport vehicle would have been destroyed by now.

Without a vehicle, survival here would be impossible.

Eventually, they would be trapped and killed!

"Damn it, the communicator!"

Zhou Yiming stomped hard, crushing it.

Lu Qingqing glanced over, shaking her head: "It's useless. They already transmitted our location during the ambush. We're exposed now."

Inside the transport vehicle, Chen Qing's eyes glimmered white as he said, "No spiritual fluctuations detected—everyone's dead. But the problem is, they relayed the information before dying."

Lu Zijin rested her chin on her hand and said, "It's to be expected. The You Ying Group is conducting a carpet search and would eventually find us. They might not confirm I'm here, but as we approach the Sea of Eternal Life, the area narrows down, and sooner or later, they'll know."

Exposure complicates the mission.

Lin Wanqiu's expression shifted between grim and unsure as she said, "I'll go check on the wounded."

At that moment, Ji Xiaoyu's voice rang out, yelling, "Aunt Zijin, you're so knowledgeable, come down and take a look!"

Lu Zijin snapped, "Call me sister!"

Despite her retort, she jumped off the vehicle.

Chen Qing gave her a look and followed quickly.

Standing amid the burning sea of flames, Gu Jianlin lowered his head, staring at the Copper Coins on the ground in deep thought.

"Divination lineage?"

He muttered suddenly.

Ji Xiaoyu exclaimed, "Hahaha, these fools dropped Gold Coins when we killed them!"

Chen Qing paled instantly at the sight of the Copper Coins.

Lu Zijin's face darkened slightly as she snapped, "Idiots! These are Copper Coins tied to the divination lineage. An old Divination Master planted them on the cannon fodder to divine our identities and location!"

Ji Xiaoyu froze on the spot.

"As expected, the You Ying Group has clever methods. Even if I wasn't exposed now, they'll send more people after us. This Divination Master isn't ordinary... the Si family's old master?"

Feeling the threat looming closer, Lu Zijin glanced at the Little Princess: "From now on, you're Lu Zijin."

Ji Xiaoyu: "..."

A deafening explosion erupted from the nearby transport vehicle.

Seems they left a last resort, fearing retaliation and theft.

Lu Qingqing and Zhou Yiming looked visibly grim.

"If not for Xiao Gu, we'd be walking now, like Arab traders on the Silk Road."

Lu Zijin scoffed, "Learn from this."

Lu Qingqing felt slightly embarrassed.

But Zhou Yiming stayed quiet for a moment before turning to the boy and asking, "How did you know?"

Gu Jianlin couldn't be bothered to answer.

I have both Tiger General and Female Sacrifice.

Do you?

Chapter 478 - 235 Moon Princess: I Am Invincible in the World!

In the city desolate like ruins, the deafening sound of explosions broke the silence of the night.

Motorcycles weaved agilely through the wreckage, dodging wave after wave of arrows and bullets that raced toward them, while rockets would occasionally explode behind them with unrelenting thunder.

This was already the sixth battle tonight—a deadly relay race, no less.

Deacon Wang of the Judgement Court had fallen.

The You Ying Group had paid a heavy price for it.

Currently, the Ancient God's Blood was in the possession of Instructor Wan from the Omega Sequence.

He was frantically fleeing with a cohort of Fifth Rank Omegas.

A few directors from the You Ying Group were relentlessly chasing them from behind.

The scene was both brutal and somewhat comedic.

Netherworld strolled through the ancient monastery, gazing at the statues standing stoically in the darkness, laughing softly. "Sometimes, even I fail to comprehend human greed. A mere drop of Ancient God's Blood can drive them to such madness. But perhaps it's not so bad after all—the people of the Dark World always carry a hint of savagery. Letting them vent a little is good, isn't it?"

"Ever since King of Qing tore through the Dark World, it's been a long time since I've seen chaos like this."

He held paper and pen in his hands, sketching the relics as he walked. "This is what the Dark World should truly look like. I'd love to see the order Aunt has painstakingly maintained be shattered again."

A white-haired, ancient-seeming youth crouched before an old fresco, closely observing the traces of civilization left behind by endless ages. His expression was focused and curious as he murmured, "There was once a time you were the successor chosen by the President. If not for your betrayal, Rhein wouldn't have risen to such heights today."

At first glance, he looked like a mere boy, yet he seemed ageless.

Threads of silver hair stretching three thousand miles, a backward glance betraying an entire lifetime.

"Everything was for the King."

Netherworld replied solemnly, "In this absurd and frenzied world, the King is the only resolution. Unfortunately, Aunt's judgment is far too poor—too indecisive, too archaic in thought."

The boy fell silent for a moment, then shook his head. "Don't say that. Your Aunt has undeniably been one of the top three pillars in human history. Her unmatched accomplishments, daring to challenge even the heavens, speak for themselves. Yet, she came from that era of blood and fire—the civilization of the Ascenders, the order upheld by the Ether Association—these are her everything."

"Anyone who entirely denies their own past ceases to be themselves."

He added, "Even Wang Fusheng must acknowledge the greatness of that order."

Netherworld folded his hands behind his back. "Was that the King's words?"

"Yes."

The boy spoke faintly, "The King's eternal regret is that he cannot prove he is right to others."

Netherworld caressed the diary he carried in his arms, sighing wistfully. "The King is perfectly capable of predicting the future, yet unable to prove he is correct. What a tragic reality that is."

The boy shook his head.

"Foretelling the future has always been a false proposition."

He explained, "Before a prediction unfolds, how can one be sure it is correct?"

The midnight bell tolled, ushering in a new day.

Netherworld opened the diary with anticipation and saw a new page.

This page contained only a single sentence.

"May 6, 2022—Lu Zijin concealed within Dawn City transport team's third division."

Such prophetic miracles had long ceased to surprise the upper echelons of the You Ying Group.

"Why does the King fixate so obsessively on Lu Zijin?"

Netherworld shook his head. "She's just a little girl, nothing more."

The boy chuckled lightly. "You need to understand something."

Netherworld looked up. "What would that be?"

"Everything the King does is part of his ongoing contest with the King of Qing."

The boy shrugged. "If you encounter something incomprehensible, it's likely the King of Qing has placed a bet first, and then the Red King matched it. Until the Ancient Supreme awakens, this world is their chessboard. Red versus Qing, black against white, right and wrong, survival and destruction."

Netherworld laughed softly, "Interesting."

"The Sea of Eternal Life holds significant secrets."

The boy stated calmly, "If I'm not mistaken, there might be a living Primordial there."

Netherworld's pupils narrowed, a madness blooming deep within his gaze.

"I know you're eager. But don't rush. That place isn't somewhere you can access. It deliberately hides there—its dimension doesn't permit someone like you to enter."

The boy snorted, "It must still be left to the younger ones."

Netherworld's gleaming eyes gradually dimmed. "Who will go?"

The boy waved his hand nonchalantly, "Send whoever you please. There's no shortage of people for you to use."

Netherworld seemed surprised. "I thought the Think Tank was here to personally take over."

"It's not yet time for Dusk to take the stage."

The boy sneered, "I'm only here on someone's behalf, merely checking on the children."

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Amid collapsing ruins, smoke spread like fog, blotting out the sky and sun.

"Where is the Ancient God's Blood?"

An elder's furious voice roared, "My Ancient God's Blood—where is it?"

Old Master Si bellowed in fury, his frail, hunched body trembling ferociously, almost to the point of coughing up blood.

As the smoke dispersed, all that remained in the rubble was a mangled corpse.

This was his cultivated candidate.

The one who should have carried that drop of Ancient God's Blood to him was now dead beyond redemption.

A hundred candidates from the You Ying Group stood behind him, exchanging uncertain glances and skeptical expressions.

Something felt peculiar.

By all accounts, they had all witnessed the final blow themselves.

Chapter 479 - 235 Moon Princess: I Am Invincible in the World!_2

The people from the Ether Association are already at their limit; they shouldn't have been able to withstand that strike.

In the end, they fled.

The Ancient God's Blood is nowhere to be found.

"There's no sign of the Ancient God's Blood. It seems it's no longer here. As expected of Instructor Wan from the Omega Sequence, a Sixth Rank Dragon Slayer—his prowess is beyond doubt."

Hel said indifferently, "That's enough for now. It's time to move on to the next mission. Old Master Si, among us, you are the most skilled Divination Master. For this beheading mission, the higher-ups specifically designated you to lead. As for the Ancient God's Blood, Lord Youming will naturally arrange for personnel to pursue Wan Rentu and his group—no need to worry."

Crack.

The cane splintered under a strong grip.

Old Master Si restrained his aura and said gravely, "This time, I want the best people."

Hel chuckled, "Rest assured, the team heading to the Sea of Eternal Life this time is almost entirely comprised of Twilight Candidates."

She gripped a crystal ball tightly; eerie pure white glimmered in her pupils as she transmitted her mental thoughts outward.

Military helicopters screeched through the air, landing on the dust-ridden ruins, their propellers stirring violent winds.

The Twilight Candidates joining the pursuit sensed the pulse of mental energy.

Feeling compelled, they moved toward the helicopter cabin.

The Moon Princess sensed the mental energy. Ever since advancing to the Fifth Rank, she had naturally become a Twilight Candidate. Although she had yet to showcase her true strength, her mere talent was overwhelmingly sufficient.

In truth, due to certain constraints, she hadn't intended to reveal her strength so soon.

But the man who occupied her thoughts was en route to the Sea of Eternal Life, where he was about to face a You Ying Group ambush.

She knew she had to go.

She wouldn't be at ease unless she was at his side in this critical moment.

Especially since she had sensed the information embedded in the mental pulse.

"Boss, are you okay?"

The Butcher's complexion shifted. He hurriedly said, "Should we ask Third Master to intervene? You don't need to go. This time, there are Twilight Candidates—someone from the group may target you. What if they make a move against you?"

The Moon Princess replied coldly, "It's fine."

Miss Lan furrowed her brows and said patiently, "Don't act tough. You've been keeping a low profile for so long. Don't expose yourself now. I recently heard from friends in the Jiang Family that that vile woman has grown considerably stronger. Ji Han and Ji Ye couldn't hold their ground against her earlier—they say she's at least on par with the Crown Prince."

She paused, speaking earnestly, "Don't forget how you lost to her back then. If you reveal your strength, she'll inevitably leverage the family's resources to target you again."

The so-called Crown Prince referred to Ying Changsheng from the Omega Sequence.

Renowned as the foremost talent of the New Era.

The You Ying Group also had individuals of such caliber, though they rarely appeared.

"Don't act recklessly."

Mr. Liu coughed and said, "My aunt asked me to look after you. Otherwise, I wouldn't be able to answer to your mother."

Whether it was bad luck or something else, the candidates under his care rarely proved exceptional.

Even the Moon Princess was ostensibly misplaced—she didn't belong to his group.

Rather, she was tied to the Jiang Family, the first Board Member.

If something were to happen to her, it'd be an immeasurable loss.

"I didn't have backing then, but it's different now."

The Moon Princess picked up her Tang Blade casually, leapt down from the jeep, and said icily, "Let me make myself clear—I got here by my own talent, not because of that woman's help. I've never acknowledged her as my mother."

Mr. Liu was startled. "Eh? Is the backing Miss Moon Princess mentioned me?"

"You should know your limits."

Miss Lan vaguely suspected the reason why the young woman was so resolute but refrained from voicing it.

Only the Butcher truly understood. He caught his boss's fleeting glance before departure—a look instructing him to continue the Supreme's mission, to monitor You Ying Group's movements and ensure the news of their plan to hunt in the Sea of Eternal Life got leaked.

After all, there was still the Supreme.

Nothing to worry about.

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Nine helicopters roared amidst the ruins, their rotor blades slicing through the air.

Si Wei'an sat grim-faced in the cabin. Once a high-ranking Board Member, he had been reduced to madness after exhausting the power from three cycles of the Sorrowful Corpse Cycle.

Now, he resembled a rabid dog, attacking whoever he encountered.

Si himself was aware of this flaw but remained powerless against it.

Especially after suffering monumental injustice, his fury and loss of reason reached an apex.

Currently, he had been demoted to Twilight Candidate.

"Is this Si Wei'an? The demoted Board Member?" A Twilight Candidate sitting in a neighboring cabin eyed him with malevolence, his gaze filled with greed and jealousy.

The man's code name was Poison Scorpion, a Fifth-rank Star Lord on the Divine Path. Known for his extreme and unhinged methods, his favorite pastime was stealing others' most cherished possessions right before their eyes.

A Twilight Candidate backed by Second Master.

"Yes, they say the Qilin Wedge fragment is in his possession."

Can Jian sneered. "Yet he denies it."

A practitioner of the Sword Sect Path, this man had once escaped the Sword Tomb. Later, he pledged allegiance to Master Five and remained a constant on the Ether Association's bounty list, never dropping out of the top ten.

Even Omega hunters seeking his head would either find themselves eluded or killed.

"I feel like challenging him right now—what do you think?"

Another person licked their lips, smirking. "Shouldn't be an issue, right?"

"Heh, if you want to fight, fight. We're all competitors anyway."

Someone incited further tension.

Suddenly, everyone fell silent simultaneously.

A tall, imposing woman in a trench coat strode against the fierce wind, cutting a haunting figure.

Her forehead bore a pair of gruesomely purple Qilin Horns, her face etched with ominous black Demon Runes. Her exposed arms were clad in durable Dragon Scales, exuding an aura of horrifying malice.

Evolutionary State!

This was Evolutionary State!

Displaying traits of the Qilin Clan!

Though most present were Twilight Candidates, their hearts raced uncontrollably upon seeing her.

Evolver!

This was an Evolver!

It was widely known that Twilight Candidates belonged exclusively to the Evolver organization.

Dominating the top echelons of the Dark World.

And their status as candidates stemmed from their lack of mastery over the Evolution Path.

And this woman had evidently left them all behind.

Of course, her power was secondary.

Her lineage was what truly terrified everyone.

Jiang Hanyi, a direct descendant of the Jiang Family and heir to the Red King.

"Insignificant pests."

She glanced coldly around before scoffing.

Suddenly, she seemed to sense something and turned her head.

A young girl wearing a cat-like mask stood there, dressed in a pink down jacket and a black pleated skirt. Her long, slender legs were encased in black stockings, her thick-soled black shoes striking the dust below.

In her hand, she gripped a long Tang Blade, emanating a chilling murderous aura.

"Bastard child, so it's you?"

Jiang Hanyi seemed momentarily surprised, narrowing her eyes with icy indifference. "You dare show yourself before me?"

The Moon Princess stared coldly at the woman. She had mentally prepared herself on the way here, telling herself to remain composed no matter what, to avoid revealing her strength, that future happiness required her to curb her temper.

Her husband was what mattered most.

But at this moment, another voice reverberated in her mind.

No, you must not endure!

A gift from the Qilin Venerable—the influence of the Candle Dragon Forbidden Curse!

For a fleeting moment, she felt invincible, the dragon roar in her mind resonating through heaven and earth. The people before her seemed like mere ants, ones she could crush with a single step.

And her patron was an Ancient Supreme.

These people—worthless trash—had no right to act brazenly before her.

"Bitch, flaunting protection from a few decrepit relics—does that make you proud?"

The Moon Princess involuntarily spat out the words, "Keep barking, and I'll sever your head like a dog's."

After speaking, she felt the seething rage from across the room.

Along with the attention of everyone present.

Even the You Ying Group's higher-ups were casting glances.

This... wasn't good.

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A loud explosion echoed.

Lord Youming was startled and looked around. "What's happening?"

The youth known as the Think Tank grinned and said, "Oh, it's not much. The offspring of two Kings just started a fight. I specifically came today to observe that child. It hasn't been long since we last met—how did she grow so arrogant already?"

Chapter 480 - 236: The Ancient Clan, Jiang Clan

The transport truck sped across the wilderness, breaking through the mist.

Chen Qing focused entirely on driving, making sharp, drifting turns to evade a barrage of arrows.

"Have we really not been exposed? Why are there so many of them? Are we the masters of order, or are they?" Zhou Yiming stood on the roof of the vehicle, gripping his sword with both hands, unleashing wild bursts of Sword Qi to fend off rockets raining down from above.

Meanwhile, Lu Qingqing had already set up her sniper rifle inside the truck. Each thunderous roar from the gun's barrel was followed by a devastating Arrow of Destruction tearing through defenses, blowing apart the pursuing helicopters overhead.

"The key issue is that these transport trucks are ours. This means several other teams have already been ambushed. Either they've been annihilated, or they've abandoned their vehicles and fled, putting all the pressure squarely on us."

She lay against the cold steel, peering through the scope at the sky, and pulled the trigger!

Boom!

The entire truck shook violently. The windows had long since shattered, and despite wearing alchemy earplugs, everyone still felt the terrifying power of the modified, large-caliber alchemy sniper rifle.

"First Unit lost contact. Fourth Unit lost contact. Sixth Unit lost contact! As for the Eighth Unit, they're holding on but have informed us they're unable to provide any support!"

The two Alchemists, clutching their tablets, shouted in frustration, "What's going on?!"

Gu Jianlin knew exactly what was going on. These were the methods of The Order of the Hidden—an insidious force that infiltrated major organizations like invisible ghosts, effortlessly steering events in their desired direction.

They could even tip the balance between order and chaos at will.

On the surface, the Ether Association seemed stronger when compared to the You Ying Group.

But the real enemy was The Order of the Hidden.

Of course, if The Order of the Hidden wanted someone dead, both the Ether Association and the You Ying Group would help make it happen.

Together, they'd push toward that outcome.

"Stop requesting reinforcements. Right now, we can trust no one," he said after a brief moment of contemplation. "Head straight for the Eastern Front line."

Out here in the isolated wilderness, encountering a traitor meant getting attacked from both front and rear.

But if they could regroup with the main force, their safety would greatly increase.

The two Ancient Martial practitioners from the Lu Family were about to argue but, recalling that without this young man's help their transport truck would have already been blown up, they swallowed their words.

Silently, they concentrated on receiving treatment.

Both were already badly wounded.

"We've been attacked seven times so far," Lin Wanqiu said, wiping the sweat off her face before casting a Holy Light Skill. "We might not even make it to the Eastern Front."

Lu Zijin said expressionlessly, "Follow his instructions."

Gu Jianlin looked up and saw that the illustrious Golden Realm was still looming overhead. This meant that under the current circumstances, he couldn't undergo Ancient God Transformation—its side effects would be devastating.

They didn't need to make it all the way to the Eastern Front.

If they could just escape the area under the Heavenly Person Realm's shroud and create enough chaos—

Then he could transform.

This was his domain, after all.

Boom!

In the distance, three dark figures leaped out of a falling helicopter, cutting through the air.

Suicide attackers!

It was the same tactic used to destroy their other transport truck!

"Die!"

Ji Xiaoyu's wrist-mounted white wolf fang pendant glowed with electric light. Her right hand rapidly morphed, transforming into a claw covered in Dragon Scales. A ferocious eye opened in the center of her palm, from which lightning roared!

Boom!

An intense pillar of thunderous light shot skyward, annihilating the three dark figures!

Duobao Child, indeed!

After unleashing the attack, the Little Princess slumped onto one knee, panting heavily, and tilted her head back to drain a bottle of Blue Blood.

The Spiritual Secret Medicines they used to replenish their spirituality came with limitations.

Overusing them risked losing control.

"We haven't reached the hardest part yet. The Twilight Candidates haven't shown up," Lu Zijin said coldly, crossing her arms. "Right now, they're just relying on sheer numbers to exhaust us. Once they're sure we're completely drained, that's when they'll show themselves."

Gu Jianlin was about to respond when a distant summon once again echoed in his mind.

New intel: The You Ying Group had pinpointed Minister Lu's location.

The Twilight Candidates were already on their way.

"The Twilight Candidates cultivated by the You Ying Group are the equivalent of our Omega Sequence. The Dusk Organization is the throne of the Dark World, and all of its members are unequivocally Evolvers, each at least Seventh-Order Holy Realm or higher," Lu Zijin stated calmly. "Our advantage against them lies in the Breathing Technique. At least for now, their Evolvers seemingly cannot master it. At present, only the Catastrophes and their students can wield both the Breathing Technique and Evolutionary States."

Gu Jianlin thought to himself, So that's how it is. Thunder is one of those who can master both the Breathing Technique and Evolutionary State.

"This is the legacy of the Red King. Every member of the Dusk Organization is their follower. These individuals have the power to topple the world. The only reason they've held back until now is that, in the past, someone nearly annihilated them," Lu Zijin said with a calm expression. "And that someone is well-known to you—Mr. Jing."

Gu Jianlin froze. "Senior Brother?"

That made sense. His Senior Brother always gave him an impression of boundless strength.

Lu Zijin nodded. "Indeed. In fact, the You Ying Group's current combat strength is lacking because, years ago, an entire batch of Twilight Candidates was almost wiped out by someone else."

Gu Jianlin asked, skeptical, "Could it be...?"

"Yes, your late Second Senior Brother," Lu Zijin replied nonchalantly. "Ji Chuan, codename Milo, was also a dazzling genius like you in his time. But he was perpetually plagued by inner demons, much like my younger brother. At that time, your Second Senior Brother was only Third Rank, but he single-handedly almost demolished the entire Twilight Candidate lineup before ultimately perishing at the hands of the Netherworld."

"He was obstinate to the end. He could have escaped," she murmured, a glimmer of remembrance in her eyes. "I miss him."

Gu Jianlin nodded slightly. "I see."

"If your Second Senior Brother had succeeded in eliminating the Twilight Candidates, that girl wouldn't have suffered as much as she did."

Lu Zijin suddenly said.

Gu Jianlin frowned. "What do you mean?"

Lu Zijin was surprised, glancing at him curiously. "You don't know?"

Gu Jianlin stared at her, expressionless.

"Ah," she gasped, covering her lips as her eyes widened in feigned horror. "Oops! Did I let that slip?"

"What's going on?" Gu Jianlin demanded, his tone cold.

Lu Zijin, utterly defenseless against the icy glare of the young boy, sighed and cradled her face. "Oh no, if that little girl finds out I told you, she'll never forgive me! Well, you do know the six directors of the You Ying Group hail from six prominent families of the Dark World, right?"

"These families were originally allies of the Ether Association but rebelled alongside the Red King."

She paused. "Back then, these six families controlled one-third of the world's extraordinary resources. In the mortal realm, they wielded immense influence, holding sway over entire nations' economies and political arteries. Even major world wars bore their fingerprints."

Gu Jianlin contemplated this. "If they rebelled, wouldn't that cause utter chaos?"

"Exactly," Lu Zijin said, pursing her lips. "The Red King intended to establish a great empire with them."

"What happened then?" Gu Jianlin asked.

"Those six families were nearly wiped out by a single individual," Lu Zijin said with a peculiar look in her eyes. "And you know who I'm talking about."

Gu Jianlin nearly choked—undoubtedly, it had to be his teacher.

No wonder everyone kept warning him not to provoke anyone from the Dark World.

It was a matter of a generational blood feud.

"The strongest among those families was the Jiang Family," Lu Zijin added. "The Red King himself came from that clan, taken as a child by the President and his wife to be groomed in the Catastrophe Plan. As for the King of Qing, he wasn't born into any noble line, just a wild Ascender. By the age of four, he was already rampaging through Buzhou Mountain."

She paused. "The Red King was roughly the same caliber."

Four years old.

At four, Gu Jianlin was probably busy peeing into ant nests. "What can a four-year-old even do?"

Lu Zijin replied seriously, "What do you think? Qing and Chi were never normal people. Legend has it your teacher was born awakened, raised on Spiritual Secret Medicines. By four, he was already a Fourth

Rank Cloud Lord, advancing a rank a year. The common sense and rules of Ascenders didn't apply to him."

Gu Jianlin was stunned. He had heard that humanity's mental resilience was especially fragile before adulthood.

Advancing to higher ranks was supposed to be nearly impossible.

"The King of Qing was a relaxed individual, uninterested in power. The Red King, however, was far more domineering. After his rise, the Jiang Family began consuming other forces, growing stronger."

Lu Zijin continued, "Even though the Jiang Family was devastated once, they remain powerful today. They value pure bloodlines, attempting to recreate a new king genetically. Their strict rules stem from this belief in their noble lineage, untarnished and exceptional."

"Your girl happens to be a descendant of the Jiang Family," she hinted, giving Gu Jianlin a sidelong glance. "You can figure the rest out yourself."

Gu Jianlin fell silent.

So that's why Youzhu never talked about her lineage.

Her mother was a descendant of the Jiang Family.

All part of the Red King's legacy!

And I became a student of the King of Qing.

What kind of mess is this?

But that wasn't the point.

The point was—Youzhu had been bullied!

Just then, Chen Qing suddenly spoke up. "Urgent update. Wan Rentu, the Omega Sequence's chief instructor, has acquired the Ancient God's Blood and has led several injured Omegas to the Eastern Front. The Eastern Front forces are strong, with the Profound Yin Saint Li Hanting serving as deputy commander."

Lu Zijin spat. "Disgusting!"

Gu Jianlin asked, "The Judgement Court? Should we be worried?"

Before the words even fell from his lips, worse news came.

Chen Qing continued, "Eastern Front Headquarters has already dispatched reinforcements in our direction. Their orders are for us to converge with them and annihilate the You Ying Group's forces."

For Gu Jianlin, this was undoubtedly bad news.

He glanced at the red dots on the tablet, marking the coordinates on the map.

Multiple factions were converging on the wilderness ahead for a large-scale confrontation.

There was no chance for him to undergo Ancient God Transformation.

Suddenly, the Stone Bead on his wrist trembled violently!

This meant the enemy was near.

"Damn it!"

Lin Wanqiu stared out the window. Her lovely face turned pale. "Something's not right. How did it come to this..."

