

## Ancient 71

### Chapter 71 - 34 Father's Task

Jing Ci returned to the park to find the old man still seated by the lakeside in his wheelchair, fishing rod in hand.

The fish basket, however, was now filled with a variety of random items.

"Teacher, every time I watch you fish, I feel like we really don't need to open a grocery store,"

Jing Ci remarked with his hands tucked into his pockets. "Just selling scrap alone would suffice."

The old man remained as still as a mountain, not even sparing Jing Ci a glance, completely ignoring him.

"I've done everything I was supposed to do."

Jing Ci seemed to recall something and smiled faintly. "I have to admit, that kid is quite sharp."

The old man gripped the fishing rod, staring intently at the shimmering surface of the lake, and said, "You rarely praise others."

Jing Ci replied candidly, "Mastering the Evolution Path at Zero-tier — that kind of talent is indeed far superior to mine back in the day. By quite a margin. In some ways, that kid is even more reckless than his father..."

The old man remarked flatly, "He still needs more refinement."

Jing Ci raised an eyebrow. "You're still observing?"

"He needs to feel more pressure. Those fools from the Ether Association are ideal candidates."

The old man spoke unhurriedly, "A fine blade must be repeatedly honed before it can truly reveal its sharpness."

Jing Ci didn't dispute this and instead shifted the topic. "But aren't you worried, Teacher, that if you wait too long to act, by the time he truly matures, the others will have noticed him?"

The old man frowned slightly. "What's his pathway?"

Jing Ci answered, "Divine."

The old man followed up, "And who's the strongest Divine?"

Jing Ci paused briefly before answering, "You are."

"Exactly. I am the strongest Divine,"

the old man remarked emotionlessly. "Who can take him from me?"

"Fair point."

However, Jing Ci suddenly said, "But, Teacher, aren't you worried he might change his pathway? While you've certainly proven that Divine might be the most powerful of all the ancient paths, Sword Sect and Ghost Slayer are undeniably attractive as well..."

The old man remained silent for a moment. "Has the boy asked what our objective is?"

Jing Ci shook his head. "Not a single word. He's probably waiting for us to tell him directly when the time is right."

"He has stability,"

the old man remarked lightly. "Not impatient, not reckless. Very good."

"Teacher,"

Jing Ci hesitated. "I understand you want to continue observing him for a while. But more importantly, you don't want him to bear the consequences of your actions at this stage. The problem is, you're also aware of the Ether Association's obsession with the Qilin Immortal Palace this time. If they persist in believing Gu Ci'an has left something behind for the boy, won't that..."

"No matter,"

the old man replied, his gaze as misty as his calm voice. "I'll keep watching."

The shimmering lake surface suddenly rippled violently, the waters seemingly boiling as the fish below darted restlessly. Amid the furious churning of the water, faint cracks of thunder echoed ominously.

The moonlight was swallowed by darkness, but the lake reflected the silhouette of an enormous shadow.

It came from the sky, where pitch-black clouds gathered and churned.

The swirling black clouds seemed to outline a fearsome and majestic face, looming over the city below.

The hospital room was eerily empty. Gu Jianlin lay on the bed, silently enduring the excruciating pain, lost in thought.

"There's a third person in the school? And they're at least on par with Lu Zicheng?"

This was truly strange.

Before taking action, he had nearly profiled all the Ascenders in the school.

Cheng Youyu was an exception — he was just a student himself.

Moreover, Gu Jianlin had actually suspected for some time that the chubby kid wasn't as simple as he seemed.

After all, when Joker started slaughtering animals, that kid had cautioned him to avoid going out unnecessarily.

Unless this third person had never revealed themselves before.

But the real question was: why would someone like this want to rescue him?

Gu Jianlin was utterly baffled. His head ached, and the pain in his body flared up again.

If he were still an ordinary person, he would've long since passed out from the agony.

Since becoming an Ascender, however, many things had changed. For instance, he found his energy levels to be much greater, his ability to think more enhanced, and even his nerves more acute.

Along with that came an increased resilience to enduring pain.

He glanced at the screen of his phone. It was 9:30 pm, almost the end of the evening classes.

A new message had appeared on WeChat.

"Where have you been?"

Just three simple words.

It was from Su Youzhu.

Gu Jianlin replied, "Class was boring; went to an internet café with friends. Sleep early, goodnight."

He'd given his reason — whether she believed it was up to her.

As long as his mother didn't find out.

If the truth came to light, it would mean both of them facing her wrath, along with broomstick and rolling pin strikes in tandem.

Gu Jianlin turned off his phone, then picked up the vial on the bedside table and downed it in one gulp.

The secret medicine carried a bitter, herbal taste. As it went down, it felt like swallowing a shard of ice — the coolness spread throughout his entire body, alleviating much of the searing pain.

At the same time, a refreshing sensation trickled into the depths of his soul, condensing into a faint hint of spirituality.

Admittedly, it wasn't much — probably only a tenth of his total spirituality.

But it was enough.

To be cautious, Gu Jianlin first activated the Lock of Nonexistence. Silver-white chains trembled and floated into the air, weaving around him and crisscrossing together to form a barrier.

The very presence of the hospital bed seemed to vanish.

Only then did he take out the Soul Comforting Bell, injecting a sliver of spirituality to awaken it.

As the bell's clear and reverberating sound rang out, black halos spread like mist, faintly revealing a fragmented soul.

Joker's soul.

The Soul Comforting Bell's imprisoned souls generally had two uses.

First, as a reserve of spiritual material.

This was typically for crafting Transcendent items such as secret medicines and alchemy weapons.

Second, to enslave or interrogate.

When a soul was extracted, it no longer retained combat capabilities but still held onto its memories. Its self-awareness would be forcibly erased, leaving it like a puppet, unconditionally obedient to its master.

Finally, it was time.

Gu Jianlin took a deep breath and asked in a low voice, "I've read your profile. Six months ago, you participated in the Qilin Immortal Palace excavation project as a Dimension Detection Officer. At that time, what was your relationship with Gu Ci'an?"

After a brief silence, Joker's fragmented soul quivered faintly.

There was no audible response, only mental fluctuations.

Yet Gu Jianlin instinctively grasped its meaning.

"At that time, we were colleagues."

That was Joker's reply.

Gu Jianlin pressed on, "What was Gu Ci'an's job?"

"Six months ago, at the launch of the Qilin Immortal Palace project, several first-line archaeological investigators from the association went missing under mysterious circumstances. They were later deemed to have defected with ancient texts, suspected to have entered the Immortal Palace. Gu Ci'an was dispatched to the East Sea Coast to investigate the defection and track them down."

Joker replied.

Gu Jianlin froze, his thoughts immediately shifting to the five individuals he had encountered in the Ancient Tomb.

"Investigating defectors?"

He furrowed his brow. "And then what?"

Joker paused once more.

"Eight years ago, when the Qilin Immortal Palace's dimension was first pinpointed, several incidents had already occurred. The most severe resulted in the deaths of over 200 individuals, along with members of the Ether Association defecting."

"The Night Watcher elites Gu Ci'an and the current Peak City District Head, Lu Zijin, were the ones who handled that disaster back then. Their teammate, a Nightmare Master, went insane during a survey mission and conducted a bloody ritual to advance themselves, claiming many investigators' lives."

"Lu Zijin's younger brother, Lu Zicheng, was the Nightmare Master's student at the time, and one of the survivors."

Gu Jianlin was stunned, never realizing that Captain Lu had such a tragic history.

"Because of this, the higher-ups took the matter extremely seriously. As one of the super-elite Night Watchers, Gu Ci'an returned to Peak City."

"Gu Ci'an was tasked with two objectives: one, track down the rogue Night Watcher teammate; and two, investigate the defectors."

"With Gu Ci'an's skills, investigating those defectors wasn't difficult. Even without the aid of ancient texts, he quickly identified the location of the Immortal Palace and found a way to enter. Within the Ether Association, he was the most accomplished investigator and the archaeologist with the greatest understanding of Ancient God Clan history."

"His involvement brought significant breakthroughs to the stalled excavation project."

"But during our first attempt to enter the Immortal Palace, we encountered something extremely eerie..."

