

## Ancient 73

Chapter 73 - 35: The Man Behind the Joker\_2

"The subsequent dives also went very smoothly. We roamed in the underwater tomb rooms and achieved unimaginable gains. Until one day, there was a signal interference caused by a strong magnetic field from the seabed, and we briefly lost contact."

"At that time, I was on the shore, extremely anxious. When the signal resumed, I quickly instructed them to report their numbers to re-establish contact."

"Number One, safe. Number Two, safe. Number Three, safe..."

"I listened to their reports, until I heard... Number Seventeen, safe!"

The Joker's Thought suddenly trembled with an intense ripple.

Gu Jianlin, upon hearing this, felt a deep chill run down his spine.

There were only sixteen people in total. How could there be a so-called Number Seventeen?

Something seemed to have infiltrated the diving group!

This didn't necessarily mean that the person reporting as Number Seventeen was suspicious.

It could also be that some bizarre presence had mixed in, reporting the number ahead of time.

The Joker's Thought trembled violently, forcing the use of the Soul Comforting Bell to soothe him again.

"At that moment, I realized something might have gone wrong, so I ordered the diving team to surface immediately. Strangely, there were still sixteen people, without any anomalies. It was as though I had merely imagined hearing it. They also didn't remember anyone mentioning Number Seventeen."

"But I was certain I hadn't misheard. I submitted a report to the higher-ups, yet nobody believed me. I was convinced that a ghostly entity had infiltrated the diving team. I... I had to find it!"

"Shortly afterward, members of our project team started disappearing under mysterious circumstances. Neither alive nor dead, as though swallowed up by an invisible vortex, leaving no trace behind."

"I panicked and realized that if I couldn't find the demon, everyone would die! So I started killing people. Whoever I suspected, I killed. I had to kill that demon; otherwise, I would be the one to die!"

"I suspected it was Gu Ci'an, but he was too powerful. I bided my time until... I discovered Gu Ci'an's diary."

Gu Jianlin's gaze sharpened: "Continue!"

In the silence, the Joker's Thought transmitted an idea that chilled him to the bone.

"The diary was filled with strange symbols, a unique cipher Gu Ci'an must have created. But, being versed in cryptography and using the immense computational power of the Deep Space Network, I deciphered part of its contents."

"Gu Ci'an had long known there was something alive in the tomb. He deliberately led us down there to awaken the entity in the seabed, to achieve his goal."

"The Ancient Gods slumbering in the Qilin Immortal Palace are not alone!"

Gu Jianlin froze with shock, his voice trembling: "Then what happened?"

"That's all I uncovered from the diary."

The Joker's Thought became utterly numb.

Gu Jianlin asked: "Why?"

The Joker answered numbly: "Because as I was deciphering the diary, Gu Ci'an was standing right behind me."

Damn.

Gu Jianlin's scalp prickled.

He rarely swore, but even he couldn't hold back at this moment.

Under the control of the Soul Comforting Bell, the Joker couldn't lie.

From this account, Father's mental state seemed utterly abnormal.

Utterly eerie.

"Next came the so-called Blood Moon Slaughter Incident?"

Gu Jianlin asked coldly: "Yet if, as you claim, Gu Ci'an was the mastermind behind it all, how did you survive? Logically, he wouldn't have spared you."

This time, the Joker responded quickly: "At the verge of death, someone saved me."

Gu Jianlin frowned and asked: "Who?"

At that moment, the Soul Comforting Bell trembled violently, its black aura rippling with unease.

The Joker's soul quaked turbulently, as though suffering extreme agony, screaming silently.

Suddenly, chaos erupted!

The Joker's soul disintegrated abruptly, releasing a boundless mist of blood. Within the crimson haze, a pair of molten lava-like vertical pupils burned brightly, as though gazing across a vast expanse of space with dread-inducing malice!

What an terrifying monster, with a grotesque side-profile, like a colossal beast roaring from the depths of Purgatory!

Holy shit!

Gu Jianlin startled, feeling an oppressive force washing over him, his heart nearly stopping.

The majesty of Ancient Times swept over him, crushing him almost to the point of total collapse.

In a critical instant, the Black Qilin within his mind suddenly awakened, its golden pupils blazing as it roared mightily!

Gu Jianlin felt his spirituality rapidly evaporating!

Boom!

The oppressive force of Ancient Times dissipated, scattering completely.

The Joker's soul vanished into dust, while the pair of imposing vertical pupils in the blood mist wavered until extinguished.

Finally, the scene dissolved into the night.

"Huff, huff..."

Gu Jianlin gasped for air, still shaken.

Because he would never have imagined that such a horrifying entity was hidden within this soul.

Were it not for his spirituality, which allowed the Black Qilin to wield some power, he might have been doomed.

The hospital room fell silent, only the night breeze softly flowing in, sending chills across his skin.

"This was the entity the Joker mentioned—that which granted him new life."

He murmured softly, "No, this shouldn't be human."

Taking out his phone, Gu Jianlin opened a drawing app and sketched a quick outline.

Though he hadn't seen much, he drew an uncanny silhouette.

A visage resembling both dragon and serpent, massive vertical pupils glowing blood-red, its body wreathed in molten lava, clad in cyan scales, with a single leg!

"What kind of monster is this? Could it have emerged from the Qilin Immortal Palace?"

Gu Jianlin attempted an online search but only found references to a similar mythological creature.

—Kui!

The Classic of Mountains and Seas-Great Wilderness East Classic notes: In the East Sea, there is Liu Bo Mountain, which extends seven thousand miles into the ocean. On it resides a beast, shaped like an ox but cyan in color, hornless, with one foot. It stirs winds and storms upon entering and leaving the water. Its light rivals the sun and moon, and its voice thunders like lightning. Its name is Kui.

Gu Jianlin's scalp tingled. If his conjecture was correct, this must be the Ancient God Clan.

The real Ancient God Clan.

Not humans like him, who somehow obtained the power of the Ancient Gods.

"Gu Ci'an, what are you doing, entangling yourself with these things..."

Gu Jianlin's thoughts swirled chaotically, piecing together fragments of clues. He identified three key points:

First, Old Gu's mental state was indeed abnormal—he might already have lost his sanity.

Yet the problem was, when Old Gu returned from the airport, he behaved perfectly normal, albeit a bit frantic.

No signs suggested he manifested traits of the Fallen.

Second, there's more than one Ancient God sleeping in the Qilin Immortal Palace!

Third, behind the Joker lies an Ancient God!

Now the question is: Where to continue investigating following this interrupted trail?

Gu Jianlin's access level within the Ether Association was too low, leaving him without any information sources.

The Joker they managed to capture has now disintegrated.

Currently, all evidence points to his father.

"The evidence is overwhelming. Even if I don't believe it, how could I exonerate you?"

Gu Jianlin murmured softly.

Yet he couldn't forget the warmth of his father's embrace when shielding him from the oncoming truck.

Fallen exhibit extreme aggression, yet the returning Old Gu was unusually composed, if slightly frantic.

Something must be amiss.

The deep night stretched on, the sound of traffic outside relentless, while faint footsteps of a nurse echoed down the hallway.

"The only option now is to elevate my Rank and status step by step, gaining access to more clues. As long as the Qilin Power remains hidden, I can leverage the Ether Association's resources to grow stronger."

Gu Jianlin thought internally, "The problem now is, the entity behind the Joker is terrifying."

If this matter isn't resolved, he'll be perpetually shrouded in unease.

Gu Jianlin remained silent for a long time, until he suddenly felt the Qilin within his consciousness stirring restlessly.

Mysteriously, he seemed to hear a distant summons from another realm.

The call was ethereal and surreal.

Yet eerily real.

Like a beckoning from a dream.

Gu Jianlin distinctly sensed his world collapsing and distorting, disintegrating inch by inch, riddled with cracks.

Scarlet light seeped through the fissures, like a rising sea tide.

"Ancient Supreme..."

So that's it—it was those five people in the Ancient Tomb summoning him again.

Gu Jianlin heard that familiar call and suddenly froze.

Right, he still had those five individuals from the Ancient Tomb.

What he couldn't investigate, they could!