

Ancient 781

Chapter 781: The Secret of Qing and Chi

When night fell, Gu Jianlin arrived at the Shinjuku Imperial Garden by car.

He disguised himself again as the young master of the Si Family, wearing an ancient golden mask. His white shirt paired with black tailored pants, and brightly polished black leather shoes gave him an air of sharp efficiency.

He greeted the security at the entrance politely, and casually glanced into the depths of the garden. In the seemingly quiet forest, there was a hidden, bustling Life Rhythm—obviously, all were Ascenders of the Jiang Family, and all at Superdimensional Level.

This is the largest Japanese-style garden in Tokyo, and supposedly has quite a few French-style buildings. During the Edo Period, it was the residence of the Neiteng Family, later managed by the Imperial Household Agency, and is now a national park governed by the Ministry of the Environment. Today, it remains open to the public, though a portion has turned into private territory belonging to the Jiang Family's assets.

"Don't look around, I know your Life Perception range is broad."

A youthful female voice came through the headset: "These are all Jiang Chunyang's private guards. The old guy has been very cautious ever since he was cursed, especially after your senior brother came knocking. He didn't choose to fight but instead hid in the deepest part of the Shinjuku Imperial Garden, where there's an Alchemy Domain modified by the Red King, claiming to be the 'Land-based Heavenly Plain.'

She deliberately emphasized: "To this day, no one knows the effects of this Alchemy Domain, but when the Red King defected, his first base was established in Tokyo, and even the Ether Association couldn't break through."

A new Shadow was remotely guiding his actions.

This was the so-called novice tutorial.

This Shadow's number was No.5, sounding no older than ten years.

The personality profile was of a young, home-bound girl hiding in a rental room, with hair covering her face like a ghost, curled up in an oversized hoodie, fingers typing away, and toes twitching.

"Understood."

Gu Jianlin replied calmly.

Shinjuku was known as the city that never sleeps. Even at 6 PM, the national park was still bustling with crowds, tourists from various countries poured in, and late cherry blossoms fell onto the tranquil lake, causing ripples in the water.

The bell from the awakening bell still echoed in the park, yet the tourists remained oblivious.

Old Master Si led his subordinates, supporting himself with a cane as they approached. Dressed in sophisticated suits, they looked like upper-class individuals visiting the Imperial Garden, blending silently into the crowd, standing beside the youth.

"You're here."

The elder raised his hand, signaling with an eye of respect.

Gu Jianlin assisted him, their interaction resembling a close-knit relationship between grandfather and grandson, seemingly harmonious.

"Has Uncle passed the test of the awakening bell?"

"Naturally, it was no difficulty for me."

"Were you not affected?"

"After all, I haven't done anything wrong, so the awakening bell's deterrent is like nothing."

"That's good."

Evidently a conversation between uncle and nephew, yet seemingly meant for others to overhear.

The former had no other thoughts, as he never considered himself an Ancient Supreme.

Respecting the elderly and loving the young is a traditional virtue of Eastern nations.

As for Old Master Si, he didn't think that way. Now they had to play the roles of a kind uncle and a dutiful nephew, he had to maintain the demeanor of one in power, which wasn't difficult for him, as the Si Family was one of the Six Major Families in the Dark World, and he was the undisputed elder Family Head.

The issue was that posturing before an Ancient Supreme was quite stressful.

Especially considering the things they were about to do, it made him even more nervous.

"I only give you this one chance to show the aura you had when you swallowed the Ancient God's Blood in front of me. If you fail this time, you might as well start considering where to buy a cemetery plot." Gu Jianlin said calmly.

This was a life-and-death moment, Old Master Si puffed out his chest, lifted his head, seemingly growing younger by fifty years in an instant, returning to his peak years, when he swaggered with hands in pockets, arrogant enough to forget his own surname.

Indeed, he was someone who had seen an Ancient Supreme and lived to tell the tale.

What was there to fear about Jiang Chunyang!

Gu Jianlin listened silently to the voice coming through the headset.

"I don't know how you managed to gain control of the Si Family, but if they can cooperate with you, it'd be ideal. You're young, after all, lacking in foundation. Your capacity doesn't allow you to negotiate terms with the Jiang Family. You need the Si Family to back you, thus making your actions more justified." No.5 stated.

"You give me the feeling of Taixu."

Gu Jianlin tapped the microphone, using the coded language he just learned today.

"You're adept at profiles, finding this isn't surprising."

No.5 responded: "Three years ago, there was a program update in Taixu, her logical thinking was programmed by me. Since the creator of Deep Space was the Red King, one can never be sure he wouldn't leave behind anything peculiar."

Gu Jianlin was slightly stunned, surprised to find out this was indeed a hacker prodigy.

The further they walked into the Imperial Garden, the fewer tourists there were.

Fathers holding children, elders with canes, artists with easels, and photographers carrying equipment all gradually faded away, seemingly vanishing into the night with the cool breeze, leaving no trace.

Clearly, they had stepped into a barrier visible only to Ascenders.

No.5 tapped the coded language, continuing to guide him: "Turn left ahead, and you'll meet an outside member, not part of our department's core team but an excellent informant nonetheless."

Chapter 782: The Secret of Qing and Chi (Part 2)

Gu Jianlin was a bit surprised when he suddenly heard a dog bark.

Under the cherry blossom tree, there was actually a wooden doghouse. A Golden Retriever barked at him, stood up on its legs, and ran over, wagging its fluffy big tail, seemingly quite excited.

This was a very old dog, its fur no longer bright and shiny but rather mottled and sparse, and it ran with a sense of old age as if it might fall apart at any moment. But it still held on, running over, its dark eyes gleaming with immense joy, even letting out a whimpering sound.

Anyone who has raised a dog knows that this is the behavior they show when rushing to their owner.

The subordinates of the Si Family wanted to shoo the dog away, but the old man stopped them.

"This is a precious pioneering dog. Back in the Ancient God Realm, they would occasionally make use of such dogs with a certain level of spirituality. Their Spiritual Gene also changed, allowing them to smell the scent of corpses over a dozen kilometers away. Many in the You Ying Group wanted to raise it, but were all refused."

Old Master Si sighed, "Who knows who raised this dog? It's been guarding this spot for eight years."

Gu Jianlin was stunned, because he found the Golden Retriever kept staring at him.

It even sniffed him closely.

Very quickly, the Golden Retriever was no longer excited. The dark eyes revealed a mournful emotion.

The tail stopped wagging and drooped listlessly.

It gloomily returned to its doghouse, rummaging among some dog toys for something.

Through the earphones came the sound of tapping keys, as No.5 explained, "This dog's name is A-Qi, and it had only one owner in its life. That person was your father. Professor Gu adopted it in the Ancient God Realm and finally left it here on a mission in Tokyo to guard something very important."

"Your father would occasionally visit it, but he hasn't come in four years."

Her tapping paused slightly, "Perhaps, it will never see him again."

Gu Jianlin had already guessed it.

Clearly, A-Qi mistook him for that man at first, which was why it was so excited initially.

Dogs have very sharp noses; eventually, it sensed the different scent.

After a while, A-Qi came to his feet with an old rag doll in its mouth.

Gu Jianlin squatted down, petted its head, and took the old rag doll.

A-Qi obediently squatted on the ground, panting.

Gu Jianlin fiddled with the rag doll, clearly feeling something inside it.

Incredibly, the Shadows actually entrusted a dog to guard something important.

"Looks like you're really an elite, senior."

Gu Jianlin shook hands with the Golden Retriever and softly asked, "Do you want to come with me?"

A-Qi shook its head, barked at him, and turned back to its doghouse.

Under the dim streetlights, its back was lonely and desolate, yet it seemed to find liberation.

Gu Jianlin was once again stunned; he hadn't expected to be refused.

"A-Qi said that exploring the Ancient God Realm with your father was the happiest and proudest time of its life. The task your father left it, it has completed. Now it wants to continue waiting for its owner to return, but if it can't wait, it will leave here to search for him itself."

The sound of tapping returned through the earphones.

Gu Jianlin was silent for a moment before replying, "Can you understand dog language?"

At this point, No.5 revealed a hint of a young girl's emotion: "Animals with spirituality can actually grasp human language; they just can't speak it. They have their own way of expressing themselves, which can be understood with careful observation. I've cared for it for two years, so of course, I can understand."

Gu Jianlin felt a mixture of emotions in his heart.

A-Qi most likely won't be able to wait for its owner.

As for the so-called leaving here, it's not leaving in the true sense.

But rather death.

"Woof."

From the dark doghouse came A-Qi's bark once more.

Gu Jianlin looked up, and the Golden Retriever's eyes seemed to shine in the darkness.

"A-Qi is blessing you. It waited many years for your father but was met by you. It doesn't go with you because it's already old and can't accompany you further, hoping you can take care of yourself."

No.5 was tapping out some code.

Gu Jianlin silently smiled.

For some reason, his eyes were a bit moist.

It was clearly just a dog, yet it gave him a sense of respect.

He had rarely respected anyone before.

"Is this what legacy means?"

He suddenly asked.

No.5 replied, "The Shadows is an organization that continues through faith. We never expand outward, only seek our spiritual continuation. For instance, the previous No.5 adopted me, and I became their legacy. Although Professor Gu never trained you, you still inherit everything and become his legacy."

"What was my father's code number?"

"Zero."

Gu Jianlin was silent for a long time, then asked, "What is your faith?"

No.5 answered without hesitation, "Whatever the President's faith is, that is our faith."

Gu Jianlin was quite surprised, "Do you trust the President so much?"

No.5 answered with pride, "Of course, the President is the greatest person in this world."

Suddenly, something occurred to Gu Jianlin, and he frowned, asking, "I remember there was an incident within the Ether Association involving a palace coup. My father was among the Night Watchers and was one of those who rebelled."

Chapter 783: The Secret of Qing and Chi (Part 3)

No.5 replied again: "Do you think your father willingly became a shadow? It was after that event that your father discovered the truth. If you hadn't taken that position, you would never understand the helplessness and burdens, and all the silent sacrifices she made for this world. The reason why this world still exists is because of her four centuries of silent dedication. Sadly, the world never thanked her, and wishes for her death."

Gu Jianlin fell into deep thought.

"The reason we all welcomed you wasn't just because of your father, but also because you found the Eternal Bone in the Sea of Eternal Life, which allowed the President to survive."

No.5 continued tapping out the code: "Next, I'm going to tell you why even though the President is so great, the world still wishes for her death. It's not because people are ignorantly evil, but because of interests."

Interests.

When Gu Jianlin heard this word, he had a bad premonition.

"You should be aware that the Golden Age of the Human World was initiated by Qing and Chi. Two centuries ago, Qing and Chi made a significant discovery in the depths of the universe. The original aim of the Deep Space plan was to explore the true secrets of the Ancient God Clan. For a divine-like race, two supreme laws are crucial: Candle Light Law and You Ying Law. These correspond to the ancient mythical two Holy Beasts."

A rhythmic tapping sound came from the headset: "Sun Candle and Taiyin Youying."

Gu Jianlin responded with a sound of acknowledgment.

"Until now, we haven't figured out why the two supreme laws of the Ancient God Clan can be practiced by humans, yet the Ancient God Clan themselves are unable to touch them. Including the two supreme Holy Objects, which were thought to be mythological records in Ancient God Clan texts. If it weren't for Qing and Chi's discovery, perhaps even today, people wouldn't know that the so-called Heavenly Person's Breathing is one of the two supreme laws."

The tapping rhythm from No.5 became more rapid: "The subsequent discovery of the You Ying Law further verified the opposition of the two supreme laws. The problem is, both supreme laws have their issues. Research shows that the inheritance of the two laws is almost identical to the Ancient God Clan."

Gu Jianlin suddenly recalled a paper he read on the Deep Space Official Website.

The Ancient God Clan has an evolution chain.

The universe's earliest beings were the Ancient Supremes, who spawned their own clans.

They use their own bones and blood to create the Primordials.

Primordials then use their Divine Essence to create the Ancestors.

This forms a complete evolution chain.

Of course, some powerful Ancestors can obtain the Ancient Supremes' bones and blood.

Thus evolving into a Primordial.

But no Primordial can ever become an Ancient Supreme.

If the inheritance of Candle Light and You Ying laws is like the Ancient God Clan, then there's an issue here.

Gu Jianlin pondered for a moment: "You mean, the earliest practitioners of the supreme laws essentially started an evolution chain. In this chain, her position is the highest, equivalent to an Ancient Supreme. To pass it on to the next generation, she would have to use her own bones and blood."

This time No.5 remained silent for a long moment.

"Your logic is very meticulous, no wonder you gained the President's favor."

No.5 tapped out a response: "Your analysis is indeed correct, but not entirely. Now I want to ask you, what is the real difference between humans and the Ancient God Clan?"

Gu Jianlin thought of the answer in just a second.

"Lifespan!"

"Yes, human lifespan is limited, whereas the Ancient Supremes are eternal. No matter what the Ancient Primordials do, they can never become true Supremes, this is an undeniable iron law. Just like how you're still living, no one can say you're dead, this iron law is absolute."

No.5 explained: "Humans are different, everyone will die, even someone as strong as the President is no exception."

Gu Jianlin felt his blood turn cold, and even his hand tapping the microphone trembled slightly: "In other words, the President can be replaced as long as someone can usurp her power."

"Yes, the President herself doesn't mind because she doesn't want to use her own bones and blood to create beings weaker than her. For the Human World to continue, someone must replace her."

No.5 replied: "What truly disheartens her is that some people can't wait."

Gu Jianlin curiously asked: "Who?"

The tapping sound from No.5 became heavier: "The Red King."

"Why the Red King?"

Gu Jianlin walked up the stone steps in the park, an ancient red torii stood above him.

Deep in the Imperial Garden was an ancient shrine, wind chimes swayed in the evening breeze.

Priests in red robes stood on either side of the steps, all of them were Jiang Family retainers seen the night before.

The faint sound of an ancient bell's roar echoed.

It was the awakening bell.

Inside the old shrine arose shrill wails, evidently from those once betrayed by the Dark World exposing their secrets under the bell's intimidation, executed on the spot, punished to death.

Old Master Si squinted, playing with a copper coin, and said lightly: "How insane."

Gu Jianlin nodded slightly, sensing rhythms of life fading away.

"Because the Red King lost to the King of Qing."

No.5 said: "The Red King couldn't stand at the end of an evolution chain, so he sought other methods."

Chapter 784: Gu Jianlin's Way

Gu Jianlin felt as if he had been struck by lightning, an enormous fear exploded in his mind. If not for his strong self-control, he might have lost his composure at this moment.

Two hundred years ago, Qing and Chi fought to the death at Buzhou Mountain. In the end, this earth-shattering battle concluded with Qing's victory. Ultimately, Qing achieved his wish and mastered the ultimate You Ying Law, standing at the end of an Evolution Chain. Because of this, he could exhibit Quasi-Supreme Level combat power and break free from the shackles of the Heaven's Punishment.

Heaven's Punishment was originally created as a weapon to counter the Catastrophe Level.

In fact, Qing had already transcended the scope of Catastrophes because Quasi-Supreme Level signifies one thing.

That is, the King of Qing had already surpassed the Primordial Ancestor.

The Red King was the loser in this dispute, but if you think carefully, a question emerges.

Though both stood at the top of the Evolution Chain as the Strongest, there was a difference between the President and the King of Qing.

"That's the problem. I think you should have understood. The President holds almost absolute control over the Evolution Chain of the Heavenly Person. Every Heavenly Person can only grasp the Candle Light Law with her permission. In nearly two hundred years, only Skylark was the Alien Species, and to this day, we don't know how she did it."

Gu Jianlin suddenly had a bold idea.

That is, these amphibious creatures could break the limits of the Evolution Chain.

To become the most powerful existence outside the Evolution Chain!

He attempted to call out to the bad woman within him, but unfortunately received no response.

Skylark was probably asleep.

No.5 tapped a frequency, continuing to speak to him: "The King of Qing doesn't have absolute control over his Evolution Chain. Most Evolvers are in the Dark World. Therefore, we think the King of Qing must be missing something crucial. That something should be Chi's legacy."

Gu Jianlin nodded slightly, this speculation was quite reasonable.

At that time, Qing and Chi had jointly recreated the You Ying Law. Naturally, after turning against each other, they would hide something from one another.

No.5 continued: "This is our most important mission while lurking in Tokyo: to find the Red King's legacy. It can prevent the You Ying Group from further destroying this world and also balance the King of Qing."

Gu Jianlin remained silent for a while; indeed, the Ether Association was still wary of his teacher.

His teacher didn't seem to want to maintain order either; he had his views on this world.

Though caught in the middle, he didn't feel too troubled.

The previous generation's matters had nothing to do with him.

He just wished that everyone around him could find peace and joy.

If the grievances of the previous generation couldn't be resolved, then eliminate the conflict itself.

"As to why we think Chi did it on purpose, if you've truly studied this person, you'd find that he's filled with malice and mockery towards the world. If you were to find a word to describe the King of Qing, without a doubt, it would be aloof. And if you were to find a word for the Red King, it would surely be vile."

No.5's breathing seemed to become somewhat heavy, the tapping frequency quickened: "The Red King was both a genius and a madman, talented, elegant, and conceited—apparently passionate but in reality, cold-blooded to the extreme. No one in the world could ever fathom his thoughts. He didn't love anyone and could sacrifice anyone to achieve his goals."

"The Red King's cold-bloodedness was horrifying, even sacrificing his own fiancée; that girl's family became experimental sacrifices simply because their sensitivity to the You Ying Law was keener than ordinary people."

"His mentor, his teammates, his family, and his enemies—all without exception were his tools. If you're of no value to him, you'll die a miserable death, and if you're of value, you might die even more miserably. He enjoyed the process of toying with the world, even though he claimed he didn't want to watch the world burn."

Gu Jianlin tried to construct the image of this pair of senior brothers in his mind.

The king of Qing's aloofness and arrogance, the Red King's madness and vileness.

Qing and Chi were like two opposing deities, each casting their shadow over half the world.

"Do you think the Red King lost on purpose?"

"That's very possible because he doesn't really care about his own life."

"A madman who spares no costs to achieve his goals, what exactly does he want to do?"

"That's precisely what we need to find out."

Silence lingered for a moment.

"If the Red King is such a person, then even if he's truly dead, his malice still shrouds the world, and the Heaven's Punishment Meteor won't be his only contingency. For him, this is too simple." Gu Jianlin also tapped the microphone; it's better to err on the side of caution with this matter, treat it seriously.

"After the Red King's death, his legacy fell into the hands of his biological father."

No.5 explained: "Jiang Chunyang naturally inherited everything from his son, becoming the sole ruler of the Dark World. For two hundred years, he has continuously governed the Dark World. No one knows what he is plotting. Do not underestimate Jiang Chunyang; the older they get, the more dangerous they are, as they emit an aura of decay."

"Like hyenas on the prairie, always coveting you."

This little girl was only about ten years old, yet her rhetoric could give off a blood-curdling scent: "Don't bleed in his presence, or he'll reveal his most ferocious and greedy side, devouring your flesh and blood."

Chapter 785: Gu Jianlin's Way (Part 2)

Gu Jianlin thought to himself that it was indeed like negotiating with a tiger, as he weighed the worn-out doll in his hand.

"What's inside this?"

He calmly asked, "A Qi guarded this for so many years before giving it to me; it should be very important."

No. 5 responded succinctly, "Petals of the Ghostly Glowing Lotus."

Gu Jianlin's hand, holding the worn-out doll, recoiled as if electrified.

Back then, Xu Fu once told him on Penglai Fairy Island that one of the highest symbols of the Ancient God Clan, the Sun Candle, corresponded to the ultimate Holy Object, which was that towering Golden Divine Tree.

Then theoretically, the other highest symbol of the Ancient God Clan, Taiyin Youying, should also correspond to something.

Now he already knew the answer.

The Ghostly Glowing Lotus!

"This is something your father obtained through mortal danger many times over. It's said that the Ghostly Glowing Lotus doesn't even exist on Earth; its petals were brought by meteors from beyond, making it a nonrenewable resource. The petals can lift the Curse of the Candle Light Divine Tree, and you need to use it to gain the trust of the Jiang Family."

No. 5 eventually typed in a series of cryptic codes, then said, "Good luck."

The communication terminated.

Gu Jianlin put the worn-out doll in his pocket and walked slowly up the long stone steps, following the bell through the massive red torii gate, somehow finding himself alone.

The subordinates of the Si Family, including Old Master Si, seemed to have vanished into thin air.

He guessed that he might have entered an Alchemy Domain, and it was still the awakening bell causing mischief.

This was an isolated time and space, and those traveling with him had all scattered.

If he hadn't had spiritual immunity, he would probably be seeing endless illusions right now.

Amidst the silence, heartrending wails could be heard, and one could feel the Life Rhythms fading away.

The ancient shrine was already a river of blood, and at the end of the stone steps stood dilapidated bronze pillars, where shackled prisoners with battered bodies were tied up, whipped by the Red Priest with a Blood Whip.

Crack!

The head of a prisoner was struck off by the Blood Whip.

The head rolled like a ball and fell to the ground.

"Useless waste, being used by others without knowing anything."

The Red Priest flicked the Blood Whip, speaking coldly, "Sixty Million Dollars could buy you, but how can you take your wealth with you once you're dead? Look closely; this is the price of betraying the Dark World!"

Gu Jianlin looked down at the head with eyes that couldn't rest in peace, then looked up at the shrine.

A heavy bronze bell was suspended in mid-air, rendering the prisoners incapable of resisting through its sound.

"Heh, another one has come."

It was a one-eyed old man, kneeling in prayer to the heavy bronze bell with devout sincerity.

Noticing another person arriving, he grinned, "Hope you're clean."

Besides him, many others were kneeling, seemingly never having committed betrayal, all praying devoutly to the bell, like pilgrims, swearing to dedicate their lives to their master.

"Kneel."

The Red Priest looked at him coldly, saying indifferently, "This is the awakening bell. If there's a Devil in your heart, then the evil spirits will have nowhere to hide under the bell. If your soul is pure, then swear before the bell, pledge your eternal loyalty to the darkness, and vow never to betray in this life."

"Don't try to resist."

His voice was hoarse like iron scraping: "Young Master Chu Ge is watching outside."

Gu Jianlin instinctively frowned, thinking even such words about swearing allegiance to the Dark World could be uttered.

Loyalty to the old ghost of the Jiang Family might be more fitting.

He glanced at the people kneeling before the awakening bell.

It was obviously impossible to expect him to kneel like some foolish believer.

He never believed in the existence of Gods in this world.

Because the definition of a god is omniscient and omnipotent.

Even Ancient Supremes have things they cannot achieve, so they are not true Gods.

Not worthy of faith.

"Sorry, I refuse."

His eyes devoid of any emotion, he said coldly.

The Red Priest nodded with satisfaction, then reacted, "What did you say?"

Gu Jianlin repeated, "I said, I refuse."

Not only the Red Priest but even the believers kneeling before the awakening bell stared at him in astonishment.

According to the Shadow's plan, Gu Jianlin was supposed to easily shed any suspicion on himself, then offer a solution to the Curse of the Candle Light Divine Tree, thereby completely gaining the Jiang Family's trust and uncovering its secrets.

But he was never one to act strictly according to plan.

Therefore, he had an alternate plan for emergencies.

"Is the awakening bell all-powerful?"

Gu Jianlin suddenly asked, "Does the awakening bell work on everyone? Can the awakening bell make the President of the Ether Association speak the truth? Can the awakening bell make the King of Qing reveal their innermost secrets?"

"There never has been anything absolute in this world."

He spoke indifferently, "Step aside; I want to see the Family Head of the Jiang Family."

The Red Priest's voice turned stern and fierce, "Is Old Master someone you can just see?"

He suddenly drew a long sword, the tachi emanating a chilling cold light, breaking through the air with a shrill wail.

Ghost Slayer Path, Sixth-Order Soul Master!

Such a decisive strike, the trajectory of the blade's fall completely invisible, only a star-like blade's flash, this is the Iaido Slash within the Divine Speed Domain, like late cherry blossoms, grim and poetic.

His Sword Skill, having gone through countless refinements, was theoretically capable of instantly killing anyone below the Sixth Rank.

Chapter 786: Gu Jianlin's Way (3)

This is the power of the Ghost Slayer Path; if you are weaker than me, you don't stand a chance.

Clang, that was the sound of the blade being blocked.

Gu Jianlin held the blood-red ghost knife in reverse grip, expressionless. The crimson blood Qi flowed along the blade as he easily parried the horizontal slash from the tachi, causing invisible ripples in the Void.

"I know what you're thinking; why hasn't my blade broken? If everyone thought about problems as you do, only using common sense, then this world would be absurd and laughable. You are trapped in the cocoon of thought you set up for yourself, finding a ridiculous belief to worship, trying to cover up your fear."

Gu Jianlin glanced at the ancient and imposing awakening bell, including the believers kneeling before the ancient bell: "Unfortunately, are such people really useful? They cannot help you solve problems, nor can they save you in critical moments."

The Red Priest was furious to the extreme, exerting all his strength to press down the blade, attempting to overwhelm him with power.

A terrifying blood color appeared in Gu Jianlin's pupil. The dormant spiritual gene unleashed an ancient and majestic aura, like a floodgate opening, washing through the human body. Endless power flowed

through blood vessels and meridians, like a transformation from inside out, allowing him to break the barrier of species and reach the realm of the Ancient God.

A blood-red Dragon Horn, crimson vertical pupils, and a protruding brow bone, resembling an Evil Spirit.

The blade trembled and hummed, like another ancient bell echoing with a roar.

He suddenly shook his blade, releasing immense power from his wrist.

The Red Priest was shockingly forced back, his wrist numb, with the web of his thumb splitting.

Gu Jianlin coldly pressed forward, swinging the blade with a brutal, unskilled hack. His movements were so large and uninhibited, yet the crossing blade lights almost overlapped, flickering out in the darkness.

Faced with this wild Sword Force, the Red Priest could only raise his blade to block, yet each block forced him to endure an incomparably majestic force, nearly shattering his entire skeletal structure, almost unable to hold his own blade.

At this moment, Gu Jianlin missed a slash, the blade tearing through space and leaving a dark scar.

A harsh tearing noise approached from behind.

The Red Priest used teleportation to appear behind him, attempting to decapitate him with a single stroke.

With a crack, a dark, harsh blade scar tore through space and time, exposing the Universe's primordial darkness.

Gu Jianlin's body was severed, yet no blood spilled, for what was cut was only the afterimage he left from his teleportation. His true form had already vanished the instant the blade attacked, his Divine Speed Force like a ghost's!

The Red Priest's strike hit empty air, landing confusedly.

Before he could even react, he was engulfed by a massive shadow.

In the old shrine of the Shinjuku Imperial Garden, the late cherry blossoms fell as Gu Jianlin descended like a hawk on prey, gripping the blood-red ghost knife with both hands, the blade erupting with a violent arc, the flash of the blade resembling lightning!

With a crack, the Red Priest's back was torn, nearly cleaving him in two!

Blood gushed like a waterfall.

The priest knelt on the ground, a look of terror frozen on his face.

This injury wasn't fatal, but he had lost.

Lost to someone of a lower Rank.

Gu Jianlin casually flicked the blade, the incoming blood being cut off, not a single drop splattering on him.

The prisoners gaped in shock, even the believers forgot to breathe.

Only the remaining priests realized the danger, drawing their blades to attack without hesitation.

Blades flashed from all directions.

The murderous intent was intense as a tsunami, threatening to drown him at any moment.

Gu Jianlin looked at the advancing priests, casually brushing off the cherry blossoms from his shoulder.

The Shadows had briefed him in advance; he knew what to do next.

"I know this is an Alchemy Matrix, an independent pocket space. Each independent pocket space has a core, and the person guarding the core is you. I don't know how to break the array, so I can only deal with the one guarding it. Between Superdimensional Levels, the difference of each Rank is not significant."

Gu Jianlin walked past him with the blood-red ghost knife, ignoring the approaching priests.

"So there's no need to take it to heart."

Facing the heavy bronze bell, he threw the Jiuyin outward!

With a boom.

His voice was drowned out by the enormous noise.

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In the old shrine of Shinjuku Imperial Garden, Old Master Si faced the toughest moment of his life.

"I believe you are making things difficult for the Si Family."

This old man sat cross-legged on the ground, heavily dropping his teacup: "Our Si Family's people have been forcibly detained in the illusion by you. Some indeed harbored schemes, but none to the extent of betrayal. Why must they also be punished? I need an explanation, or there will be no end to this today's issue."

Tonight was a night of Jiang Family's rage, as the five great families were subjected to forced investigation, daring to be angry yet not speaking out.

Even direct relatives, detained due to Jiang Family's suspicions, wisely remained silent.

Only hoping that the wrath would not spill over onto themselves.

Except for one family.

Not only did they refuse to remain silent, they even dared to rise in revolt!

This family was the Si Family!

"You know very well what the Si Family has done."

Jiang Chuge, clad in a white suit, sat cross-legged opposite him, pouring himself a cup of hot tea, saying expressionlessly: "The Si Family once collaborated with The Order of the Hidden for a fragment of the Qilin Wedge. We still do not know if that fragment is in your possession."

Chapter 787: Gu Jianlin's Way (Part 4)

He raised his eyes: "Your family's suspicion is the greatest, so a thorough investigation is necessary."

Old Master Si sneered: "Investigation? I think it's a public vendetta, isn't it?"

With a bang, he slammed the table: "I want to see Jiang Family Master!"

Jiang Chuge looked at him in surprise and frowned, saying: "No way."

This elderly man seemed absolutely deranged.

Grandfather's state could almost be described as madness.

Not to mention whether someone of your status can simply demand to meet.

Even if you do meet, you may not survive.

"This marriage was personally drafted by the Think Tank, and Miss Yue Ji's excellence is evident to all. Our Si Family is willing to put past conflicts aside and welcome her into the family, why not? Your Jiang Family has never fulfilled any obligations to her, and even some have suppressed her, trying to hinder her growth."

Old Master Si snorted: "Although our Si Family has done similar things, now we sincerely express our remorse and have provided certain compensations, which Miss Yue Ji has gladly accepted."

He lifted his eyes, looking at the silent woman beneath the statue: "The Jiang Family doing this shows a lack of magnanimity."

Jiang Chuge squinted his eyes, realizing today the old man seemed somewhat different.

Daring to accuse the Jiang Family of not fulfilling its duties to that young girl.

And doing so right in front of that woman.

Jiang Mingyan, a member of Dusk, codename Demon Night.

Jiang Chuge did not know much about this mysterious Aunt, but many in the Jiang Family feared her.

Today he was supposed to be the one guarding the awakening bell.

For some reason, Jiang Mingyan also came here, staring silently at the statue in the shrine.

"I understand what you mean."

After noticing Aunt had no reaction, Jiang Chuge said indifferently: "Your most beloved nephew is still trapped in the illusion, and I can understand your feelings as a parent. But I must say, this is the rule set by Grandfather; if he cannot pass the test of the awakening bell, he will never come out."

He paused: "Even if Grandfather met you, he wouldn't agree to your request."

Outside the shrine stood an antique bronze bell, and the bell's sound echoed in the night.

Amidst overlapping space domains, there was another identical shrine.

Many bloody things would happen there.

Shinjuku Imperial Garden is a nice park, considered a treasure for leisure and vacation.

They didn't want it stained with blood.

Old Master Si was silent for a moment, a strange smile appearing on his aged face.

"No, you've misunderstood."

He said calmly: "I wasn't making a request just now, I was telling you that today I will see Jiang Family Master. Whatever happens, I must see him, and I will see him."

At this moment, he revealed a trace of arrogance of a superior, his voice extremely indifferent: "I'm just informing you so you can be prepared. Miss Yue Ji is already on her way; this is her first time meeting her maternal grandfather, after all, her marriage needs the blessing of elders."

At this moment, Jiang Mingyan turned around in the shadows, her sharp Eagle Eye seemingly wanting to pierce through him.

Jiang Chuge was also stunned.

"Secondly, I am not worried about my nephew not being able to come out of the illusion."

Old Master Si turned and looked at the bronze bell: "Watch closely."

With a boom, the awakening bell exploded violently!

Space twisted fiercely, and someone walked out carrying a knife, its blade still dripping with blood.

"Sorry, this way of meeting may be a bit rough, and caused some property damage."

The young man said calmly: "This interrogation method of yours is indeed a bit too elementary."

Chapter 788: The Man in the Coffin, Red King!

In the silent universe, a gigantic satellite spirals along its predetermined trajectory, locking onto the Yingzhou Islands in the Northwest Pacific, then to Tokyo, renowned as the world's foremost metropolis in the heart of the Kantō Plain, and even to Shinjuku District.

From a distance of twenty thousand kilometers, the entire fifty-six hectares of the Shinjuku Imperial Garden can be seen, vendors selling glow sticks, couples taking pictures under cherry blossom trees, women soothing crying babies, old men feeding fish by the pond, and a boy climbing the steps, his silhouette disappearing behind the red torii.

No.5 reported in a youthful, clear voice over the encrypted communication channel: "The target has entered the barrier of the awakening bell, the mission is officially starting. According to the plan, the target will be trapped in the barrier for ten to twenty minutes. Old Master Si will negotiate with the Jiang Family, which might dispel the suspicions of the old ghost of the Jiang Family."

No.1 was silent for a moment and asked: "Isn't it a bit humiliating for him?"

No.3 replied: "Everyone who becomes a Shadow has to learn to endure humiliation, it's a necessary process, we all went through it. Some have to play a mistress beside the big figure in Mo Country, while others often have to pretend to be dirty beggars. Some will break an arm for the mission, and there are still some who haven't come out of prison. For those who could lose their lives at any moment, dignity doesn't mean much."

"I just hope his spirit immunity is reliable enough, at least able to withstand the intimidation of the bell without exposing his secrets, otherwise years of painstaking efforts will all be for nothing."

He spoke nonchalantly, but his words abruptly ended.

Because the satellite detected a fierce distortion of space and time, the red torii seemed twisted into a vortex, accompanied by the explosive shattering of the bronze ancient bell, one could almost feel the shock burst through the screen.

Such a breathtaking sight tightened the heart, as if it was being gripped.

Shadows from all corners of the world fell silent.

"Mission failed?"

Someone muttered.

The promised future ace, the President's most cherished Crown Prince.

How come the mission can be declared a failure just as it started.

"No, the mission hasn't failed, it's just beginning."

Long-silenced No.4 spoke quietly: "You don't know him well enough. I've watched him grow since his debut, this child will not act according to your plan, nor will he walk the path you paved for him. You will never guess what he will do, but there's nothing he can't achieve if he sets his mind to it."

He paused: "I believe he can complete the mission... in his own way."

The communication abruptly ended.

In the depths of the Shinjuku Imperial Garden's Shrine, Gu Jianlin stood at the end of the stone steps, wielding a bloodstained ghost knife, while blood-red cherry blossoms fell like rain, mixing with the shards of the shattered ancient bell and dropping to the ground.

Not only did he emerge from the barrier, but eighteen priests in red also appeared.

When the virtual and real worlds overlapped, these superdimensional-level priests appeared all around the Shrine, pinned to the walls by their own swords, blood gushing out, flowing along the cracks in the stone bricks.

It was clear someone crushed them in an overwhelming fashion, creating this highly religious scene.

Besides that, there were also followers who yielded to the awakening bell, still maintaining their kneeling posture. However, they weren't kneeling before the lord of the Dark World, but the boy wearing a golden mask in front of them.

The barrier of the awakening bell, had shattered.

Jiang Chuge looked at the boy at the Shrine entrance, his tranquil eyes bursting out a glint of cold light, instinctively reaching for the sword box beside him, the ancient sword inside vibrating slightly.

"I said before, I have no worries about my nephew being trapped in the barrier of the awakening bell."

Old Master Si raised his head and chest, hands behind his back: "Just an awakening bell, it can't trap him."

Gu Jianlin shook his slightly sore wrist, he had been exercising vigorously within the barrier just now, the intense close combat with knives causing his breathing and heart rate to accelerate, the scorching blood surging in his chest.

The Ancient God's Breath had subsided, yet his eyes still carried a crimson hue.

He glanced around, emotionless eyes.

The young man seated in the Shrine looked familiar, the leading figure of the Jiang Family's younger generation.

Jiang Chuge, known as Little Rhine.

As for the woman standing in the shadow of the statue, he was sure he had never met her.

It was just her sharp Eagle Eye, he wouldn't forget once he had seen it.

The biological mother of the Su sisters, the Jiang Family's former genius, Jiang Mingyan.

Jiang Chuge gazed at the boy with the golden mask, calmly saying: "In fact, I've never heard of your name before, nor do I know when you rose to fame, seems Old Master Si hid you well. People like you should continue to hide and not show their sharpness."

"Let's not mention the matter of the engagement, you shouldn't have destroyed the awakening bell anyway."

He said expressionlessly: "According to the rules, I should kill you now."

Jiang Mingyan said nothing, just coldly stared at the boy.

It was her first chance to observe him closely.

He really looked like a big boy, just that his demeanor was too cold and aloof, even carrying a murderous air.

Chapter 789: The Man in the Coffin, Red King! (Part 2)

No one knows how he broke the illusion of the awakening bell.

But just by looking at him, you would feel that no cage in this world could confine him.

Except for the girl he loved.

"What was the purpose of the Jiang Family activating the awakening bell?"

Old Master Si asked calmly with his hands behind his back.

Jiang Chuge answered calmly, "To test the loyalty of the Dark World."

"No."

Someone interrupted him softly, "You are searching for a way to lift the curse of the Candle Light Divine Tree."

As though thunder roared in silence, these words exploded like thunder in the shrine.

When Jiang Chuge heard the word 'curse', his hand fell on the Sword Box.

Jiang Mingyan raised her head, her sharp gaze seemed to pierce through the young man.

"The number of traitors within the You Ying Group doesn't matter anymore. What matters is that someone wants to find some clues about the curse from them to discover a way to save themselves. Talking about loyalty in the Dark World is the greatest joke, were we brought together initially because of belief?"

Gu Jianlin sheathed his sword indifferently, observing the ancient shrine, he said coldly, "I think not. The Dark World is held together by interests. Man dies for wealth, as birds for food, how can loyalty be discussed?"

"The loyalty that Jiang Family Master desires is also based on fear."

He said softly, "He needs others to fear him, like a god high above, eternally worshipped by his followers. The problem is, gods are perfect, they can have no flaws, they cannot lose."

The indifferent voice echoed through the ancient shrine.

As if talking to himself, yet also speaking for someone else to hear.

"Even losing once would cause the fall from the altar, being devoured by millions of followers."

Gu Jianlin shook his head and said, "Perhaps a few might still hold fear for you, continue to be loyal, but such people are of no help to you, they cannot help you solve problems."

This statement was clear in its meaning.

I am not loyal.

Thus, I broke the barrier of the awakening bell and emerged with the strongest stance.

But I am useful to you.

"With Jiang Family Master's ability, he can certainly kill me."

Gu Jianlin walked to the crimson wooden table, gently placed an old wooden box on it, and said calmly, "Of course, he surely has many ways to torture my soul, but I believe he won't do that, because he wants too much to survive, wants too much to break free from this curse, and I am the only one who can save him."

He gently pushed the box forward, seriously saying, "Today, I want to know how much Jiang Family Master's life is worth, what price he is willing to pay to exchange for what I hold."

Jiang Chuge silently turned his head, squinting at the old wooden box.

Being at the Holy Land Level, handling this young man before him would be a piece of cake.

Yet his hand on the Sword Box felt overwhelmingly heavy.

Like turning to stone, unable to move an inch.

Because he dared not bet.

Jiang Mingyan remained silent, for she knew her father was watching, everything that happened in the shrine couldn't escape that tyrant's eyes, she could only silently sweat, muttering recklessly.

In the oppressive silence, time and space seemed to distort together, black mist spread.

"Commendable courage."

An hoarse voice broke through the silence, like a monster gnashing teeth and sucking blood.

The first to disappear was the wooden box on the table.

Gu Jianlin was also swallowed by the black mist, completely vanished from the shrine.

From start to finish, he did not resist, just sat calmly on the cushion, like a silent statue.

Finally, Old Master Si squinted his cloudy eyes, playing with the Copper Coin in his hand, divining fortune and misfortune.

In the end, he too was engulfed by the mist, vanished without a trace.

Jiang Mingyan heard her father's old voice, her eyes subtly changed.

"Come to the old residence, bring your daughter."

The old voice sounded like a strange noise from a broken bellows.

It wasn't these words that truly shocked her, but the legendary old residence.

It was an annex in the Shinjuku Imperial Garden, where only the Jiang Family Master could freely come and go, an absolute forbidden place for others, impossible to set foot in without permission.

Jiang Chuge also heard his grandfather's old voice, his eyes narrowed.

"You are no longer needed here. Go gather excellent young people. The Qilin Immortal Palace's second-dimensional gate has been opened, it is time to fulfill the sacred mission, to find that Divine Ruins... "

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When the black mist receded like the tide, the clear lake reflected the cold moonlight, and late cherry blossoms fluttered.

By the lake pavilion, the old man rubbed paint vigorously on the canvas, he was so decrepit, his hunched back nearly breaking, his thin and withered body could hardly support the black kimono, resembling a mummy.

Gray hair hung loose, fluttering endlessly in the wind.

He looked like a madman.

Old Master Si gazed at him across the quiet path, also stunned by the overwhelming madness and pressure, if not for having received the reinforcement of the Ancient Supreme, he would have knelt down immediately, his spirit shattered.

Dark clouds gathered in the sky, the waning moon swallowed by mist, with faint flashes of lightning and thunder.

In the instant of flashing lightning, the old man's ghostly face was illuminated.

Gu Jianlin silently gazed across the stone table at his fierce, terrifying face, his skin sagged completely, wrinkles etched like deep rings of age, even distorting his features, like a screaming ghost.

Chapter 790: The Man in the Coffin, Red King! (Part 3)

The distance was too close, and the oppressive force, like a sinister wind, came rushing towards him.

Fortunately, he had undergone the baptism of the Supreme Level, allowing him to remain calm in the face of danger.

Without a doubt, this was Jiang Chunyang.

A pioneer of the Human World four hundred years ago, and now the true ruler of the Dark World.

Jiang Chunyang continued to wield his paintbrush on the canvas, as if the paint was his fury, wantonly venting.

From start to finish, he never averted his gaze, seemingly immersed in the world of the painting.

Suddenly, he lifted his withered right hand, reaching for the golden mask on the young man's face.

"If you take off my mask, you will die."

Gu Jianlin said coldly, "Whose life is worth more, yours or mine?"

Jiang Chunyang's extended right hand halted at his forehead, gently tapping the mask with his index finger, rasping, "Quite a character you are, knowing what to use to bargain with me."

"When did the Si Family produce someone as bold and insightful as you? Truly interesting."

He withdrew his hand, sneering, "What secrets does your face hide?"

Gu Jianlin remained silent. Of course, he had disguised his face, with a layer of simulated skin made from an Alchemy Mud Mask, even injecting special agents to cause swelling and change his features.

But to be safe, he still did not want to reveal his true face.

The people of the Dark World tended to believe in divination more.

With the golden mask and the Lock of Nonexistence, it was already enough.

"Whether or not I remove the mask makes no difference to me, but if I let you handle me arbitrarily, then in this transaction, I am already at a disadvantage, and I'll definitely suffer."

Gu Jianlin continuously analyzed his personality profile.

His brutality, his madness, his cruelty, his cold-blooded nature.

As if in his mind, there was also a blank canvas, sketched with a ghostly face by paint.

Based on the information he had gathered, coupled with the sketched personality profile.

He knew very well what the old man in front of him wanted.

"You are very brave."

Jiang Chunyang continued to stare at the canvas, rasping, "Not many dare to transact with me."

Gu Jianlin glanced at the wooden box on the stone table, saying indifferently, "That's because they're of no use to you."

Bringing out something essential for survival like this, by conventional wisdom, he'd be considered crazy.

In actuality, he wasn't crazy.

Because Jiang Chunyang would not act rashly.

The old man didn't even touch the wooden box.

Yet his peripheral gaze never strayed a mere inch from it.

"It seems you really want to know what's inside this box."

Gu Jianlin allowed himself to relax, propping his elbows on the stone table, fingers interlaced: "Sadly, nothing has leaked out, so even you dare not mess with it, for fear of losing your lifeline."

Jiang Chunyang's hand gripping the brush paused, seemingly unconcerned about the tone used to address him, a suppressed painful sound emanating from his throat, he said in a low voice, "Where did it come from?"

Gu Jianlin answered seriously, "The first layer of the Qilin Immortal Palace, the Returning Burial Forest."

Jiang Chunyang was silent for a moment, a fierce light flickering in his ferocious eyes.

This was the narrative Gu Jianlin had prepared long ago.

The Si Family had once collaborated with The Order of the Hidden to explore the Returning Burial Forest.

Afterward, Si Wei'an had always denied obtaining anything from the Returning Burial Forest, but no one believed him.

Now, Si Wei'an was dead.

If there truly was something in the Returning Burial Forest, it could only end up in the hands of the Si Family.

"If you're lying to me, you will die a horrible death."

Jiang Chunyang thrust the brush forcefully, as if seeing his mortal enemy, ready to pierce his heart.

The reason he said such a thing was because he considered the source believable.

Temporarily, no problem could be seen.

But he was a vicious old wolf, always needing to threaten his opponent.

As for why he didn't resort to theft, the reason was simple.

Because Gu Jianlin wasn't a fool. Since he dared to bring it out, he wasn't afraid of robbery.

Anything related to the Ancient God Clan must be approached cautiously.

Even if you've obtained a treasure, using it incorrectly would still lead to eternal damnation.

"The effects of the roots of the Candle Light Divine Tree must, of course, be neutralized with petals of the Ghostly Glowing Lotus."

Gu Jianlin raised his eyes, enunciating clearly, "I think you should understand."

Ghostly Glowing Lotus.

For the first time, Jiang Chunyang turned his head, staring intently with eyes that seemed to burn with Ghost Fire.

After a long silence.

"The Moon Princess is yours."

He licked his lips, rasping, "From now on, there will be no interference in your marriage to her, the Jiang Family's suppression of the Si Family will cease, and when you ascend to the Sixth Rank, you will be

given a Holy Corpse to aid in mastering the Primordial Return. If you survive continuously, you will become one of the Dusk."

After a moment.

Gu Jianlin, unfazed by his terrifying gaze, calmly said, "Not enough."

Jiang Chunyang tilted his head, like a monster gazing at a helpless lamb, ready to devour it in one bite.

"The Moon Princess is indeed good, but how could your life be worth only these?"

Gu Jianlin pushed the wooden box in front of him: "I want to share your secret."

When he made this gesture, his gaze suddenly landed outside the lush cherry blossom courtyard.

At the far end of the ancient courtyard, there was a Shrine, countless bronze wind chimes swaying in the wind without a sound, ancient statues scattered all around, talisman paper with spells affixed to their foreheads.

The Shrine was like an abyss of darkness, illuminated only when lightning flashed, revealing a faint corner.

It was a sarcophagus wrapped in golden chains.

When Gu Jianlin saw this sarcophagus, an incredible thought flashed instinctively through his mind.

Because it was so absurd, he forgot it in an instant.

"You are so bold, yet fearful of this thing?"

Jiang Chunyang actually grinned, a demonic and madly captivating smile: "That's right, you should be afraid, because even I fear, sometimes feeling that he will push open the coffin and come back to life."

For the first time, Gu Jianlin felt his heart clenched, his breathing rhythm disrupted.

"The one lying in the coffin is my son, Jiang Yanli."

Jiang Chunyang licked his parched lips, his eyes playful and malicious: "That is my secret."