

# 1

Title: The Guy

Actions have consequences—Imagine that.

Countless men confronted Williams Logic, reasonably so. It's not easy sleeping with other's wives and daughters before running off. However, in his defense, he never forced a single soul. Also, it's not like those women happen to fall upon his dick. They knew what they were doing.

Besides, Williams doesn't possess a craze to speed run his way through STDs by sleeping around. Who wants that?

If it wasn't his urge to 'collect' things through his encouraging trait...

He sighs.

Well, he fucked up, didn't he?

Nobody told him to try and woo the Sun Priestess for the wanted Platinum Achievement—his first and possibly last one—if the soles of his boots sliding past the edge of a skyscraper's railing signal anything. Again, in his defense, Traits are mysterious, and he could have never imagined the cute little thing having a trait to make even a dishonest lover like him honest once he deposited a fresh load inside her.

The post-nut clarity was different on this one!

He just exclaimed things out.

However, Williams didn't fault that cute stuff. Oh, he knows a bitch when he fucks one, and Priestess wasn't it.

After all, everyone has a different trigger. How was the virgin Sun Priestess supposed to know her Trait's trigger would be penetration?

Things derailed from the moment he confessed his 'sins.'

"Don't let him get away!"

'As if I can get away,' Williams rolls his eyes. 'I'm on the edge of a skyscraper, bud.'

“Logic and Kaye are deviants! Kaye already jumped down a building! Hahahaha! It’s Williams’ turn!”

‘God rest Kaye’s soul,’ Williams’ sighs as he recalls his temporary partner in crime. Oh, it wasn’t anything sexual. Williams simply tried his hand in a couple of heists with one of the greatest thieves on the planet—who was a victim of his Gamer Trait.

“I want revenge! You killed my wife, you rapist!”

THAT got to Williams. The man in a burgundy suit clenches his fist around the platinum scepter. The diamond-like crystal head of the Scepter glows sharply while the glassy orb around Williams thickens.

“Say what?” Williams snarls, glaring at the decrepit old man. “Do you think I would go down on Laurette by forcing her? She was already 68! If it wasn’t the third orgasm that took her, it would have been her heart going berserk!”

Laurette’s husband flushes before pointing a bonafide grenade launcher.

A large explosion erupts around Williams as his pursuers observe in silence until the smoke clears, revealing the man unharmed as the protection around his body persists.

“The Scepter of Might!” One of the men gasps greedily.

“Give it up, Williams! We will have that Scepter!”

“That’s not a power belonging to one person!”

“Yeah! You defiled the Great Priestess! You’re not deserving of it!”

‘Considering I got the Scepter through the act,’ Williams sneers. He understands he has no option left. It wasn’t just exclaiming the truth about his trait to the Priestess, but using it in her presence and revealing the reward from the Platinum Achievement that got him in this mess.

It was bound to end someday, right?

‘I hope Kaye was right when he devised that manic plan. As if we can just reincarnate by reciting a script.’

He sighs, closing his eyes.

He can never go to jail for his acts. He won’t last a week with all the Achievements he’ll be forced to

accomplish.

'I practiced many things to pick up chicks because of my trait. It was fun.' He smiles. He always knew there was something wrong with his head since he didn't hesitate to pull the trigger with his other hand.

\*Splat\*

Others watch in a daze as Williams' body explodes, splattering chunks of flesh and blood as the delicate Scepter shatters into pieces before their eyes.

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Simply put, Traits are powers. Everyone has it after six but can spend their lifetime finding the trigger to activate their traits. It's like any other process in life. For instance, food in the digestive system triggers Digestion. Similarly, by performing a specific act, one may initiate their traits. A person's vomit may 'trigger' their vomit to turn into Soda, creating a highly fetishized brand. Or a person can simply have a trait respond to their existence, demanding specific clauses before showing game-like stats.

Logic's trait... no, Lo Jik's trait, *'triggered'* when he kissed his classmate during her birthday. He was 10. It's quite the thing, his *'Trait.'*

At the time, he got a box of crayons for kissing her. It merely snowballed to him getting the lost artifact of the Sun Priests through their recent addition.

'Fuck my trait! How the hell does a Reincarnation forum on a porn site actually work?!' Lo Jik blinks, feeling speechless. He scratches his head. Memories of his host fill his mind, integrating with him. Gu Yue Lo Jik IS Williams Logic. If the forum thread was correct, the technique would somehow send a portion of his soul to a different realm to grow, and his persona would take over once he dies in his current world.

'Wait a minute,' Lo Jik gapes. 'No wonder the suicide rates spiked, and the World Alliance banned the site! People tried speed running Reincarnation!'

He sighs, scratching his head again as his heart stifles with frustration.

'My host had different circumstances—No parents and no one to look after him or someone would teach him how a snow salt a day keeps bad breath away. He also has lice.' Lo Jik scratches his head for the umpteenth time.

'Yep, I'm going bald. Before that, let's see if I have my trait.'

He closes his eyes and notes something strange.

'I have my 'trait,' but my achievements are gone. Sigh. Years of hard work, those achievements. However, it's a new life. I should get cracking on with learning the culture of this world and forming pickup lines.'

He opens his eyes.

'And what exactly are Gu Worms and Gu Masters again?'

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Gu Yue Village is a sight of wonder when compared to mortal establishments due to the existence of Gu Masters. The settlement possesses a charm that Lo Jik's never seen before. His small bamboo cabin fails to reduce the sights of the village as the dawn of spring sees wild, colorful flowers blooming alongside the verdant bamboo groves around the Village. A few patches of bamboo shoots grow around various structures that keep the settlement from looking dull.

In fact, Gu Yue Village's perimeters cover a sufficient patch of the Spear Bamboo grove, allowing the settlers to enjoy spring in the wild, often resting beside shallow lakes.

Morning dew slides down glimmering flower petals and leaves as a trail of excited youths no older than 15 ignore the natural beauty around them. A thin layer of morning fog settled on the ground seems to consume their feet as they climb the village's incline to hover about in the village square across a tall, red-roofed pavilion with tilted tiles.

It's THAT time of the year.

Children are excited about it.

If his world had Traits, then Lo Jik's current world possesses the might of Gu Masters. He has yet to understand the basics of it, of course. However, he's excited—call it the morning air or the freedom of his scalp from the lice as his bald head attracts a few looks from other children around him.

As an orphan and a hunter, Lo Jik spent more hours hunting his dinner than socializing so others wouldn't question him. Just as well. He wouldn't know how to react if his 15-year-old body had a 15-year-old girlfriend.

Ew.

This world's culture might accept it, but his refined tastes cannot.

A soft commotion attracts his attention as the crowd in the Village Square clears for the pair of dark-haired twins. Why they have such long hair and no fear of lice is something Lo Jik doesn't understand. Still, he hears hushed whispers.

"Look at him, so cold and elegant!"

"You would act the same if you had his talents," exclaims another youth with unconcealed envy.

'Chill, brother,' Lo Jik blinks. 'Isn't that just Fang Yuan and his younger brother? Writing some poems shouldn't—ah, it's that kind of culture?'

Lo Jik's trait saw him traveling across his former globe, allowing him to contact and appreciate various cultures and norms. It was an intriguing phase of his life. He realized how a good and effective line from one region wouldn't work on another even if he got the pronunciation correct. Of course, everything wasn't sex for him. He learned about biases and several discriminatory practices, opening his eyes to the harsh realities.

He sighs, feeling sorry for the twins.

The Academy Elder, a man possessing a headful of white hair and beard, walks over to the square, proclaiming, "Good! You're all punctual! You all understand why you are here, so I won't waste more time. Follow me."

The Elder leads the teenagers teeming with excitement into the Clan Pavilion, entering the underground cave through a stone ladder before moving past the awe-inspiring passage filled with dimly glowing moss on the side walls and almost kaleidoscopic stalactites! Many from the group gasped, commenting on the beauty of the cave.

How could Lo Jik think anything else?

It's enamoring!

The soft glow from the exit attracts their attention, bringing everyone to a large underground cave bisected by a spring.

Scratch what Lo Jik thought before.

**THIS** is enamoring!

The dark ceilings act like the night sky as the beautiful pink and blue flowers past the river bank on

the other side mimic fallen celestial bodies, illuminating the interiors and allowing others to view the flowing clear spring to the point Lo Jik can observe the soothing seabed past the wavy grass and fleeting fish.

“All of you must enter the spring,” the elder announces. “The farther you can walk, the better. Understood? Where is Gu Yue Chen Bo? Come forward.”

A youth shakily walks ahead after the announcement, slipping his bare feet into the shallow spring before taking a few steps forward. However, Lo Jik notices the boy shivering—*struggling*.

He hears soft gulps around him as the boy returns with his head hanging low.

“Sigh. Gu Yue Chen Bo. No talent for cultivation!” The Elder announces as one of the girls near Lo Jik whimpers.

“No, not Chen Bo. We promised we would be together.”

‘Maybe you won’t have any talent, too,’ Lo Jik refrains from letting his intrusive thoughts win. He already blew himself once. He can do well with some rest from his antics.

“Hiiiss.” A boy sucks in a breath of cold air. “How did Ren Zu ever cultivate? Wasn’t Chen Bo always good at running? He can’t even cultivate?”

“Ren Zu? Isn’t that what we’ll study about in the Academy?”

“IF we get in,” the previous boy replies sarcastically before smirking mischievously. “My elder brother told me the first story yesterday. Want to hear it?”

“Nope. I’m too nervous.”

“I promise it’ll help!” the former youth hears no rebuttal from his friend and dictates a mythical tale spread to almost all humans—except Lo Jik, the reclusive orphaned hunter.

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One of the oldest legends talks about the Hope Gu. In the legend, the world was filled with savage wilderness in its inception. Among the wild beasts that walked the earth, the first man appeared. He was known as Ren Zu, eating raw meat, drinking blood, and living a difficult life.

In particular, was a group of wild beasts called Predicament. These feral beasts loved the taste of Ren Zu and longed to eat him.

Ren Zu did not have a body as strong as mountain rock, nor did he have the sharp teeth and claws of a wild beast. How could he fight with the Predicaments? His source of food was unstable, and he had to hide all day. He was at the bottom of nature's food chain and could barely survive.

At this moment, there were 3 Gu that came up to him and said, "As long as you use your life to provide for us, we will help you through this difficulty." Ren Zu had nowhere to go, so he could only agree to these 3 Gu.

He first gave his youth away to the biggest Gu among the three. That Gu then granted him strength.

With strength, Ren Zu's life began to change. He started to have a stable source of food and could protect himself. He fought bravely and ruthlessly, defeating many Predicaments. However, he soon suffered and finally realized that strength was not everything. It needed to heal and be cultivated, not spent freely at his will. Not to mention, his strength alone was too small when facing the entire group of Predicaments.

Ren Zu reflected on this lesson bitterly and decided to give his prime middle years to the most beautiful Gu among the three. And thus, the second Gu gave him wisdom.

With wisdom, Ren Zu was able to learn how to think and reflect. He accumulated experience and found that Wisdom was more effective than strength when dealing with Predicaments.

***{A/N: I removed the part that stated Ren Zu ate and drank Predicaments since it's a plot point later how hard they are to consume.}***

But good things do not last, and Ren Zu was old. He would only grow older and older. After all, he gave away his youth and middle years to keep the Strength Gu and Wisdom Gu. When a man is old, his muscles deteriorate, and his brain slows down.

"Human, what else can you give us? You don't have anything else left to provide us," the Strength Gu and Wisdom Gu said as they realized this. They left him.

Without wisdom and strength, Ren Zu was once surrounded by Predicaments. He was old and could not run—his teeth had fallen out, unable to chew wild fruits and plants.

As he fell weakly onto the ground surrounded by Predicaments, his heart was filled with desperation. At this time, the third Gu said to him, "Human, take me up. I will help you escape Predicament."

Ren Zu tearfully replied, "Gu, I have nothing else left. See, the Strength Gu and Wisdom Gu have abandoned me. I only have my old age left! While it is not as worth my youth and middle age, my

life would immediately end if I gave you my Old Age. Even though I am surrounded by Predicaments right now, I will not die immediately. I wish to live a little longer, even if just a second more. So you should leave. I have nothing else to provide to you.”

But the Gu said, “Among the three, I have the smallest needs. If you just give me your heart, it will be enough, Human.”

“Then I will give you my heart,” Ren Zu said. “But Gu, what can you give me in return? My situation wouldn’t change even if the Strength Gu and Wisdom Gu returned to my side.”

Compared to the Strength Gu, this Gu looked frail and was just a tiny ball of light. Compared to the Wisdom Gu, this one only gave out a dim white light, not beautiful in any way.

But when Ren Zu gave it his heart, this Gu suddenly gave out endless light. In this light, the Predicaments screamed in horror: “This is the Hope Gu, withdraw! We Predicaments are most afraid of hope!”

The Predicaments retreated suddenly. Ren Zu was speechless, and from that day onwards, whenever he faced a Predicament, he would give his heart to hope.

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The youth smirks smugly at his friend’s awed expression before scowling when his friend scoffs, “Was that it? My farts sound better. Now, let me watch others fail in peace!”

Meanwhile, Lo Jik muses, ‘That sounded interesting, Ren Zu’s tale, not the boy’s fart.’

Elder’s loud voice snaps at his attention, “Gu Yue Mo Bei, B-Grade!”

Others gasp as a square-faced youth with a slightly longer nose returns to the crowd after tossing a pockmarked, red-haired kid a challenging look.

Emboldened by the sudden arrival of talent, others enter the spring lake with their heads held high until they fail to step any further, unable to absorb the motes of light emerging from around the lush underwater flora.

‘So, that’s a Gu Worm?’ He looks at the motes of light, hearing a few whispers, calling them *Hope Gu*.

‘So, this culture’s youth’s career depends on a ceremony about something they cannot change? Isn’t this just a magical version of a small-dick fiasco? It’s not something you can control— NOOOO! You CAN control your size in this world!’



While he's not lacking in any manner, Lo Jik suddenly looks forward to entering that lake and testing his luck.

"Gu Yue Lo Jik!"

Lo Jik steps out. His bald head attains a prominent glimmer in this underground scenic scape, earning him a few snickers from his fellow disappointments. He takes his sandals off before taking a deep breath and stepping in.

'The water feels so warm and cozy,' Jik sighs in contentment, feeling a few errand fish swim near his toes and nibble at his skin. Taking another breath, he steps forward.

1...

3...

5...

9...

13...

Motes of gentle white light float out and surround him, entering his body from several directions, prominently the area around his stomach.

It feels... nice.

A warm current of *'something'* flows through his body.

17...

19...

20...

He feels pressure build around him. He exhaled deeply, not knowing how long he'd held his breath.

He takes another step forward as the motes of light swirl more frantically around him.

'That's it?' He sighs. Lo Jik observed that the Gu worms would turn intense moments before



***Title: Hope Resides In The Heart***

Whatever Lo Jik expected from an Academy, Gu Yue Academy for *'Promising Gu Masters'* wasn't it—no need for textbooks in this one. Classes exchange information verbally through the Academy Elder to the packed class of 57 students. Indeed, more than 100 eager youths only produced 57 Gu Masters. However, Jik's issue with the lessons is how padded they are. The verbal lectures often deviate from their intended course about Qing Mao Mountain and its nearby flora and fauna species, including the Gu Worms, and instead derail into moderate and often heavy-handed propaganda.

Why does the topic of Flower Wine Monk's attack on the 4th Ancestor Patriarch of the Clan need to erupt in a lecture about Gu Masters' ranking system and their hierarchical structure? Lo Jik wants to understand the power dynamics before he decides how to best use his trait for benefit. Who knows what he can earn in this world.

A culture of individual strength is greatly instilled in this world, so doesn't that mean he can abuse his trait as much as he likes once he gets stronger? No other collection of angry husbands will ever get to him!

'However, I DO understand the broad strokes. Gu worms are like traits of this world. These creatures come in many shapes or forms, following a specific function after consuming the Primeval essence. Gu Masters are merely professionals who can utilize Gu Worms. Their hierarchy is structured into 9 significant ranks from Rank 1-9.'

"If I was born a few hundred years ago, I would tear Flower Wine—"

"Sir!" Lo Jik raises his hand, interrupting a rather passionate speech of murder. The otherworldy's thoughts are more about doing things than talking about them since he isn't a newbie when it comes to extinguishing lives—and he would instead grant new lives. "You said something about Gu Master using, refining, and feeding Gu worms. What does that mean?"

"Ehm," the Elder clears his throat. The Academy Elder is responsible for guiding the youth into the righteous path by setting peculiar examples in their minds about the evil ways of the Gu World. However, he cannot ignore sincere questions since they always take priority.

"Gu worms have their needs and demands. Ehm," their tutor clears his throat. "Think of a Gu Worm as a hired help. A hired helper needs food to continue working, instructions to perform his duties, and often different equipment to perform diverse functions. Similarly, Gu worms need to feed to survive, and they need the Gu Master to use them and reveal their full potential. As for refinement, it's when you refine a Gu worm with your essence, making it your own. However, there is another aspect of refining which you will

encounter once you graduate.”

Lo Jik nods while the Elder continues, “Hmm. It’s been seven days since you awakened your apertures. You will earn your first Gu Worms from the Academy. I advise you to focus on refining your chosen Gu worms and return to the academy for further lectures. The classes will resume in a week. As I informed you at the beginning of our session, the first to refine their Gu Worms in the coming week will be rewarded 20 primeval stones!”

The Academy Elder promptly ends the class as his words elicit excited whispers from others.

A Gu Worm!

They learned about various Gu Worms and how to cultivate their aperture for the past week, and now they can step on the path of Gu Masters by choosing their Gu Worms! Their excitement is understandable as the Elder made the group form a line based on their Aptitudes.

Heading the group is a familiar face with flowing black hair and simple facial features, possessing determined pools of black orbs for his eyes. It’s Fang Zheng!

Lo Jik glances at the youth proudly standing ahead of the class before mingling with other C-grade students behind the only two B-grade students, Gu Yue Mo Bei and Chi Cheng. His glance inadvertently falls upon Fang Zheng’s older twin, the childhood prodigy who was expected to be an A-grade talent—Fang Yuan.

It’s intriguing.

Fang Yuan used to be THAT neighbor’s kid your parents would compare you to. Meanwhile, Fang Zheng usually followed his Elder Twin’s shadow. However, the awakening ceremony revealed that Fang Yuan had a C-grade aptitude. Meanwhile, Fang Zheng turned out to be the prodigious son of a bitch with an A-grade talent.

Unlike others cawing and fawning over the young twin, Lo Jik didn’t have a great impression of the boy. He’s no saint, given his past indecencies. However, Lo Jik knows if he had a brother who fell from grace and now wastes time by drinking and squandering the classroom lessons by sleeping through them—he would tightly slap his brother’s face to wake him up from his self-destructive stupor. It might ruin his relationship with his brother, but Lo Jik would sacrifice that happiness and comfort for his brother.

However, Fang Zheng...

Lo Jik sighs mutedly. 'Maybe these two never had a good relationship. Whatever. Not like they're my brothers.'

The classroom follows the Elder through the open Academy field towards the small, well-guarded building. The structure is as large as a freighter's container back from his old world, about 55-60 cubic meters if Lo Jik has to guess. Two Gu masters stand guard over the entrance as the Academy Elder clears his throat, guiding, "Choose your first Gu Worms within the four walls of the Academy Gu Storage. Remember what I taught you all about these Gu Worms and choose carefully. A Gu Master's first Gu Worm is a special one."

Fang Zheng enters the storage and walks out shortly after with a confident smile. He bows to the Academy Elder before glancing in Fang Yuan's direction and leaving.

Mo Bei and Chi Cheng don't take too long either, prompting Lo Jik's turn after the trio.

The entrance leads to a small and dim interior, with the most prominent feature being several holes and squares cut out of the wall to accommodate various leaves, discs, boxes, and more. These items further house different creatures. There are some unmistakable insects in a few bamboo cages.

Gu Worms!

They come in different shapes and sizes, but most of them mimic actual insects, earning them the name—*worms*. A few insects chirp loudly, while a minority stays silent. Lo Jik stares at ladybugs, bed bugs, crickets, a rare spider or two, beetles, and even earthworms.

However, as the Elder stated, their first week of introductory classes earned the class enough knowledge about these Gu Worms and what the classroom can expect from them.

Lo Jik locates a silver dish in the nearby square cut-out within the wall, noticing a neat array of crescent-shaped blue quartz-like creatures placed neatly in rows and columns. The creature's opaque surface grants it a delicate appearance as a soft glow around it makes Lo Jik wonder if they ARE shards of a moon.

He smiles.

*Moonlight Gu.*

If this was a game, then Moonlight Gu would be the most recommended piece of equipment in the said location of the game.

‘It’s a standard offensive Gu, allowing the students to *‘taste’* a Gu Master’s path firsthand. It’s also easy to feed since Gu Yue village is ground-zero for this Gu Worm’s creation and food.

Indeed, this Gu worm is artificial.

A Gu worm exists naturally in the surroundings, possessing different features. However, Gu Masters can create, nay, *‘refine’* a Gu worm through diverse materials.

Lo Jik quietly pockets the Gu Worm, noticing how three other Moonlight Gu are absent from the structure of rows and columns, allowing him to understand that the three students before him selected the same Gu worm.

Exiting the room, Lo Jik makes way for Fang Yuan to enter as he further bows to the Academy Elder before taking his leave—not before accepting his rations on the way out.

Why would Lo Jik, a struggling orphan, not accept the rations even if they are bland. Fuck taste! He can eat whatever he wants once he makes something of himself. It also wouldn’t be the first time Lo Jik compromised with his situation.

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Lo Jik’s bamboo cabin is the pinnacle of safety as he calmly enters the short trail between the small bamboo grove. He watches other cabins and cottages beside the track. It’s obvious how the society, divided into Gu Masters and the rest, may also possess different locations for their stay. His humble origins find Lo Jik staying in his bamboo cabin within this small grove alongside a few other quiet and peaceful hunters.

It’s still the Gu Yue Village, but not the dazzling portion of it since many mortals from the clan settled around the perimeter.

Unshackling the chains around his door, which others can simply break into—since it’s made of bamboo—Lo Jik enters his humble abode. An unfortunate guest would notice a tarp covering the ceiling, preventing rainfall from seeping through, as the slanted roof allows all the water caught between the tarp and top to flow past the doors and drizzle outside.

Aside from a small bamboo shelf for his worn clothes, there’s only a rolled mattress, a longbow, and a quiver of arrows. Lo Jik sighs.

He unbelts the dagger under his clothes.

As one can assume—cold steel is allowed in the Academy of Magical Insects.

On the same belt is a small pouch. Lo Jik unrolls the mattress before undoing the ration's package and feasting on the biscuits. Licking his lips and gulping the water from the sac, Lo Jik retrieves the cloth pouch on his belt, undoing its mouth to reveal a collection of small, milky-white oval stones.

### *Primeval Stones.*

These are a Gu Master's most prominent resources after their Gu worms. Or, in Lo Jik's terminology, these are the premium currency in a video game IF his second life was one.

There are eight of these stones in the pouch—his life savings. A stone lasts a month for a mortal family, and these eight stones are what Lo Jik's host accrued over time by hunting, selling materials, and saving miserly. Lo Jik respects his host for such hardships, which is HIM.

He has been saving on their use until now. Eventually, the Academy will hand out stipends for the students, and things won't be so lean. However, Lo Jik is unwilling to wait any longer to spend them.

Lo Jik understood that he should focus on the main stuff before spending things on his cultivation. Wealth exists to be consumed—it's a simple logic. However, how and when he uses it depends on his needs.

Closing his eyes, Lo Jik *fee/s* the aperture in his body—like how he's taught in the academy.

It was hard to do so on the first day, but Lo Jik got around it by the third day.

His vision shifts and Lo Jik finds his world surrounded by a flowing white light in the shape of a sphere. He isn't present in this world physically because this aperture is inside his body. It's a curious thing.

When a Gu Master visualizes the aperture, they find themselves in an impossibly large world filled with their essence. However, externally, the Aperture may not even be more significant than a pencil's dot present a few inches under the Gu Master's navel.

Just that '*dot*' defines who becomes a Gu Master and who doesn't.

He looks around and observes the spherical wall. According to the Academy Elder, this light is the work of the Hope Gu that entered his body.

Lo Jik glances down, viewing a jade-green ocean!

This is his essence!

*Primeval Essence.*

Lo Jik instinctively knows the ocean fills 48% of the space—his C-grade Aptitude.

One may wonder how a Gu Master cultivates. Well.

Lo Jik glances at the flowing light wall again.

The answer is the perimeter of his Aperture.

A Gu Master's cultivation is divided into nine major and four minor ranks. Of course, one cultivates not out of the goodness of heart but because it benefits oneself. By reaching higher realms, a Gu Master can utilize more powerful Gu worms.

The process of a Gu Master's cultivation involves nurturing this flowing wall using the essence stored in the aperture.

Lo Jik smiles.

He didn't start cultivating even after three days since he could visualize his aperture because he was interested in something more.

Jade-green tentacles slowly float from the ocean. There are only three of them.

'It's so cool,' Lo Jik snickers. He couldn't even move a drop of his essence, and now he can control three tentacles of flowing water. Of course, this doesn't do him any good right away. However, he could understand that nurturing the aperture's light wall needs the Gu Master to extensively control their essence.

That's what he's been focusing on the entire afternoons and post-dinner meditation sessions.

Besides, what sane individual wouldn't want to play around with magic essence?



He shakes his head, focusing harder.

The tendrils of essence drop into the ocean as a wave slowly rises, tumbling into the sea before emerging again.

Lo Jik frowns.

He cannot effortlessly move the entire ocean yet, even if he knows he can eventually do so with practice—the classic case of *git-gud*.

However, Lo Jik finds some joy in using the natural laws as he breaks the ocean's peace by constantly crashing waves into the sea itself! The waves he manages to pull through '*spiritual momentum*' turns grander.

It takes quite a while and mental exhaustion for Lo Jik to overturn the entirety of his essence and slam it against the light wall.

What does he get for his hard work?

He feels a sliver of Primeval Essence, no more than 2%, entering and merging with the light wall. There isn't any change, but Lo Jik knows that accumulating enough essence into the flowing wall will trigger a transformation—*an advancement!*

'Let's try absorbing the essence from the Primeval stone.'

Like a Gu Master's aperture, Primeval essence exists in nature in different forms. The most prominent collection of such an essence is the Primeval Stones!

A Gu Master's essence regenerates in time. Lo Jik has yet to note the specifics of how much his aperture restores his essence in a minute. However, a Gu Master can effortlessly recover their essence by siphoning it from the stones!

Lo Jik concentrates on the stone in his hand, noticing the warm currents of essence deep within it. His practice allows Lo Jik to divert the free-flowing currents of energy within the Primeval Stone into his aperture.

It's a strange feeling.

It's as if something eerie is crawling into his veins before depositing into his aperture. A thin stream of mist-like essence enters Lo Jik's aperture and promptly turns into jade-green droplets.

Only—

It's not just pale-milky mist.

Under Lo Jik's shocked gaze, dark, stormy mists separate from the pale-white one, hovering in the empty space.

'What's that?' Lo Jik frowns. Before he can consider what to do, an internal jolt snaps and seizes his spine. His body turns numb and immovable as a familiar pressure overcomes him.

Thoughts fail him as his body tries to curl to mitigate the pain and pressure. However, he cannot move. His heart beats madly, drumming into his ears and almost pounding out from his chest as a thundering clap resounds in his body—*known only to him*.

His vision shifts instinctively.

He's in an aperture.

However, this can't be HIS!

After all, a brightly glowing 'sun' hovers in the empty 52% space. Lo Jik feels a wave of comfort and indescribable sensation fill his senses as the thin black mist slowly slips into THIS aperture instead, promptly sucked into the white-gold sun.

Lo Jik isn't near his navel.

This isn't Lo Jik's aperture.

After all, how can an aperture be present in one's heart?

Why? How?

His tense body relaxes as he senses a Rank 1 Gu aura from the sun.

It's a Gu Worm he's seen before. Of course, it wasn't shining as brightly earlier or possessed such a wave of comfort. It didn't look 'strong.'

Now?

Lo Jik forces himself to wrap his head around reality. His senses shift, and he's back in his hut. His worn tunic sticks to his drenched, sweaty body while Lo Jik quickly tosses

the stone into his pouch.

He has two apertures, totaling 96% Primeval Essence, and he has a vital gu in one of these Apertures.

If Lo Jik hadn't said it after his reincarnation, accurately hunting a rabbit with a bow, enduring the awakening ceremony, and watching the Academy Elder slice apart a poor bamboo with a flying crescent blade—then allow him to say it now—

***'What the fuck?!'***

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'A vital Gu, huh?' Fang Yuan stares at the pale blue, crescent-shaped quartz in his hand. He quietly smiles.

'I'm a drunk and useless nobody in this life, not much different from the last one either.' Unlike others' expectations of a youth falling from grace, Fang Yuan's eyes reveal no signs of pain or hurt. His pitch-black irides seem to melt with the dim evening shadow, seemingly forming depthless pools of abyss that only display a sense of ethereal peace masking the stuff of nightmares.

'I need to focus on searching that Gu worm. 500 hundred years of future experience may sound fantastic. However, I can't claim to know every single thing. Among the significant news, the Liquor Worm's discovery near the village's bamboo forest led to lots of talk. The original Gu Master will find it in a month or two. I need to be quicker.'

Fang Yuan chose to act drunk and loiter in the nearby forest to attract the Gu Worm. He gazes at the cloudy sky, sighing. 'Unfortunately, it seems it will rain soon. It will suppress the wine's smell, so I can't look for Liquor Worm.'

There's also another thought in his mind.

'Should I change the history—I wonder how the ripples will affect my *'new'* Present.'

His smile widens.

'The thought still wouldn't stop me. Once a demon...'

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***Alternate Title:*** Lo Jik in Whitebeard's Voice: The Propaganda is Real!; Realms of



'Academy Dorm should be available soon, right? That's the primary reason why the Academy shut down for a week. Previous dorm students are going through their former residences to clean things. Since not everyone is present in the Village, they get a week's notice to accomplish the task.'

He licks his dry lips.

'Should I rest at the inn instead?' He thinks it once before shaking his head.

'I'm already halfway through.'

Lo Jik hacks at the Spear Bamboo. These bamboo are green and fragrant, but their tips are as sharp as a spear. His hand raises to hack down at the offending bamboo when Lo Jik wonders something.

'Can't I use the Moonlight Gu?'

Granted, Lo Jik knows little about the Gu worm, and the demonstration from the Academy Elder on the first day was a swift process, leaving many others dazed. However, nobody's stopping Lo Jik from trying... except for bad weather conditions.

He steps back, indifferent to mud sliding between his soles and sandals, as he wills the Moonlight Gu in his second aperture to travel into his hand. Every Gu Worm has different functions, like Traits, requiring various conditions to be usable.

For instance, the Moonlight Gu is useless within a Gu Master's aperture. However, if the Gu Worm rests in his palm, he can utilize it.

Gu Yue Lo Jik looks at his right palm. His calloused palm sports a blue crescent tattoo, signaling the Moonlight Gu within his hand. Exhaling sharply, Lo Jik continues supplying the Gu worm with his essence. Under his dazed, almost enamored gaze, a film of bluish energy surrounds his hand. It looks like clear water, flowing yet stable around his hand.

'Hmm, next,' Lo Jik purses his lips, finding it hard to maintain a continuous connection with the Moonlight Gu. Once a Gu Master refines a Gu worm, they can control it as their limbs! However, things are not so easy. A Gu Master, like an infant child, must learn to control these limbs again. With accumulated experience, a Gu Master will control new Gu worms as easily as breathing.

The blue, watery light around Jik's hand wavers as his breath catches in his throat.

He slowly sticks his fingers straight before horizontally slashing at the nearest bamboo.

A weak, pale blue, palm-sized, crescent-shaped arc of energy flies out of his hand, thinning as it glides before fizzling in the space between the bamboo, leaving a visible scratch on its surface.

Lo Jik regains his breathing. He walks forward and inspects the tiny scratch.

'Academy Elder effortlessly cut through a thick scarecrow. Even if I chalk it up to his Rank 3 cultivation... the Elder made it look easy.'

A smile appears on his lips.

**Good!**

How many challenges Jik faced in his quest to bag higher achievements?

He joined several fighting gyms, making his way up the competition to impress who would be his silver achievements.

He learned several languages to fuck the language barrier and polish his *game*.

Hell! Lo Jik has done more for a lot less since he understood all those practices will help him enjoy his life and better himself!

'Fear not the challenges, but one's weak will to look away from them. Fearing weakness breeds the courage to challenge oneself.'

Lo Jik recalls reading something similar.

'So, one attempt takes 10% essence. I can use the Moonlight Gu eight times, but I can't reveal that. Hmm. I will mix things up—training my use of the Gu worm and rebuilding my roof. I still have four days, and I will have excess essence for cultivation at night, too.'

With his thoughts set, Lo Jik gets to work.

<<<>>>

The Academy training ground is almost 2000 square meters, padded with graphite and other materials to make the surface solid. A tall fence of stacked bamboo keeps their training away from the public gaze.

Five rows of students launch their Moonlight Gu at the thick scarecrows that would

recover its body every time it gets hit. His turn finished, standing on the left side—Lo Jik frowns slightly.

The Academy dorms have limited rooms and are granted on a first-come, first-served basis. If Jik has to calculate, he doesn't think there are more than 10 students who have no caretaker to look after them. Yet, all 20 rooms are occupied! He sighs. He wasn't late either. The dorm guard admitted that 5-6 rooms remain unoccupied every year. However, not this year. It's frustrating.

'It's already been five days. Well. The weather is stable for now, so it's not like I'm hurting for a new place.' Lo Jik exhales. He unconsciously reaches for his head.

'Either this world has different types of humans, or my hair's recovery is better than the rest.'

His previous bald head already sports a short carpet of brown hair as *tall* as one centimeter.

"Good!" The elder's loud exclaim attracts everyone's attention as a scarecrow's head falls off. "Did you use that Moonlight Gu?" He glances at the nearby student, who is just as stunned as the rest before he slowly nods.

Aside from a student getting a lucky shot, the first day of practical training ends with the Elder announcing another competition in three days for the best aim in the class—for the prize of 10 Primeval stones. Roused by the chance of earning the sum, other students rush to the Gu Store in the Academy for a straw target. Lo Jik would be the same if he didn't have the dense bamboo grove behind his house and if he had three stones to spare. As things are now, Lo Jik smiles at the store clerk, a Rank 1 Gu Master named Jiang Ya, and purchases another load of *Moon Orchid* petals.

As taught before, a Gu worm needs food—except the Hope Gu, from the looks of it.

Moonlight Gu consumes two moon orchid petals in the morning and at night. One primeval stone buys a pack of 10 petals. So, his Moonlight Gu consumes 0.4 stones a day.

Now, Lo Jik only has 5 stones remaining since he has yet to go on another hunt for materials.

He wishes hunting was more effortless. Catching a small game for dinner and hunting large creatures for profit are two distinct concepts. If hunting was lucrative, every mortal in the surrounding Mortal villages would be bagging loads of primeval stones! Not to mention, preparation for the hunt and the act itself consumes time—which he can

dedicate to cultivating and practicing the Moonlight Gu instead.

'What would be the easiest way to earn more?'

The most recent competition comes to mind.

Unlike what he's shown, he's got a better aim. He can use more practice, but Lo Jik believes he can win it if he trains seriously for the next three days.

'And if I'm stuck in that cabin, I benefit from making it more stable. Hmm.' His eyes gleam. 'I can employ the woodcutters in the Mortal villages under Gu Yue Clan's authority. I'll need wood and good wax. Tiles are expensive for the roof, and I can always recoat the wax. Or I can lay another tarp atop it?'

Consumed in thoughts, Lo Jik exits the academy.

<<<>>>

Lo Jik stares at the dark cloud within his second aperture above the Hope Gu. This time, Lo Jik doesn't let the Gu Worm consume it despite feeling its urge. The Hope Gu's light is now weaker than before and sways midair.

He was wrong.

Hope Gu does need food to survive in his Aperture.

He didn't know what its food could be until he recalled its sudden arrival. The Gu Worm only revealed itself once he absorbed essence from the stone, somehow invoking the dark mist. Unexpectedly, it worked.

Lo Jik can feel the Gu worm's hunger as the dark mist swirls in his aperture. The young Gu Master observes this mist. He was worried he wasn't absorbing the entire effect of the stone's essence. He was proven wrong when he recalled his classmate's discussion. His aperture's absorption rate is satisfactory.

The dark mist is merely something *extra*.

The more he looks at it, Lo Jik feels a profound rejection breeding in its mist-like pool. Unable to make heads or tails about it, he allows the Hope Gu to feed as it creates a suction to consume the dark mist.

The light of the Gu worm sharpens again, and it grows stable. He briefly senses



fondness from the Gu worm and shakes his head. That can't be right. A Gu Master overrides their will upon the Gu worm. How can they have sudden bursts of affection if they don't have independent 'will'?

Lo Jik recalls how hard it was to tame the Moonlight Gu. However, it merely exists now—to be used.

'Maybe I'm wrong. The Academy doesn't know a thing after Rank 5. Blinding myself to their norms would be foolishness. I didn't sense things wrongly. The Hope Gu... is alive.'

Lo Jik stares at the floating creature before retracting his vision.

'However, it seems to need that mist once every week. My cost of living rose to 0.5 stones a day. I'll be out of the currency in two more days. Just as well. That's the day of the competition.'

<<<>>>

*3 Days Later.*

The class sits on the ground and watches their combat instructor take out grass and wood puppets. Grass puppets are agile, and the Wooden Puppets are taller and heavier! Their combat instructor is a Rank 2 Gu Master with a bulky, muscular physique. His skin seems slightly unnatural, taking a bronze tint, as his naked torso reveals several scars.

Slightly competent in close-quarter combats, not because he took classes in his previous life, but because he had several skirmishes with wronged husbands in the streets, Lo Jik finds it refreshing how their instructor talks about tackling boars and bears.

He wants to do that, too!

The streets of his previous life may as well be concrete forests since there weren't any rules. Sure, his training helped. However, his ass got kicked more times than he would like to admit, learning from his mistakes and becoming more shameless in his ways. He would often sleep with the same women to have rematches with their husbands!

However, Lo Jik notes how the combat instructor doesn't have a teaching plan. A good teacher always prepares a concise plan to relay information and demonstrate skills.

As expected, students grew bored without a uniform teaching plan and began chatting among themselves. Many students are eager for the test.

Growing angry, the Combat Instructor shouts loudly, “No talking! Pay attention to the class and how to deal with your opponents. There isn’t just one Moonlight Gu, and you kids must learn how to combat with your body since your Gu worms are only for show until later!”

The students grow silent for a while, making the instructor feel helpless as they start whispering again. It’s always the same every year. Students get swept by the mesmerizing use of Moonlight Gu, unwilling to pay attention to martial arts until they suffer a few defeats.

The excitement rises to an all-time high after the combat lessons. The students await in the training ground near the five straw scarecrows. Only today, the Academy Elder arrives slightly later until the students become restless. He smirks internally, noting the eagerness in most eyes. Pointing at the five targets, the Elder prompts the classroom. “Form five groups and step forward. You will attack your target three times.”

Ordinarily, the class of 57 students will find it challenging to divide themselves into multiples of 5. However, not all students chose the Moonlight Gu as their Vital Gu and were exempted from the competition. A total of 35 students chose the Moonlight Gu. By now, even the D-grade students finished refining the Gu worm, allowing them to enter the competition.

A group of five students steps up. There’s a bit of chaos as everyone wants to show their skills. Unlike them and intent on winning, Lo Jik decides to wait till the last group. If possible, he wants to be the last one to use the Gu worm so he can assess everyone’s skill.

If he’s better than them, he will show limited expertise. If not, he’ll aim everywhere but on the target since there’s no chance of winning.

If Lo Jik was interested in kids, he would show off.

Fortunately, he isn’t. He doesn’t talk with the rest often and keeps to himself.

He, and a few other D-grade students alongside Fang Yuan, might be the most overlooked student.

Flowing blue crescent blades cut through the air in awkward arcs as only 9 attacks land on the target. Meanwhile, two students miss entirely. Displeased and disappointed with such results, the Elder verbally tears the two students anew. Excitement fades from many student’s faces once they see the Elder’s reaction. The students were excited to show their skills. However, they are now nervous.

Another group steps forward, but their result isn't great. Still, all of them manage to land one hit on their targets.

The next group sees one of the top three students entering the fray—*Gu Yue Mo Bei*.

\*Fwip\*

\*Fwip\*

\*Fwip\*

Three moonlight blades hit their targets. Two of them slash against the target's chest while the other one brushes past the arm, cutting a deep gash. Exhaling sharply, Mo Bei turns around. The youth is one of the more *'built'* students, possessing squarish features and short black hair. The Elder nods, his expression eases as he offers a few words of encouragement to Mo Bei.

The next group includes a slightly nervous redhead, Gu Yue Chi Cheng. Unlike his rival, Mo Bei, Chi Cheng has a thin frame, shoulder-length red hair worn in a high wolftail, and a face *blessed* with pockmarks. The boy sends out three attacks, all landing on the target's chest.

Beaming instantly, Chi Cheng tosses Mo Bei a challenging look, causing him to snort and cross his arms. Hearing a few words of encouragement, Chi Cheng returns to his position.

It's as if they have a tacit understanding that the trio didn't enter the same group since the next group included Gu Yue Fang Zheng.

The grandsons of the Mo and Chi elders straighten their backs and stare at Fang Zheng, who's a nervous wreck.

'I can do it,' Fang Zheng peps himself. 'I trained every day! Elder Brother has a weaker talent than me. With my A-grade cultivation potential, I used the Moonlight Gu more than most. Watch this, Elder Brother. I will surpass you today and focus on my true competition, Mo Bei and Chi Cheng.'

Lo Jik wouldn't be surprised if he could read Fang Zheng's thoughts. Why?

The twin's relationship being strained would be a grave understatement.

A few days ago, Fang Zheng stormed into the classroom, accusing Fang Yuan of being

a terrible brother. He revealed Fang Yuan slapped him when he tried talking some sense into the fallen star. Not only that, Fang Zheng also wanted Fang Yuan to apologize to him for scamming him. Why? Fang Yuan apparently *'sold'* his maid to his younger twin since he liked her for 6 primeval stones. However, the maid wasn't Yuan's property.

It was easy for Lo Jik to deduce it was just Fang Zheng's cock speaking for him since he fixated on the so-called Shen Cui's honor.

\*Fwip\*

Surprisingly, Fang Zheng's first attack slices into the target's neck.

"Wow! That's A-grade aptitude for you! He boldly went for one of the hardest regions to target!"

"Maybe he can teach us something?" A girl speaks with a hopeful expression.

More students clamor on while Mo Bei's and Chi Cheng's expressions turn dignified.

'Uh. Am I the only one who thinks that was a fluke? He slices in the chest's direction before shaking nervously and gets a hit on the neck? That's some luck. All I have is the opposite of it.'

Lo Jik sighs.

Still, the praises stabilize the poor soul as his subsequent two attacks strike the chest region.

Fang Zheng returns with his head held high. He looks at Fang Yuan before returning to his position.

Another group of students produces a subpar result before Lo Jik's turn.

He, Fang Yuan, and three more students step 10 meters away from their targets.

While the three students aim at different parts of the body, barely missing or their attacks weaker than others, a relatively robust moonblade flies above the target's head before fizzling away.

"Pfft! See that? That's Fang Yuan. There's so much difference between the twins!"

"Hmph! Serves him right. He's a scammer!"

Others were always jealous of Fang Yuan, and being the first to refine a Gu Worm earned him more ire from his classmates.

“Gu Yue Lo Jik! What are you waiting for?”

The Elder barks loudly as Lo Jik smiles wryly. Coincidentally, most of his interactions in the classroom are with the Elder. Lo Jik has taken it upon himself to interrupt the Academy Elder’s propaganda lectures in favor of the real ones since anything else would be a waste of time. He would question concisely, ensuring the Elder had to answer him first. Of course, the Elder finds Lo Jik slightly an eyesore.

To be fair, the Elder internally commends Lo Jik’s spirit. However, the student is also a thorn in his responsibility in guiding the next generation of the Gu Masters.

“Uh,” Lo Jik nods, raising his hand toward the target and taking his sweet time to feed the Moonlight Gu as other students are already done. Fang Yuan briefly glances at Lo Jik before pointing at the target and releasing successive attacks that slice the target’s neck off neatly!

Everyone, including Lo Jik, gape in surprise.

They are momentarily stunned as Fang Yuan calmly adjusts his sleeves, revealing no pride in his gaze. The head of the dummy quietly rolls down to the ground.

Is it a fluke—

*\*Fwip\**

*\*Fwip\**

*\*Fwip\**

Three water-like crescent slashes draw sharp, keen arcs in the air as vertical slashes neatly cut the target’s arms and head from the center.

Fang Yuan stills, slowly glancing at the Gu Master beside him. Surprisingly, he notes a pair of curious brown eyes staring back into his depthless black pools.

*\*Thc\**

*\*Thc\**



The Academy Elder deepens his voice, adopting a serious tone.

“In the next three months, the first to reach the middle stage of cultivation will become the Class President, followed by the two Vice-Presidents! Remember, the President will earn 10 stones, and the Vice-Presidents will receive a weekly stipend of 5 Primeval stones!” His words cut through the gloomy surroundings, touching the students’ souls as their gazes brightened.

“If I can become the President...”

“Becoming a Vice-President is enough for me!”

‘Hmph! I will become the President. I don’t care about the stipend. However, if I can make the A-grade talent Fang Zheng lower his head to me, I will have earned a great honor for my family!’ Mo Bei clenches his fist, glancing at Fang Yuan and Lo Jik. ‘I won’t have C-grade nobodies mocking me!’

‘Just you wait!’ Fang Zheng purses his lips with a determined look. ‘I will surpass the two of them. This is a contest of talent. The real threats are Mo Bei and Chi Cheng because of their family’s support. However, how can Elder Brother and Lo Jik compare to me? I have 80% Primeval Essence. I can win this!’

‘Tch,’ Chi Cheng feels indignant. ‘How can C-grade students like them achieve all that?’ Jealousy births in the depths of his heart as he glances at the duo venomously.

‘Just 10?’ Lo Jik sighs. ‘That won’t be enough. There’s got to be a way to earn a quick buck! A month’s almost passed, and I don’t even have a single target yet. Cultivation just HAD to be so time-consuming.’

Still, Lo Jik wasn’t eager to use his trait and frolicking around. Where will he run to when things get dangerous? It’s not like this world has airports for quick escape. However, he can predict his situation worsening should he not find a sustainable source of income. In the worst-case scenario, he sets aside two days for hunting and providing for his Gu worms.

“Gu Yue Lo Jik!” The Elder calls Lo Jik forward, setting two pouches on the desk. One bag has his weekly stipend, and the other has the competition reward.

Picking the two, Lo Jik leaves the classroom under several envious gazes.

Where to?

Free rations, of course!

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Lo Jik expected some annoyance if he won the tournament, but he didn't expect Mo Bei, Chi Cheng, and Fang Zheng to try to ride his dick so hard!

"I challenge you!" declares Fang Zheng as Lo Jik slowly stows the package meal into his worn robe.

"Face us, Coward!" Mo Bei snarls as Lo Jik turns from them and walks towards the exit.

"Leave him. His victory must be a fluke," goads Chi Cheng by the time Lo Jik is far from them, unable to hear their words.

'Should I find a job?' Lo Jik muses before shaking his head. 'Jobs may sound stable in this world. However, Gu Masters either join a faction or enter the logistics department after graduating. There's no way Gu Yue Village will allow assets like us to fly solo. They are already paying us through stipends. As they say, there are no free meals. So, no Gu Masters are hiring other Gu Masters. I also can't work for mortals.' It's not discrimination. Mortals simply cannot pay him enough, that's all.

'If only I had those maps.' Lo Jik narrows his eyes.

As an orphan, he was allowed to train in a trade in a mortal village to earn his keep. So, Lo Jik spent some time with an old hunter, learning their ways. That's where he learned how to use a longbow and set various traps. He recalls hearing a few hushed whispers about how the generations of hunters develop a map marked with different regions of prey and predators. Acquiring such a map will greatly relieve Lo Jik's issues by hunting rarer beasts and selling their materials.

He stops in his tracks as he sees five of his classmates lying on the ground, groaning weakly, if not unconscious.

The setting sun shades the boy's pale face in crimson-orange as he peacefully blocks the only exit from the Academy. A cool breeze picks dust between them, swaying his black locks as he eyes Lo Jik coolly. He extends his hand, demanding, "One Primeval stone, and you can leave without injuries. Or..." Fang Yuan glances at his earlier victims, not noticing the sudden glow in Lo Jik's eyes.

'Fucking genius!' Lo Jik gasps internally. 'That's right. I can ALWAYS loot the motherfuckers! They're kids. What can they do?!'

He stares at Fang Yuan before quietly stepping sideways and sitting on the grassy ground. Feeling Fang Yuan's stare, Lo Jik pulls out his rations and digs into it, wolfing it all down. Before they can exchange words, another group of students chasing after Lo Jik to chat with him after his earlier display finds the situation of their classmates.

Ignoring the boy feasting on dry rations, Fang Yuan glances at the group of six students. "Pay up or end like them."



“Am I seeing things?”

“Fang Yuan! You asshole! How dare you hurt our friends?!”

“Fuck off! Send your mother to my room, and I’ll consider paying her a primeval stone! Wait, you don’t have a mother!”

“Uh, isn’t she also a Fang Zheng’s mother?”

“Stop interrupting my insults!—”

The group barely gets another word out as Fang Yuan lashes at the nearby student assisting one of the unconscious students. His palm chops at her neck, making her eyes roll into her skull as she collapses. The sudden and swift attack shocks the boys before one of them snarls. “Let’s get this arrogant punk! Does he really think he can take all of us on?”

‘Yes,’ Lo Jik smirks, staring at the unconscious students. ‘He thinks he can.’

The thing about Lo Jik is that he is shameless beyond belief. Others will spit at his face if they find out he plans to bully kids, including another bully. What of it? Shame and honor won’t pay Daddy’s bills! He needs those stones. However, Lo Jik swiftly recalls the Academy’s rules and thinks of various consequences of his actions should he go through with this.

Not only that but seeing Fang Yuan’s sick and savage moves, Lo Jik quietly sneaks something away.

Good Lord, the boy can fight!

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The Elder momentarily ignores the guards, wearing his ears out with their whining, as he watches the situation unfold atop the academy pavilion. Fang Yuan’s actions aren’t hidden. The Guards promptly report the crisis to him since the mortals have no right to hurt the Gu Masters.

However, is this truly a crisis?

‘Fang Yuan... such talent.’ The Elder narrows his eyes, stroking his white beard. ‘Early signs of genius such as speech and physical strength usually point to a Gu Master possessing better aptitude. However, exceptions exist in every pattern, and Fang Yuan is one such anomaly. If his talents in poems are useless in battle, then he has a chance to become an ingenious battle Gu Master! He was just one step short! If only he had a B-grade aptitude!’ He sighs before glancing at Lo Jik, watching everything unfold without interfering.

The recent Champion watches Fang Yuan dismantle others. He has already finished his rations and seems to be awaiting his turn.

“That Fang Yuan is such a troublemaker!” the guard’s Chief hisses. His words prick the Elder. However, the Gu Master remains silent. “How can he beat his classmates like that? We should do something about him, Lord Elder!”

“That’s right! He’s so daring that he would spit on Academy rules!”

“What rules?” The Elder sneers. “It’s a good thing they are fighting. Look. Who among the fallen is horribly injured or dead? That Fang Yuan barely used punches and kicks. Instead, he stayed true to palm strikes! Every batch has fights among their peers. The only difference in this batch is that the children have yet to realize their combat potential, which usually happens after a few months.”

“Lord Elder,” one of the guards, green with envy, complains. “That boy is extorting the entire class. Where is the justice in that?”

The Academy Elder instantly sees through their envy.

Still, the academy won’t interfere since Fang Yuan’s demand is reasonable. The boy is taking one primeval stone from each student. Since the weekly stipend is 3 stones, it’s an acceptable demand. However, should Fang Yuan demand 2 stones, the Elder will step in and stop this nonsense since Fang Yuan’s greed will infringe the Academy’s limits. After all, if Fang Yuan extorts 2 stones, is it not better to directly give Fang Yuan others’ stipend?

Before he can tear them a new one, he stops. “I’ll deal with your lot later. Stand there quietly.” He points at the corner as the guards pale.

Did they say something wrong?

Of course, they did.

How dare the mortals dare think viciously about their masters? Did any of them possess Gu Yue in their surname? Did they dare raise their hand upon the Clan’s future?

Still, as Fang Zheng steps in with a group of girls cowering behind him, the Elder grows curious and anticipates how the A-grade genius will overcome the situation.

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“What are you doing, Brother?” Fang Zheng gasps in shock. Colors drain from his face as he sees almost

all his classmates lying on the ground.

“He’s a demon!” one of the girls behind Zheng cries. “He hurt others and threatened to hurt us, too. He wants our primeval stones!”

Fang Zheng’s heart shivers as he stares at the quiet Fang Yuan, who happens to be looking at the lazily lying Lo Jik instead.

Wait! Why is Lo Jik lying on the ground as if this doesn’t concern him?

Indignation from losing the competition and the frustration of the current *catastrophe* fuses and bubbles into a verbal lashing as Fang Zheng chides Lo Jik. “What are you doing? How could you watch our classmates get abused like that?!”

“Well,” Lo Jik yawns. “Your elder brother is outstanding. I’m learning from him.”

It’s the truth.

Lo Jik doesn’t need more training to instill combat habits. Sure. This body needs to train again, but his mind is disciplined and trained enough to pick on some of Fang Yuan’s moves. It’s not as much how Fang Yuan attacks but how he deals with the opponents. For instance, Lo Jik admits that if others fought and surrounded him, he would have to break a few bones using some indecent grapples to quickly neutralize the situation.

Meanwhile, Fang Yuan?

He never lost his cool.

Lo Jik wonders what his mom ate before giving birth to him since the youth almost feels like a master martial artist nurtured from the ‘*streets!*’

Fang Zheng clenches his fist. Learning? From his dead-drunk brother?!

What’s there to learn?

He is a C-grade lowly Gu Master who will never live up to Fang Zheng’s full potential!

Yet, Fang Zheng wonders why he still tries to talk his brother out of things.

“You can get expelled, brother!” Fang Zheng reasons. “Please, stop this!”

However, Lo Jik wasn’t having it.

Remember? He's shameless.

He plans to rob Fang Yuan once he's done robbing others. To make the process smooth, Lo Jik needs Fang Yuan to exhaust more energy since Lo Jik himself isn't all that strong. After all, a growing body needs a lot of nutrition. However, Jik cannot feast due to his financial situation, leaving many things desired from his growing body.

"Gu Yue Fang Zheng!" Lo Jik sneers. He doesn't like talking to the kids. If he does, he'll make the most of it. "Your elder brother touched the girl you like! He slapped you in public! You're the A-grade talent, yet he beat you to the first competition. Do you still want to talk? Maybe Fang Yuan will fuck the woman you like and gift you a green hat for further discussions."

Fang Zheng's face turns purple while the girls behind him look at Lo Jik oddly.

After all, why does his words make sense to them?

"I know," Lo Jik smirks. "When Fang Yuan becomes the President, you should offer your Elder Brother your family jewels. After all, your aptitude is wasted on you. Why should your family's line, too?"

Fang Zheng clutches his fists till they turn white. He glares at Lo Jik before turning his hateful stare to the quiet and peaceful Fang Yuan.

He's about to speak again when Fang Zheng hears a soft chuckle from one of the boys lying on the ground. He isn't conscious but is in pain.

"Heh, ow! T-That was funny..."

Fang Zheng's shoulders shudder as he quietly steps forward.

'Oh?' Fang Yuan raises an eyebrow. "You're approaching me, Little Brother? After seeing what I can do, you're not running away but approaching me?"

The little pride remaining within Fang Zheng hurts further as he bites his bottom lip till a thin stream of blood flows down.

He suddenly charges at Fang Yuan like a mad bull, only for his Elder Brother to sidestep and stick a foot out. Fang Zheng fails to balance himself, striking the ground face-first as he quickly turns around, his robes ruined and short injuries littering his elbows and knees.

"I looked up to you!" Fang Zheng snarls, getting up and swinging a wide left hook at his Elder Brother.

'Ooh. Now you're going to look down,' Lo Jik sighs as he watches Fang Yuan *discombobulate* his younger twin with his hands striking Fang Zheng's ears at once. It doesn't end here as Fang Yuan delivers a disastrous combo of kicking his twin's calves and slamming his fist into his twin's face before the boy collapses on the ground.

The girls fearfully yelp, huddling together as Fang Yuan glances at them before looking at Lo Jik.

One of the girls stutters.

"L-Lo Jik! Please save us from this demon!"

One thing Lo Jik noticed about this world is that a few girls and boys already have partners in their batch. So, it's not wild to assume that the girls in his class are aware of sexual differences and curiosities, capable of luring boys their age with empty promises.

"Yes!" another begs. "Please do something!"

Their modestly pretty features crumble with fear as they stay rooted in their spots, their flight and fight response showing their nature.

Lo Jik stands up, unwilling to lie down since he believes Fang Yuan will rush him while he's lying down. After all, Lo Jik saw Fang Yuan kick a boy's crotch.

Fang Yuan holds nothing sacred...

Just like Lo Jik.

The duo momentarily stares at each other before Fang Yuan offers a way out, "One primeval stone."

"Hiee! Please don't leave us alone, Lo Jik!" A girl cries.

Speechless, Lo Jik ignores the girls and quietly shakes his head. He's already seen the point behind Fang Yuan's fights.

The Academy is chill as long as they don't permanently injure each other and only extort one stone each.

Now understanding the unwritten rule, Lo Jik steps toward Fang Yuan. His glimmering brown eyes turn slightly dim as he wonders how to put the youth out.

Lo Jik is the first to strike. His hand lashes out like a venomous serpent, something Fang Yuna avoids before reaching to clasp Lo Jik's wrist. Fang Yuan's pupils shrink when a watery glow suddenly covers Lo Jik's hand, causing him to pull back.

“Heh,” Lo Jik snickers carelessly. “That was a joke, Classmate Fang. Using Gu worms in the Academy to attack other students is forbidden.”

Fang Yuan narrows his eyes. Yes, it’s forbidden. However, Fang Yuan believed the crazy bastard ahead of him wouldn’t think a second to do that. However, Fang Yuan effortlessly understands Lo Jik’s ploy of using intimidation as a tactic. Such a tactic won’t work again. After all, Fang Yuan never expected someone in the classroom to be reasonably shameless, too.

Indifferent to Fang Yuan’s thoughts, Lo Jik takes to the offensive. They trade multiple blows, sending the small audience into a daze. However, Lo Jik’s expression turns solemn by the second since he’s outmatched—in technique and physique. Fang Yuan’s thin body manages to produce robust strikes. The youth seems to have an answer for anything Lo Jik throws at him.

However, they are from exhaustion.

Fang Yuan skillfully took out the students. Even if it exhausted Fang Yuan, Lo Jik’s lower stamina balances the situation.

All boils down to skills as Fang Yuan avoids a fatal kick to his balls before delivering a ruthless body blow, causing Lo Jik to grunt and step back. Lo Jik’s face turns pale as the pain only turns worse after the initial contact. He eyes Fang Yuan with more seriousness, gasping for air.

“I give up,” Lo Jik nods, slowly stuffing his hand inside his pouch. “Take the damn stone.”

He makes a tossing motion. Instead of the Primeval stone—dirt and grass fly in Fang Yuan’s direction. The youth’s body seems to be in overdrive as he launches himself at Lo Jik, surprising the otherworldly menace.

Lo Jik’s eyes widen as he takes a stance to take down Fang Yuan despite the pain since he watches how the latter prepared a strike by predicting his movements—

\*Thud\*

A dull thud echoes as Fang Yuan staggers back, glancing down at Lo Jik’s hand and seeing the butt of a dagger in the position where he got struck.

“It may as well have been the blade, Classmate Fang,” Lo Jik slowly straightens his back.

This isn’t how it was supposed to go.

Lo Jik imagined looting Fang Yuan before extorting the girls, too. Yet, he is man enough to admit to a child

almost a decade younger—

“You are the better fighter,” Lo Jik sheathes his dagger. “However, I need primeval stones.” If might doesn’t make right, Lo Jik can always try to utilize his tongue.

That came out wrong, didn’t it?

“We’re of the same batch, Classmate Fang. It’s only fitting to share our fortunes and misfortunes. Consider what just happened as an introduction to what we can achieve together.”

“What are you saying, Lo Jik?!”

Ignoring the girls, since he’s gripped Fang Yuan’s attention, he continues, “Or, I can always join the fray instead of fighting you one-on-one.”

When Lo Jik thinks he’ll have to persuade Fang Yuan harder since geniuses tend to be stubborn, he finds the latter narrowing his eyes with a ghost of a smile.

<<<>>>

Night descends upon the Gu Realm, bringing cold gusts into the Qing Mao mountain in contrast to sweet spring during daytime. Colorful crickets and fireflies occupy the bamboo groves around the Gu Yue Village, decorating it with their presence and peaceful chirps. Tender shoots grow out of the damp soil, announcing the arrival of the season of growth.

These scenes are not something Gu Yue Fang Yuan witnesses as he stays in his dorm room, watching a cute, fat silkworm dive into a vat of wine. His quiet gaze contemplates the matters of the past.

‘Gu Yue Lo Jik. I remember him now. He was executed by the Secret Hall Elder for sleeping with his wife in my previous life. He was the prolific sort, wasting his time with the girls in the academy and continuing the path of sensuality later, too. However, in this lifetime, he’s an accomplished marksman and a dangerous fighter.’

Lo Jik caught him off guard twice!

Only his centuries of experience allowed him to form a good response. Fang Yuan should have seen that dagger coming.

He did.

His body couldn’t respond in time. But what about Lo Jik? He’s a kid!

'Is this the first significant butterfly effect of my return? However, that boy was right. I cannot deal with him alongside others. If it means splitting the profits, so be it.' Fang Yuan smiles coldly. 'He'll have to work for his share. Hehe, sharing fortunes and *misfortunes*. I wonder if that kid even understands the severity of those words. It's good. I can observe and understand how my arrival changes things further by keeping him close.'

Centuries of experience swirl in his pupils before his heart calms, and Fang Yuan returns to cultivating peacefully.

'I never expected such a resistance and earned less than expected. However, this is pure profit! Plundering and looting truly is the best business.'

<<<>>>

13 from the stipend/reward and 27 Primeval stones from the day's loot make Lo Jik as rich as 45 stones!

It's amazing.

Lo Jik returns to his cabin with a full stomach after feasting on food worth half a stone.

Lo Jik let Fang Yuan take the favorable share of 28 stones. He honestly expected to sell his ass off to make Fang Yuan see his way or attack him with a group before asking him to join and extort the rest of the classroom.

'Here I considered myself shameless,' Lo Jik lies on his mattress. 'Fang Yuan is a better fighter and more shameless since extorting kids was his idea. Still, how is he that freaky? I heard that some Gu Masters have had different physical talents since childhood. Fang Yuan was one of them with his poems. However, his fists are more dangerous!'

Lo Jik recalls how Fang Yuan rushed into the mud projectiles, indifferent if it caught him in the eye to retaliate.

Lo Jik couldn't have done that.

'Kids in this world are scary,' he sucks in a breath of cold air.

'Still,' he exhales sharply. 'Let's cultivate. I only need to save some Primeval stones for feeding my Gu worm and should use the rest for cultivation. I have two apertures, so I require working twice as hard!'

<<<>>>

Lo Jik's cruel remarks fill Fang Zheng's head as the boy clenches his bedsheet with a hateful expression.



He sports a giant black eye, staring at the sheets in a daze. Those words accompany strange scenes and thoughts. The girl he likes with the man who beat him, his Elder Brother. His cold, indifferent gaze and her soft voice begging.

'Never—'

"Young Master? I prepared hot water. Should I help clean you up?"

A soft, delicate voice echoes from the door, snapping Fang Zheng out of his thoughts. Her words make him feel butterflies as he squeaks, "A-Ah, yes!"

The door opens, revealing a young girl with fair skin and a delicate appearance. Her brown eyes brighten when she sees Fang Zheng, and her cheery lips widen into a smile. She wears her brown hair in two flat buns held by yellow lily clips. Her beautiful yellow robes accentuate her youthful curves as she sits beside Fang Zheng.

Her gaze momentarily dims when she observes his injury. Fright grips Fang Zheng's heart as he almost mistakes her worry for indignation over his weakness.

"Young Master," she whispers, leaning against him as she blows into the towel and gently presses it against his eye. He can feel her warm breath through the towel. "Please, take care of yourself."

He feels her breasts against his arm. Gulping, he flushes and nods as she catches him glancing down her robe.

"Shen Cui," Fang Zheng begins before he notices the adorable pout on her face. He stammers, "C-Cui," he looks away. "I'm sorry. Those two insulted you, and I couldn't do a thing."

"Young Master," Shen Cui gently holds Fang Zheng's hand, beaming, "I trust everyone will look up to you in the future. I know you will be the best!" She giggles. "Then you'll have no use for this Cui."

"Never!" Fang Zheng snaps, grasping her hands. "Cui, I—"

She leans forward, breathing hotly into his ear. "Shh, Young Master. Rest. Cui is yours, right? I shall await the day you beat your enemies. After all, I love the Young Master who keeps his promises, and that's you."

Fang Zheng nods, allowing Shen Cui to clean him up and tuck him into the bed. Once she leaves, the sensual expression fades from her face. The girl descends the stairs before reporting to a slightly healthy middle-aged man. He is Fang Zheng's and Fang Yuan's former biological uncle and the former's adoptive father.

"How is he?" Gu Yue Dong Tu questions with an impassive expression.



# 5

## ***Title: Break The Will—Stonks***

The following week passes peacefully. Aside from a short drizzle, heaven blessed Qing Mao Mountain with calm and soothing weather. The sweet bamboo scent of the young shoots spreads and calms plenty of villages in Gu Yue Village as everyone performs their tasks amicably. Shopkeepers conduct business in peace, Teachers teach peacefully, students learn with intrigue and curiosity, and the administration continues to think of spreading welfare to the clan.

Perhaps the happiest individual this week is the Academy's Combat Tutor. The students, aside from the quietly meditating Lo Jik and Fang Yuan, would train in martial arts without the instructor needing to urge them! It's a miracle brought by the two resting individuals. Who knew extorting the classroom would rile the kids so much?

The class' ire towards the duo makes them push each other even more! The Combat Instructor has never seen a batch of students improve as much as this one in a week. The instructor is happy because good combat evaluations will earn him a bonus at the end of the year.

As the week reaches its end, the peace departs, too.

To be honest, aside from their sudden partnership the previous week, Lo Jik and Fang Yuan never talked with each other. It alerted and confused the rest of the classroom for the first few days before things returned to normal.

How could the class expect the two individuals to block their exit?

One of them is a pale and skinny youth with flowing black locks and a perpetual gloom in his dark pupils—Fang Yuan. The boy stands with his hands behind his back. In stark contrast, however, Lo Jik sits down and can be seen wolfing his rations till his cheeks inflate. His hair's grown more than a centimeter, something Lo Jik credits to his improved diet. Sure, it increased the cost of living from 3.5 primeval stones to six per week. Including the consumption of Primeval stones for cultivation, Lo Jik's left with 25 stones.

The group of students pales visibly when Lo Jik dusts his hands and stands straight.

The silent confrontation lasts a while before a girl steps forward. She is one of the girls from the group who saw Lo Jik's and Fang Yuan's fight. Gritting her teeth, at the brink of

tears, she pulls one stone from her pouch and tosses it to Fang Yuan. The duo quietly steps aside. While Fang Yuan reveals no expression, Lo Jik politely smiles at the girl.

Just this act alone lands a fatal blow to other students' nerves since they heard from the girls how ferociously the two fought!

They could barely handle one Fang Yuan. How can they expect to match a partner who seems equally silent, isolated, and devious?

What are these two?

A match made in hell?

"Gu Yue Lo Jik!" Fang Zheng passes through the crowd, glaring at Lo Jik. "You still have the nerve to stand and extort?!"

Lo Jik keeps his polite smile, nodding, "Yes."

Speechless, Fang Zheng fails to find further words as a stout figure snorts and passes Zheng. He quietly stares at Lo Jik and Fang Yuan.

"It's Gu Yue Mo Bei! He trained tirelessly for the entire week. He will surely defeat Fang Yuan and Lo Jik!"

"I saw Mo Bei shattering a puppet. He is very fierce now."

Mo Bei's *'group'* hypes the boy. It's not unexpected. Fang Zheng, Mo Bei, and Chi Cheng are the three shining stars of the classroom, attracting other students around them and forming natural social factions.

"Who dares challenge me?" Mo Bei rolls his sleeves up, snarling. His dark pupils stare at the duo until Lo Jik inclines his head. "I'll take him on. Your brother's on you."

Fang Yuan doesn't reply. He doesn't need to. After all, even if dissatisfied at being unable to take Lo Jik on, Fang Zheng's previous resentments make him stand opposite to his Elder Brother. He clenches his fists and determines his heart to fight as long as he can. Fang Zheng doesn't expect to win. Somehow, his Elder Twin is a combat genius. So what?

Fang Zheng steels his heart and decides to use his brother as a way to accumulate experience and—

Fang Yuan's eyes widen briefly while Mo Bei shouts.

"Scoundrel! How cowardly!"

'Whatever's going on, it has nothing to do with me—' Fang Zheng ignores his surroundings as a chop to his neck sends the boy tumbling down, revealing a Lo Jik behind him.

Scoundrel?

Cowardly?

Lo Jik chuckles internally.

These are the streets, boys! He'll be damned if he let any rules block him!

Others stare in a daze as Lo Jik avoids Mo Bei's jab.

*\*Pah\**

Lo Jik's hand lashes out and strikes Mo Bei's face. A loud noise echoes near the school's entrance as Mo Bei slowly touches his reddening cheek, resetting the position of his head to stare at the brown-haired youth.

'He slapped me?' Mo Bei cannot believe what happened. However, Lo Jik has a clear idea. He will only attack the students if he gets enough openings, like Fang Zheng's case. Else? He will humiliate the kids in ways they can never imagine. These kids don't have thick enough skin and will eventually lose their will to fight or even challenge him. When Lo Jik firmly crushes their spirit, he'll enjoy a satisfactory sum of Primeval stones every week without combating.

"I'll kill you!" Mo Bei roars. A grave, savage intent replaces the usual air of determination around the boy as he lunges at Lo Jik. Shrugging, Lo Jik steps back. The opponent chases relentlessly until Lo Jik swiftly turns and delivers a knee to the boy's scrotum!

Mo Bei's expression turns pale and blue as the pain kicks in. Most of the boys from their classroom press their thighs together. Admirably, Mo Bei doesn't fall. Instead, he slowly covers his crotch, breathing heavily.

*\*Pat\**

Mo Bei's eyes widen when Lo Jik gently pats his cheek.

“What—”

*\*Pah\**

The fool!

It's a simple slapping technique to measure the opponent's cheek. The resounding slap tosses the boy to the ground as he rolls, moaning painfully.

'This should be enough. It's a gradual process, after all.'

Lo Jik sighs in relief and returns to the entrance.

“A- Attack them!” Mo Bei barks at the group as Fang Yuan steps out, causing his earlier victims to instinctively step back.

It's Chi Cheng who steps forward to face Yuan. As the future heir of the Chi Faction, Chi Cheng cannot back down from the fight even if he knows he's no match.

The result?

***Disastrous.***

<<<>>>

The Academy Elder frowns secretly. If he was happy yesterday, his mood is in the pits today.

“Competition breeds advancement. The children trained more in the last seven days than a year! However, their hard work fell in such a disastrous manner. Lo Jik publicly humiliated Mo Bei. Fang Yuan defeated Chi Cheng in two strikes than one. Fang Yuan didn't even have the spatial awareness to notice Lo Jik sneaking on him.”

“This is the drawback of factions. With their leaders down, other children grow dispirited and lose any resistance they might have had they gone first. I can only hope they continue training by some miracle.”

“Their influence on the students will become a threat if things continue. I'd hoped the kids formed tactics on their own and exhausted the duo. Defeating Lo Jik and Fang Yuan right away may be much, but if they can notice their progress by wearing the duo.”

An insidious scheme births within the Elder. He doesn't want to interfere, but he also sees the long-term psychological effect of the battles.

"Fang Zheng, Mo Bie, and Chi Cheng will surpass them in cultivation. However, these shadows can hinder their cultivation itself. The Clan Leader has high hopes for Fang Zheng. What will I reply when he asks about Fang Zheng's progress?"

The Elder shakes his head and devises simple tactics to relay openly in the class as historical lessons on war tactics.

<<<>>>

Mo Courtyard balances architecture with nature as soft grunts echo in the property's beautiful garden.

*\*Thck\**

*\*Thck\**

*\*Thck\**

*\*Thck\**

Mo Bei, unwilling to change his disheveled robes, continues pounding his fists into the wooden statue as soft splashes of blood echo alongside his grunt. Each strike tears more of the skin around his knuckles as the youth recalls the phantom sting on his cheek.

Humiliated, beaten, tossed on the ground!

Gu Yue Mo Bei has never endured such humiliation ever since his birth! Being Gu Yue Mo Chen's grandson let him live a life of luxury. However, Mo Bei always wanted more. He trained and trained. He cultivated without respite!

How does *Heaven* answer him?

His nostrils prickle as Mo Bei pushes his fists into the puppet. Recalling the moments where he rolled on the ground, got slapped, and played with—Mo Bei doesn't want to show his face in the Academy anymore! What will his followers think? Chi Cheng and Fang Zheng retained some dignity in their defeat.

However, Mo Bei?

Lo Jik may as well strip the boy and whip his ass!

“Hehe~ Little Brother. As dedicated as ever to that wooden puppet of yours. What’s gotten into you this time?”

A soft giggle attracts Mo Bei’s attention as he gasps, turning around. “Elder Sister! You’re back!”

He watches as the woman’s expression freezes. Mo Bei blinks before touching the swollen right side. “This... I fell, Sister. It’s nothing much. How was your mission?”

The woman regains her smile, “Oh, it was alright. I missed you. Hihi, and my bath! It’s been 10 days since I returned! I’m going to relax first, Bei-er.” She stops in her tracks, adding with a smirk. “Mo Bei?”

“Hmm? Yes?” Mo Bei looks at his sister as she points out. “You don’t have a defensive Gu worm yet. Wrap a thick towel around your knuckles before you ruin them.”

“R-Right!”

She smiles, leaving the garden and returning to the building.

“Greetings, Young Miss!”

“Young Miss is back!”

“Welcome back, Young Miss. I’ll have the bath ready!”

Several servants lower their heads and bend their waists to greet her as she ignores them and pushes open a heavy wooden door. Inside, there’s an Elderly with his back to her who practices calligraphy.

“You’re back, dear granddaughter.”

Gu Yue Mo Yan stares at her grandfather, one of the Rank 3 Clan Elders—*Gu Yue Mo Chen*. She pouts, “How did you know it was me?”

The Elder with greying hair worn in a topknot chuckles, turning around to scold the girl with warmth in his eyes. “Who else dares barge in my study without knocking? Sigh. It’s good you’re uninjured. Take a seat. You must be exhausted.”



Mo Yan nods and sits on the chair. She regains her composure and loses her coy smirk. Before she can question anything, her grandfather inquires, "How was your scouting mission? What's the wolf cave's condition?"

Mo Yan purses her lips. "They have almost filled the cave, and their breeding cycle is acceptable, too. The wolf tides should begin from next year."

Mo Chen strokes his beard, questioning, "Did you determine the number of Lightning Crown Wolf Kings?"

She slowly nods, whispering, "There are three Wolf Kings."

"Hmm," Mo Chen closes his eyes.

Qiang Mao Mountain suffers from wolf tides almost every three years due to the nearby wolf cave in a valley and their eventual excess of numbers due to fulfilling conditions. These wolf tides are often disastrous for the clan, and they lose plenty of good Gu Masters to the foul beasts.

"Three beast kings is acceptable. The three clans—Gu Yue, Bai, and Xiong—can tackle a wolf king each. It will relieve our burdens. Good. You must need time to recuperate."

"What happened to Mo Bei, Grandfather?" Mo Yan shakes her head, beginning her line of inquiry. She goes away from the village for ten days, and this happens? Who dares lay a hand on her brother?!

Surprising Mo Yan, Mo Chen snickers. His aged face contorts and presses his wrinkles together as he questions, "Bei'er got beaten in the Academy."

"How can you laugh, Grandfather?!" Mo Yan gasps in shock.

"And it's not the first time!" Mo Chen continues chuckling. "He and other classmates of his got beaten twice!"

Mo Yan's lips part open before she scowls. Her features contort with rage as she snarls, demanding, "Who did this, Grandfather?"

"Mo Yan!" Mo Chen's expression turns stern, snapping at his granddaughter. "You will stay out of this! It's Mo Bei's opponent, and he must overcome them alone."

"How can I sit back and watch my brother suffer?" Mo Yan demands. "You say you dote on me, allowing me to enter your study without knocking. But don't you love Bei'er

more? You might not show it, but—”

“Enough,” Mo Chen quietly stares at his granddaughter. Her shoulders shudder as the Elder continues. “Academy days nurture a young mind at a pace we wish we could achieve again. My Grandson will inherit our family someday and must deal with his tribulations alone. Why else did he obtain his aperture? Was it not to house hope and cultivate? Why do we cultivate?!”

Mo Yan lowers her head, answering, “To break our mortal shackles.”

“Hmph. It’s the end of this topic,” Mo Chen snorts. “You’re tired. Take a day off and calm your mind.”

“Yes, Grandfather,” Mo Yan leaves the study. However, her gaze hides an ominous glint.

{**A/N:** So, I was re-reading the early chapters and noticed that this discussion between Mo Chen and Mo Yan was more about a man finding opponents and a female finding a family. Don’t get me wrong. I’m not into pushing any kind of propaganda aside from bullying Fang Zheng for shits and giggles. However, I felt that the discussion about the aperture suited it more? Do correct me if I’m wrong.}

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Aside from nutritional meat, the key to a balanced diet is scrumptious fruits!

Lo Jik started loitering in the village’s vegetable bazaar to purchase different fruits. It’s exciting in its own way since Lo Jik never ate any of these fruits due to his low income. Now? He tastes a new way of living through a bite of juicy peach-apple!

“How much for the bushel of those leafy reds?” Lo Jik inquires as he catches sight of something intriguing. He’s familiarized himself with the stall owners as they greet him politely, giving a favorable price.

‘Hmm,’ Lo Jik nods but doesn’t buy it. He doesn’t really have utensils to cook at home. A wrong move may burn his cabin to ashes! And—

His expression sours as he accidentally bites into the seed. He wasn’t even near the stem!

—his luck is stupidly shitty! The chances of him burning his cabin down due to an errand wind current are adequate to keep Lo Jik from cooking at home.

That's not the only reason why he's here.

Lo Jik is '*scouting*.'

He glances at several women as he passes them, keeping to himself. Now that he has enough experience with his trait, Lo Jik doesn't want to spread rumors in the village about *Bronze Achievements*.

His Trait—as far as he knows—provides Bronze, Silver, Golden, and Platinum Achievements.

Lo Jik calls his Trait the '*Smut-chievements*.'

Basically, he gets something any time he manages to perform something sexual as well as pleasing the opposite party based on the difference between their status.

For instance, if he kisses a girl from his class, he will only get a Bronze Achievement. He may not get anything if it isn't the target's first kiss! It's the question of the difference between the status.

The higher the overall status his target possesses compared to him, the better. It also signals that Lo Jik is used to aiming higher than who he is.

In his previous world, one's status is deduced from career, social presence, digital footprint, and other things! What Lo Jik knows is the broad strokes of it since his *Trait* didn't have any information function to reveal to Lo Jik what it's capable of. Whatever Lo Jik knows, he discovered it on its own!

Because of his experience, Lo Jik can summarize what he should look for here.

Firstly, mortals are out. They represent a class lower than his own. Of course, exceptions exist. He feels that a mortal wife of a Gu Master on a higher social hierarchy will get him a Bronze Achievement if not Silver. Affairs like this have extra points. So do threesomes and stuff like that.

One of his most memorable Golden Achievements was with a mother-daughter pair related to his visiting state's state senator.

Yep! He never returned to that state since the husband's bedroom was saturated with cameras!

Furthermore, he should look for a higher cultivation rank. It's not hard to understand that

each jump in cultivation rank boosts one's status significantly.

If said target is part of the stronger faction, it's even better.

The crux of the matter is his target's status must be higher than his. If he's a Rank 2 Gu Master, previous marks will grant him Bronze Achievements instead of Silver Achievement.

He glances at the passing brown-haired girl. She hums a soft tune while carrying a straw basked between her waist and arm.

'She's Shen Cui, right?'

Lo Jik muses.

If he takes Shen Cui as an example, the prime moment to try his charm for his Trait would be if Fang Zheng is already an Elder or the Clan Leader, while the girl is his concubine or wife. It means he loses out on a few *'firsts,'* but he still stands to earn a lot since her status would be higher than through her communion with Fang Zheng.

'Heh, I wish,' Lo Jik shrugs. 'Fang Zheng will take a while to become an Elder, won't he? Cultivation isn't precisely leisurely. He would have to hate someone with a passion to climb through the ranks as early as possible!'

The youth smirks as he thinks of something. It's risky. However, profits would be worthwhile.

Unlike Fang Zheng, Lo Jik possesses enough awareness to avoid the oncoming hunk of a man. He frowns and steps forward, evading the man's hand before turning and looking at him.

"You're Gu Yue Lo Jik, right?!"

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**Alternate Title:** Cash Cows; Rigorous Training; Fucked Over; Happy Instructor; The Menacing Duo; Slapping and Slapping; Taking Fang Zheng Out; Broken Will; Decimated; Worried Class; Nervous Academy Elder; The Elder's Open Scheme; Spreading Influence; Deterring the Enemy; In The Nuts; The Sister?; The Grandpa; A Beast Tide?; Three Clans; Bloodied Fists; Humiliated; Almost Crying; Lo Jik Really Makes a Child Cry?; It's For Dem Stones!; Getting Rich Steadily; Angry Sister; A Gaze That Promises Vengeance; Trait; Smut-chievements!; Scouting the *'Market'*; Fang



Instead, Lo Jik points out. "You want me AND Fang Yuan, right?" He grins viciously. "Fine! Did you catch that Bastard, too? He owes me 10 primeval stones! If you want, I can lead you to him, too." He doesn't say how beneficial it would be for Gao Wan's status of servitude if he could bring Fang Yuan and Lo Jik together. Yet the implications aren't lost on Gao Wan as his beady little eyes shine.

"Hmph!" Gao Wan sneers. 'Gu Masters are weak in their initial stage. Their signature attack, the Moonlight Gu, barely works on human flesh and bone since they need training. The boy knew that and gave up. If I bring both offending parties to Young Miss, she will reward me more.'

It's not just Gao Wan searching for Lo Jik and Fang Yuan. Other servants under Mo Yan are searching for the duo, too. Flames of greed lick his heart as Gao Wan snickers, "Fine. You have a good head on your shoulders. When you meet Young Miss, kowtow several times. It will ease her anger, and she may lessen your punishment."

Lo Jik smiles and nods.

"Come. Fang Yuan is a despicable, lying piece of shit," Lo Jik informs as he steps forward, leading Gao Wan away. "Do you know he has a twin brother?"

"Everyone knows about the A-grade genius!" Gao Wan scoffs, relaxing and conversing with Lo Jik.

"But did you know Fang Yuan pretends to be Fang Zheng and scams the shopkeepers?" Lo Jik raises an eyebrow.

"What?" Gao Wan frowns, making Lo Jik scoff. "Why do you think I lent my precious savings to Fang Yuan? He lied to me and said he was Fang Zheng! The scoundrel scammed me! Even if I fight with Fang Zheng, he is an upright genius. Of course, I will lend him my savings! But Fang Yuan? Peh! He's my partner-in-crime, but I won't trust him with a bag of seeds."

Gao Wan grows alert in his heart. He and others did not know of such an event.

'This Fang Yuan is despicable. It's known there is no honor among the thieves. However, to scam one's partner? No wonder Lo Jik easily agreed to lead me there.'

The last bits of suspicion leave Gao Wan's burly body.

"Listen, Servant," Lo Jik continues, making Gao Wan growl under his breath.

“Keep your tongue in check, Gu Yue Lo Jik. I’m Mo Family’s servant. Not yours! Talk to me that way again, and Missy won’t have to punish you!”

Lo Jik snorts but doesn’t argue. Instead, he begins, “Old Gao.”

Gao Wan nods.

“That Fang Yuan is not only a thief but a clever fellow, too. I hate to admit it, but it’s the truth. When you see him, don’t give him any chance. I’m cooperative—he isn’t. He will try to run into the Academy or say he’s Fang Zheng. However, you cannot let him do that. Look at you.”

Lo Jik stares at the man. “You can easily beat him, right?”

“Young Missy will punish him accordingly,” Gao Wan snorts.

“Your Young Missy won’t get a chance if he enters his dorm room,” Lo Jik snorts. “You have to capture him.”

Gao Wan stares at the boy, snorting in his heart. “You want me to beat him for you. Forget it, kid.”

“I will pay half the sum he borrowed from me,” Lo Jik gets anxious. “Think carefully. What will your Missy do if you let him get away when he is inches from you? However, beating him unconscious will keep him from running away, and I will pay you 5 stones, too.”

Lo Jik’s words move Gao Wan’s heart as they slowly make their way into the heart of the village.

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The story about the Fang Twins is known to man—orphaned twins taken in by their uncle and aunt. One day, the Elder Twin recites a beautiful poem. He doesn’t stop. The Elder Twin enamors the Gu Yue Clan with his literacy talents as he recites and writes poetry. It attracts the administrator’s attention as everyone focuses on the boy. His uncle and aunt favor him and treat him kindly. The Twins grow in such praises.

However, the Elder Twin isn’t the talented one. It’s as if the Heavens wished to compensate the Elder that it gave the boy a knack for poetry. However, the ‘grounded’ Younger Twin displays his talent during the awakening ceremony!

The Elder Twin could not bear such shame. He fell into the vices of alcohol and moved out of his Uncle's residence, unable to endure shaming his caretakers anymore. His hatred and jealousy for his Younger Twin made the Elder Brother publicly slap his little brother! It wasn't enough.

The Elder Twin, Fang Yuan, is angry!

He lashes out. He hurts and defeats his classmates, extorting them to fuel his alcohol addiction! He sleeps in the classroom and drinks at night, unfit of the honor that is being a Gu Master!

That's all Mo Yan knows.

Not heartless enough, she can momentarily empathize with a false genius' anger. However, she isn't kind to strangers. After all, how dare a filthy C-grade loser hurt her brother?!

Mo Bei will lead the Mo Family. How can anyone touch him? How can a duck compare to an elegant swan?

However, entering the tavern brings her face-to-face with the man beside the window. One of her servants stands beside him, quickly bowing, "I found him, Young Miss!"

Mo Yan nods and narrows her eyes. There is no fear on the boy's face. Sneering, Mo Yan snarks, "Did you enjoy your food? You're lucky, Fang Yuan. I bring a special dessert!"

A woman she might be, but her body is more powerful than most. She clenches her fist, ready to drag the boy through the streets and beat him in her courtyard.

The boy looks at her. An unappreciated, amused smirk dances on his features as he replies, "Who said I'm Fang Yuan?"

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"Very good!"

A voice stops Fang Zheng from pounding his fists into the grass puppet as he stops, indifferent to sweat pouring down his body. He quickly turns around and bows, "Elder."

The Academy Elder nods, his gaze gleaming with happiness. "You're training so hard even after Academy hours, Fang Zheng. Good. Hard work polishes one's talents!"



“Yes!” Fang Zheng nods, feeling encouraged. He started to train again after Lo Jik’s sneak attack to vent his anger. Now? He wants to practice to make his Elders proud.

The Academy Elder doesn’t linger around more than necessary and offers a few words of caution before leaving. Fang Zheng continues to train for ten more minutes before feeling drained and quits for the day. Martial Arts aren’t the only thing he must focus on. Fang Zheng is a Gu Master and must focus on nurturing his aperture walls to break into the middle stage of Rank 1! When he eventually becomes the quickest student to achieve this, he will become the Class President.

His eyes glint with something more than determination.

‘Elder Brother, Gu Yue Lo Jik! You two will bow your heads when I become the President. I will return today’s humiliations tenfold!’

He wipes his sweat and walks to the Academy’s only entrance/exit.

“There!”

Fang Zheng hears a sharp yell the second he staggers a few steps away from the Academy.

“He is Fang Yuan!”

‘Elder Brother is here?’ Fang Zheng blinks in surprise, turning to face the man. It’s coincidental. Usually, his Elder Brother would loiter in the village and only return to the dorm at night. Even when Fang Zheng trains until evening, he never runs into his Elder Brother.

However, a zooming fist as big as his skull greets Fang Zheng the second he turns around. His young body flies back through the impact alone as Fang Zheng’s vision disorients and his entire face turns numb! His lips feel something warm flowing down, and his eyes instantly tear up.

“What—” He gasps, unable to dodge the subsequent punch as the fist knocks the breath out of his lungs, making him kneel over. His eyes bulge out as he coughs spit and blood!

“Don’t go easy on him!”

Fang Zheng hears the familiar voice.

“He’s a despicable actor and can take a good beating. If you let up, he will run into the academy!”

Gu Yue Lo Jik!

Fang Zheng barely identifies the voice before the assaulter grabs his head to pull him up before plunging a knee into his gut!

‘Oof!’

Lo Jik cringes. He is intimately familiar with how a knee to a gut feels.

‘Sorry, Fang Zheng. You’ll have to take one for the team.’

Lo Jik will never snitch on the combat demon who could almost take him out even when he used tricks. It’s not fear but opportunity. Lo Jik would very much like to continue extorting the classroom, and doing it alone is not as simple as doing it with a capable partner.

‘Besides, I know men work twice as hard through hatred compared to men working for love. The funny thing is, men in love are already hard-working enough.’

“W-What is going on?”

One of the guards promptly arrives.

“Is that Fang Yuan?”

“Lo Jik is calling him Fang Yuan. Both those bastards are partners, so he must be right.”

More students emerge from the dorm after hearing the commotion. Passersby crowd the street, too, watching a middle-aged heavyweight champion abuse a poor, *‘talentless’* boy.

“Hehe! Good! Beat that bastard!”

One of the indignant boys cheers. His actions have a domino effect as Gao Wan hears loud cheers from the crowd near the Academy Gate, chanting Fang Yuan’s defeat. It emboldens Gao Wan as he beats Fang Yuan more ruthlessly!

Unlike Gu Masters, Gao Wan only has his body. He trained his mortal body to the peak and learned several martial arts. Even if Gao Wan beats Fang Yuan violently, the man

remains cautious. He cannot deliver any permanent damage. Right now, all of Fang Yuan's wounds are surface-level.

"Gao Wan!" A loud shriek stops as he notices his Young Missy accompanying a remarkably similar boy. Gao Wan becomes sure when he sees the boy beside Mo Yan. That twin looks calm and collected, aloof enough to be a genius. Meanwhile, the boy he beat up looked skittish and upto no good!

"I found Fang Yuan, Young Miss," Gao Wan kneels on the spot. "Forgive me for using these means. However, this Fang Yuan is despicable and would have rushed inside the Academy."

Mo Yan grits her teeth as she glares at the crowd.

This was not the plan!

They did NOT need a crowd of witnesses!

Before Gao Wan can utter another word, a sharp Moonblade severs his head from his body.

"You insolent cur!" Thunders the Academy Elder as he shoves through the crowd with red, raging eyes! He points at Mo Yan, who shrinks, "Are you stunted in your head, woman?! How dare you order your man to attack Gu Yue Fang Zheng?! Do you believe yourself above the laws of the Clan?!"

Mo Yan pales as she suddenly looks at Fang Yuan.

The teen shrugs, quietly nodding at Lo Jik.

'Well, I should go—' Lo Jik tries sneaking away when the Academy Elder's baleful gaze pins him down.

'—or not.'

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The Clan Leader resides in the central pavilion housing the underground spirit spring, where they hold the annual Awakening Ceremony.

A heavy tension lingers in Gu Yue Bo's study as he quietly stares at the kneeling Mo Yan surrounded by Mo Chen, Academy Elder, Fang Yuan, and Lo Jik. His narrow eyes

pin the offending woman as she doesn't raise her head, her expression aghast with shame. Mo Chen's expression doesn't look good either, while the Academy Elder continues to wear the mask of stern anger.

Gu Yue Bo notices all that, including Fang Yuan's cold and aloof expression alongside Lo Jik's curious but muted demeanor. The latter stares at Mo Yan before looking away.

In his middle ages, Gu Yue Bo proclaims long grey hair, drooping brows, and a similar greying mustache and beard. He speaks once he feels the tensions slightly settle.

"This is a grave matter, Elder Mo," he glances at Mo Chen. "Your family attacked the most talented seed of this year's batch!"

Mo Chen's head dips slightly.

"We shall discuss things after dealing with the ignorant juniors," Gu Yue Bo snorts and glances at the young trio. Even after knowing about the extortions, Gu Yue Bo acts as if he didn't hear the root cause of this mess and calls Lo Jik forward.

"Gu Yue Lo Jik."

"Here, Clan Leader," Lo Jik steps forward, cupping his fists and lowering his head.

"You will not receive any stipend for the next five weeks. Understandably, a disloyal servant from the Mo Family threatened you to give up Fang Yuan's location. However, actions have consequences. Gu Yue Clansmen are courageous and must do what's right. Reflect on these words."

"Yes, Clan Leader!" Lo Jik exclaims. "I'm deeply regretful for my actions! I vow to never commit something of this nature again."

Gu Yue Bo narrows his eyes before gesturing to Lo Jik to step back.

Meanwhile, Mo Chen's expression worsens as he realizes the *'truth.'*

"Gu Yue Fang Yuan."

"Yes, Clan Leader," Fang Yuan steps forward, his tone calm and peaceful as he bows slightly and cups his fists.

"Proving your wits despite the threat and planning to take protection under the academy to calm the situation without any altercation, you will earn Gu Yue Lo Jik's share of the

stipend for the next five weeks.”

“As you command, Clan Leader,” Fang Yuan softly states before he’s excused.

Not bothered by the punishment, Lo Jik continues staring at Mo Yan. She isn’t the most beautiful woman in the world, but her charms are undeniable. Her jet-black hair, fair skin, and slightly longer nose fail to move Lo Jik. However, she’s a Rank 2 Gu Master and an Elder’s Granddaughter with a prominent family backing her.

An idea, like getting Fang Zheng to take one for the team, blooms in his mind. Like everything in life, his opinion isn’t without risks. However, if he IS to use his Trait, Lo Jik believes he must start with a solid foundation in this world. Getting frivolous will only get him killed here.

“Gu Yue Mo Yan,” Gu Yue Bo begins by releasing a disappointed sigh. “Students must face their own battles. You also led a traitor to the clan to this batch’s genius. What would have happened if that treacherous mortal servant killed Fang Zheng? How could your Mo Family ever repay?” Gu Yue Bo chooses his words carefully as Mo Chen’s and Fang Yuan’s gaze flickers. However, nervous and anxious, Mo Yan cannot utter a word.

“You disappoint the clan, Child,” Gu Yue Bo sighs, adopting the look of a concerned parent. “I’m afraid your punishments must be—”

Seeing his chance, Lo Jik slowly steps out under the Elders’ stunned stare. Keeping her head low the entire time, Mo Yan notices a pair of worn sandals. Her first thought is to deride and mock the poor youth. However, her breath catches in her throat when she glances up, finding a firm back protecting her from the Clan Leader’s vision. Even if the youth’s back is bent, it looks formidable and stable in Mo Yan’s eyes since she doesn’t even dare speak up.

“I would like to apologize for my sins, Clan Leader,” Lo Jik begins with a deeply ashamed expression. “You graciously taught me to be courageous in Clan’s beliefs. Yet, I looked almost looked away from another sin.”

“Gu Yue Lo Jik! Get back this instant!” The Academy Elder hisses. Fear enters his gaze as the Clan Leader dismisses the man with a wave.

“Continue,” Gu Yue Bo demands.

“Gu Yue Mo Yan loves her sibling. As an orphan, I never received such love and may not understand it. However, I envy it. I long for someone in my life who would stand up for me. Born in poverty, I have to turn to distasteful ways to use my talents and earn a night’s meal. I have to repair my roof when it crashes down, I have to restore my sandals

when it breaks apart, and a lot more. Still, not a day passes when I don't long for love. Love is fickle, Clan Leader. It's relentless, mischievous, and unreasonable."

Everyone's expression slightly shifts as if they can understand where Lo Jik is coming from. After all, everyone in this room is well-versed in the mythical tale that kicks ass!

"Even Ren Zu's children could only falter when confronted with Love. How can any of us claim ourselves above it? I envy Mo Bei for having such love, and I confess my sins for lashing out. However, knowing Senior Mo Yan's action stems from love for her brother, I cannot stand aside and stay silent. Even if it is useless, I beg you to be lenient on Senior Mo Yan. She did not seek I and Fang Yuan out of hate for us, but her deep love for her brother."

A grave look briefly flashes past Gu Yue Bo's face while Mo Chen stares at the boy deeply.

Lo Jik's speech is moving and reckless, showing his inexperience. Knowing that Mo Yan still cannot help but compare his thin back with someone else's. Her brother may not remember their father, but she does. Her nose pricks slightly, and she feels overwhelmed with emotions.

'However, the key thing is Lo Jik citing Tales of Ren Zu!' Fang Yuan narrows his eyes. 'Almost every senior instructs their juniors using Tales of Ren Zu since its nuances are universal. Children and elders alike can learn from it at any stage of their lives. It's as Lo Jik says. How can any of us claim to be above such notions? Is my ambition for Immortality not similar to a crazed love for it? It's a welcomed insight. By citing Tales of Ren Zu, Lo Jik pressed the Clan Leader to adopt softer punishments, too, since Gu Yue Bo cannot publicly spit at the lessons learned from Tales of Ren Zu. But why?'

Fang Yuan wonders.

'What does Lo Jik stand to gain?'

He blinks before sneering.

'Oh, is that it? The chances of my thoughts being correct are high. Maybe my return somehow changed his preferences instead? Not interested in the girls from his batch, Lo Jik trains and practices. However, the sight of someone interesting makes him fall for her. Sigh. He is a teenager. I was impressed with how he used the servant to traumatize my Little Brother, but I shouldn't increase my expectations. Things are not too different from last time.'

"Sigh," Gu Yue Bo exhales wearily. "You are a good child, Gu Yue Lo Jik. I understand



we were? Open your eyes, Mo Yan!”

The woman hesitates, “Is it about Gu Yue Fang Zheng?”

“Him?” Mo Chen sneers. “He was merely a pawn. I see. You do not understand what happened. Let me open your eyes, foolish Granddaughter. How did the Academy Elder arrive not a moment after Gao Wan stopped beating Fang Zheng? Why did he kill Gao Wan, not allowing that scum to explain his actions? The Clan Leader accepted Fang Zheng under his wing, and the boy didn’t know it. He keeps other elders and factions from approaching Fang Zheng, letting him cultivate peacefully. Yet, the Academy Elder, who favors the Leader’s faction, did not stop Gao Wan from beating Fang Zheng. Why?”

Mo Yan’s eyes briefly widen as she understands the situation.

“To suppress the Mo Family.”

“Wrong!” Mo Chen hollers. “To EXTORT us!”

Mo Yan’s expression freezes as the Elder supplants. “The Mo and Chi Families balance each other. The Clan Leader does not want the Chi Family to use this mess as an excuse to suppress us. He indirectly demanded a small fortune from the Mo Family to provide assistance.”

The Elder collapses in his chair, massaging his head. His tone and expression soften as he notices the complicated look in his Granddaughter’s eyes.

“Sigh, Yan. Even if you don’t want to think for the Family, think of your Brother. Taking a step back from the rule of seniors not interfering in the junior’s confrontations, what do you think will happen when Mo Bei’s classmates learn his Sister came forward to cover for him. Kids their age are prideful. How will Mo Bei feel and react when his rival from the Chi Family uses that to suppress your Brother?”

Mo Yan’s expression darkens as Mo Chen shakes his head.

“We can’t change what happened, but we must take precautions. Answer me, what should we do with Gao Wan’s family?”

Mo Yan momentarily contemplates. “We should execute them since Gao Wan is already painted as a traitor.”

It’s the harsh reality of this world. Gu Masters lord over mortals and only individuals with the surname Gu Yue can follow the path of Gu Masters in the Gu Yue Village.



“That would be the case ordinarily,” Mo Chen scoffs. “However, our family is under harsh judgment. We will compensate his family with 50 primeval stones before exiling them out of the village.”

Mo Yan’s gaze flickers as she questions softly, “What about Fang Zheng, Fang Yuan, and... Lo Jik?”

“Hmph, so you can still think about atoning for your actions. You’re correct in thinking that fulfilling the Clan Leader’s punishment won’t do you any good until the Mo Family sincerely compensates the affected party. The victim of your ignorance is Fang Zheng. I have some impression of his uncle, and aside from reimbursing for the healing of his injuries, a fair sum of 400 Primeval stones should shut him up. Meanwhile, Fang Yuan was the least troubled party. He will also earn a minor boon, so I will have a servant deliver 30 Primeval stones to the academy dorm.”

Mo Yan quietly nods.

“Sigh. You should be thankful for that boy, Lo Jik. Our Family stood to lose more than I had to *‘gift’* the Clan Leader. He is also the reason why your punishment is so minor. He is your greatest benefactor of the day. What do you think we should do?”

Her Grandfather’s intense glare pins her on the spot as she swallows a lump in her throat.

“Give me a chance to show my sincerity, Grandfather,” Mo Yan stammers. “Gu Yue Lo Jik will lose 15 stones due to my actions. However, he is my benefactor. I shall reimburse him ten times that amount—I will pay it out of my savings for Fang Zheng and Fang Yuan, too.”

Mo Chen’s expression finally eases. However, his granddaughter isn’t done. The recollection of the youth’s proud back distracts her again. “This Mo Yan is set to change. You have always been kind to me, yet I let my temper dictate my actions. Grandfather, I shall personally deliver the compensation to Gu Yue Lo Jik and apologize for the trouble I have caused.”

Mo Chen blinks in surprise.

Yet, he calms down after thinking about it again. Mo Yan was dangerously close to a mission that may as well be a partial exile. It’s hard for someone to not rethink their life choices.

Mo Chen's gaze betrays his pride as he nods.

"Good," he replies flatly. "Now leave. After you're done with your missions, expect to stay in confinement on family grounds for a week. Also, you won't meet Bei'er until you endure all these punishments."

"I understand," Mo Yan sighs sadly and leaves the study.

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'I wonder if it worked a little,' Lo Jik toys with a stone while staring at his ceiling. The short duration of his stay in this world allowed Lo Jik to learn that the tone of pick-up lines in this culture is—*cheese!* The heavier he lays it, the better. Though, it will take time for Lo Jik to not feel cringy. After all, if he pulled such a stunt in his homeworld, he would be branded a pathetic creep 9/10 times.

He still isn't sure if it worked, so he will have to wait.

'What a day,' he exhales. 'I should start cultivating.'

He will consume 2 Primeval stones every night during his cultivation. His sessions might be longer than others. For instance, one primeval stone has enough essence to fill an Initial Stage Rank 1 Gu Master's Aperture completely. Lo Jik can cultivate his apertures roughly twice using two stones since his limit peaks at 48% instead of 100. However, time passes in the blink of an eye when cultivating. Each session roughly takes him 30-40 minutes, and by the time he's done, it's already midnight, leaving Lo Jik exhausted.

He wishes he could find a Gu worm to sustain him and substitute sleep so that he can cultivate more.

Maybe he'll find one someday.

He smiles and sits up.

*\*Knock-Knock\**

*\*Knock-Knock\**

'What now?' Lo Jik groans and gets out of the bed. He merely opens his door for a shallow peak, blinking in surprise when he sees a familiar figure standing at his rundown doorsteps. Her gaze meets his as she raises an eyebrow, not speaking anything until Lo

Jik slowly opens the door completely, allowing Mo Yan a glance into his luxurious deck, refurbished with a barebones mattress and bamboo shelf to keep his tidy whites from public view.

“Senior Mo,” Lo Jik nods slowly, letting apprehension filter into his voice as Mo Yan works her jaws.

“May I enter your house?” She questions, feeling her cheeks heat up. It’s not embarrassing for her to enter an opposite gender’s house. However, it’s unusual for Mo Family’s princess to ask for someone’s permission.

“No,” Lo Jik closes the door, surprising Mo Yan. He doesn’t return to his cabin and steps forward, almost hitting Mo Yan until she steps back with a scowl.

“What are you doing?”

“I don’t think it’s right for Senior Mo to enter my house this late in the night,” Lo Jik explains quietly. “There’s some privacy in the grove behind my cabin, Senior Mo.”

Mo Yan chews her lips in frustration before nodding. Anybody aware of her character will gape if they see her like this.

She follows Lo Jik as he strolls behind his cabin into a cleared space where Mo Yan notices half-cut bamboo shoots, making her recall Lo Jik’s claim of building and repairing his home. A part of her has a sick need to joke about his financial situation. Yet the woman feels she will lose something important she gained in a few moments when watching his back cover her from every blame and doubt.

They stop near a small spring with a few large rocks around it. Lo Jik looks around before nodding at her. The two did not exchange a single word during the entire passage. Silence reigns between them, allowing the crickets and rustling bamboo leaves to echo in the clearing. Fireflies buzz around, reflecting their glow on the calm spring surface.

She keeps staring at the boy. His short hair makes him look unrefined. His robes are worn and patched, and his features aren’t over-the-top either. However, she admits he looks remotely better than many in her faction. He is also slightly smaller than her, but Mo Yan knows enough about biology to understand that the youth almost her height will shoot past her any day now.

“Why do you bully my Brother?” Mo Yan questions after regaining her wits.

"I need Primeval stones," Lo Jik replies sincerely.

"How dare you extort my brother?!" Anger flashes in her gaze. Her blue battle dress still retains signs of her struggle in the world beyond their village, making her appear fiercer than usual as Lo Jik meets her gaze, pressing his already questionable luck with as much cheese as he can grind.

"I don't expect you to understand, Senior Mo. My inexcusable actions aren't—"

"Answer. Me." She demands drily.

"I don't know how I dare extort anyone," Lo Jik glances away. "If they surround me tomorrow and rob me, I know I wouldn't hate them. I suppose I'm holding them up to the same standard."

"That's no excuse!" Mo Yan grits her teeth. The need to find justice for her brother contradicts everything she feels after the evening. The sight of her brother's badly bruised face collides with the image of the enduring back who stood for her.

"I said it's inexcusable," Lo Jik glances at her again. "Senior Mo, I did what I needed to because I lacked resources for cultivation. I don't regret my choices. If your brother continues resisting, I will keep applying pressure."

"I should bury you right now!" Mo Yan hisses. She was—IS wrong. What she felt could not be honest. Lo Jik is a no-good, poor son of a bitch!

As she tries to keep it together, she notices a look of sincere hurt appearing in Lo Jik's eyes after her words. He tries hiding it, but his bitter smile betrays his emotions, stunning Mo Yan's fury. Regaining her temper, she looks away. Unbelievably, she offers him support. "I'm told it was wrong to step between your issues in the Academy. However, if it's money you need—"

"I don't NEED money," he looks at the pouch on her waist. "I want it for cultivation. However, I lived without it for 15 years already. It's a luxury for me. My needs..." He shakes his head. "Senior Mo, if you're here to make me apologize, I don't have any. And I can't let up now since five weeks of my stipend are gone, too."

"I came here to compensate you," Mo Yan snorts, patting the pouch on her waist.

"Why?" Lo Jik frowns.

"Because," Mo Yan stammers, unable to meet his gaze as she feels butterflies in her

stomach. Many men have competed for her favor before since she's Mo Family's Young Miss, but Mo Yan's never seen someone stand up for her in her darkest hour.

"... you spoke for me."

"Oh," he blinks. "I don't need any compensation for that."

Her head whips in his direction. "What? Isn't money the reason you extort others? I'm handing you 150 Primeval stones."

"Senior Mo," Lo Jik frowns. "I didn't risk my neck for you for money."

Mo Yan's expression slightly changes as he purses his lips.

"Do you look down on me and my family?" She snarls. "It's a fair compensation. Gao Wan did nothing to you—"

"I don't need your money!" Lo Jik snaps at her.

"What do you need?!" The woman barks back as he stares at her.

"I need someone like Senior Mo in my life," Lo Jik suppresses the cringe. He's come so far—he WILL bag it! "I told our Patriarch the same. I need someone who stands up for me."

Exhaling sharply as Mo Yan's expression falters, Lo Jik adds, "It's late, Senior Mo. You should leave alongside your compensation."

Her lips quiver when she notes the hint of disdain in his tone. He refuses to look at her as Mo Yan clenches her fists. What was she expecting to achieve by coming here against her better judgment? How will a pauper ingrate like him who dared hurt her brother ever have someone in his life? He's a pathetic man who does not even have a better pair of sandals, letting cold mud slip between his soles and sandals at such a chilly hour.

He doesn't NEED money?

His very existence needs it! He needs new clothes, a roof, shoes, and cultivation resources.

How dare he act so unreasonable?

Mo Yan's expression stiffens.

It's wrong to even think about THAT!

Another bout of silence ensues around them as Mo Yan steps forward and unstraps the pouch from her waist.

"I won't take it, Senior Mo."

"You must," Mo Yan asserts, making him take a step back. He coincidentally steps against the boulder, promptly cornered by Mo Yan as he hides his hands behind his back.

"Your hands!" She demands.

"I don't need your money. Don't insult my actions!" Lo Jik snaps as Mo Yan bites her bottom lip, shouting, "Take it! Stop being so stubborn!"

It would be easy to threaten him through her Gu worms. However, she can't.

"It doesn't matter what you need," Mo Yan yells. "A no-good bastard like you can barely afford your living. How do you expect to find someone who loves you?!"

"Who are you to say that?" Lo Jik shouts agitatedly. "Leave, Mo Yan! You're not welcome. You're being unreasonable!"

"Shut up," Mo Yan stuffs the pouch inside his robe, grabbing his collars and pressing him against the rock. She hisses with her eyes reddening, "You had no right to speak for me! Who are you to beg the Clan Leader for lowering my punishment?!"

"I—" breath catches in Lo Jik's throat before his hands return to their positions. His expression falters. "I'm nothing. At that moment, I thought—*How lucky Mo Bei is to have you. I wish I'm fortunate enough to be with someone as unreasonable as Senior Mo—*"

"Mo Yan!" she urges. "Like before, call me Mo Yan."

Lo Jik takes a moment to regather himself before dropping a silk-clad bomb. "I wish—no. I NEED someone like you, Mo Yan. When I am something. When I have a better roof, sandals, and clothes."

She takes a deep breath and frees his collar.

“What will change when you have all those things?” Mo Yan sneers. “I’m Mo Yan. Do you think there is another Gu Yue Mo Yan? You’re just a toad lusting after a swan’s flesh.”

He stares at her before pulling the pouch stuffed in his robe and tossing it at her face. She blinks in surprise as the hefty bag lightly hits her while Lo Jik mutters, “Just leave.”

The cloth pouch falls onto the damp ground as Mo Yan stands in her spot.

“Or else?” She raises a brow, barely keeping her voice from quivering.

“Or else Mo Bei won’t be your greatest source of worry,” Lo Jik smiles plainly. “Please, Senior Mo.”

“I’m leaving tomorrow for a mission,” Mo Yan whispers. “It will take me more than a week. I’ll return before the caravan.”

Lo Jik inclines his head as the woman continues. “So, you will have time to forget this ever happened.”

She leans forward, bringing her lips down upon Lo Jik’s. Her breath hitches when his hands land on her waist instinctively. Her eyes widen as he leans forward and takes the initiative to kiss her instead. Mo Yan closes her eyes, ignoring her mind and letting her unreasonable love set her path. The night does not feel so chilly anymore as she feels confident in her appraisal. He didn’t want her wealth until the very end.

He didn’t need it.

He needed her.

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***[Mo Yan’s First Kiss (Silver): Took Mo Yan’s First Kiss. Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

***[A Taboo Makeout (Bronze/Repeatable): Made out with Mo Yan. Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

Lo Jik stares at the prompts only visible to him as he tosses the money pouch before catching it.

Guess who got a sugar mommy?

To be honest, Lo Jik knows he pushed his limits here. If he let such a prime target get away, Mo Yan will get a chance to calm down and reconsider her options. However, Lo Jik identified what would make her anxious and used it to mark a lasting impression on her.

He snickers while wondering which reward he should retrieve first.

His Trait's reward system is straightforward.

He can store the rewards until he achieves the same task again, which will override the previous prize. For example, he has a repeatable achievement—*A Taboo Makeout*. Lo Jik can earn this achievement once a day. However, he will lose the bronze-ranked reward if he doesn't retrieve it before making out with her the next day.

'I wonder what types of reward I will get.'

The earnings from his Trait are usually inclined around his partners. He recalls how he got the same autographed guitar from one of the lesser-known singers. Yes, he can get the same reward multiple times. His Trait seems to copy an item in existence before granting it to him, so he isn't stealing anything.

The only item he cannot receive is something in another individual's possession. It gets tricky because Lo Jik isn't aware of all the rules.

What does another's possession signify?

An item's receipt?

Something present in one's household?

Or mere acknowledgment from someone about their property?

It's simply too diverse!

Lo Jik would always think about it until he realized how stupid it was to waste his time on such thoughts.

His Trait gets him goodies by having sexual experiences with others—and he pondered on its ways instead of achieving said experiences! Oh. What a fool he was!

Shaking his head, Lo Jik straightens his back and accepts the ascending order of



retrieving his rewards.

Bronze Reward!

A mere thought invokes a soft white orb of light mere inches from his forehead before it releases a 'pop' sound, letting a tiny, pitch-black ladybug fall from the space onto Lo Jik's lap. The youth slowly picks up the ladybug, being gentle about it as he observes it.

A Gu worm.

His breathing turns hurried as Lo Jik studies the creature before his eyes pop open!

A Rank 1 Black Boar Gu?!

The first thing Lo Jik does—is mentally note its worldly value to gauge the level of rewards in this world.

'I see. The Bronze Achievements should net me rewards valued between 500-600 stones. In rare cases, I might get that much cash instead.'

It happened before, too. However, cash in the previous world had serial numbers, and Lo Jik couldn't use the copies.

Here?

Lo Jik can use cash on his cultivation!

Thinking for a moment, Lo Jik extends his essence into the Gu worm to sense how resistant the Gu worm is to getting refined—

It's refined instantly.

Lo Jik works his jaws.

'If something from within me created its copy... I should have known it won't resist my will,' He narrows his eyes, quietly storing the Black Boar Gu into his aperture before thinking about the Silver Achievement.

'Usually, the net difference in the rewards increases as one goes higher on the scale. I used to get Bronze-Ranked prizes worth 300 Federation Credits. Meanwhile, the Silver-Ranked rewards were anywhere between 3000-8000 Credits. However, the Golden-Ranked achievements net me items that couldn't be valued through the credits



Another week flashes by in the blink of an eye as Lo Jik and Fang Yuan confront students in groups. Oh, sure! The Academy Elder happened to focus on ‘gank’ tactics this week. Nothing suspicious about that. Lo Jik scoffs in his heart. Gu Yue Mo Bei leads the group focused on Lo Jik, his sharp glare befitting a war general strategizing to snatch a bowl of oatmeal from his brother-in-law.

“Give up, Lo Jik!” demands a student. “You cannot defeat us!”

“Yeah! It’s time you pay for your actions!”

“Hehe, we will defeat you today and take your remaining money. You can’t get a stipend for 4 additional weeks and will have to watch us in shame!”

Fang Yuan also faces similar shouts with the bonus of an extremely angry twin who got beat up to an inch of his life because of sharing a face with the indifferent devil ahead! Chi Cheng is also in this group.

Lo Jik thinly smiles. He slowly moves, making others jerk. Even if the students surround him, nobody rushes to attack him. Why would they? The first person to get caught by Lo Jik will have his face swollen with those slaps! So, their hearts shudder when Lo Jik quietly unsheathes his dagger.

“W-What are you doing?” A girl squeaks, making Lo Jik smile wordlessly. He rushes at the girl with his dagger shining a cold, keen light. The color drains from the girl’s face as she panics and stumbles back, watching in shock as a swift sidekick catches another student in the mug! Lo Jik glances at the girl, thrusting his dagger at her as she closes her eyes, only to feel a tight slap on the face, snapping her head aside.

Lo Jik looks at Mo Bei, beaming at the boy. However, Mo Bei only sees a terrifying opponent with a sharp weapon in his hand. The boy’s breath catches in his throat as he suddenly enters his stance, almost yelping in surprise when the boys meant to block Lo Jik’s charge and stand aside fearfully.

Mo Bei learns a valuable lesson—*he can only rely on himself.*

Lo Jik’s ruthless slaps only solidified that lesson.

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The Academy Elder snorts in displeasure as he witnesses how Fang Yuan and Lo Jik use their means to quickly terrify the groups of intimidated students and tame the rest. However, the Elder cannot interfere anymore. The lessons on tactics were his way of encouraging the students to follow forward courageously. Some did, but not the rest.

Yet, the Elder observes the situation quietly.

It was a simple scheme from his side to suppress Lo Jik and Fang Yuan. The Clan Head approved of it, or else he would not have punished Lo Jik in such a way.

They all understood the Mo Family would compensate Lo Jik. Gu Yue Bo could increase Lo Jik's punishment. However, the critical part of the scheme wasn't suspending Lo Jik's stipend but turning it over to Fang Yuan!

Greed can change an individual. Wealth destroys the most beloved couples!

'That's right. How will you divide the extorted money? Will Fang Yuan reimburse Lo Jik? If he does, he will feel cold against Lo Jik since he is paying out of his pockets. If Fang Yuan doesn't, Lo Jik will grow distant from him. He may turn against Fang Yuan, evening the battlefield altogether! Hehehe, these two have C-grade aptitudes and no external support. They can only rely on themselves.'

Even if nothing changes on the surface today, the seed of discord will grow and fruit within the next four weeks.

'Once they fall out eventually, one of them can join the budding three factions within the classroom. It will also force Fang Yuan to select a group for himself, promoting group confrontations.'

Isn't that what the Academy Elder wants to see?

He—

His smile fades as he observes gloomily as Lo Jik and Fang Yuan quietly divide the loot in their usual proportion of 28-27. Lo Jik never brings up the topic of reimbursement, and Fang Yuan doesn't offer it either. Instead, one walks over the unconscious bodies towards the dorms. Meanwhile, the other crosses his arms behind his head and exits the academy with a polite smile.

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Lo Jik's careless demeanor fades once he enters his cabin. He exhales slightly, sitting on his mattress while letting his nervousness ease. Things are not so simple anymore. Firstly, his third Gu worm—Black Boar Gu—consumes a pig's worth of pork every five days. Pork is expensive in Gu Yue Village. Since the mountainous and narrow regions of the village cannot rear pigs, the villagers need to hunt wild boars instead. However, wild animals have tough skin and unusually sturdy bodies compared to animals from Lo Jik's previous world. Even his host only hunted a boar once after preparing a lot of traps!

Lo Jik cannot spare so much time!

He focuses on the lectures in the morning, ensuring the Elder doesn't waste his time with useless

propaganda. His afternoons and nights are just as busy! He spends the afternoon eating and selecting fruits to optimize his diet, and the nights are for cultivation. Since nurturing Aperture does not substitute sleep, Lo Jik spares 8 hours minimum every day.

Of course, the results are evident.

He's grown more in a month than he did last year. A good diet during puberty is a wonder for the body, and Lo Jik is no longer wiry or bald.

How will he get time to hunt boars? He would consider leaving the village to hunt boars if he could take care of one in a few moves. However, he cannot.

Instead, he's slowly adopted a careless and arrogant personality as if all his fortunes finally got to his head. He added to his weekly routine—celebrating the weekly extortions by feasting on pork.

There is no way Lo Jik can explain his acquisition of Black Boar Gu, leading to his next problem.

'I spent weeks slowly clearing my doubts in a way that doesn't make others suspicious that I have a second aperture. How will I hide it from others if they try and send their essence inside me to inspect me?'

To peek into another Gu Master's aperture is a vile offense, almost always leading to fatal battles if done without a cause!

He lets his vision into the aperture within his heart.

There is one doubt Lo Jik doesn't know how to clear—about the Vital Gu.

He stares at the Rank 1 Hope Gu.

'Others don't have two apertures, so they will never question if they can move their Vital Gu from one Aperture to another. The Moonlight Gu is only acting as my Vital Gu. I don't need to make it my Vital Gu and can wait for a rare Gu instead. However, I cannot move the Hope Gu from my heart. Is it because of the legends? Hope Gu resides in the heart. Does Hope Gu refuse to leave my Aperture because it's my Vital Gu, or does it need to stay in my heart?'

He wishes he could use the Hope Gu as in the Legends. However, Lo Jik admits he feels like Ren Zu—unaware of things.

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The story mentions that Ren Zu escaped his predicament because of hope. But eventually, he grew old, and without Strength Gu and Wisdom Gu, he could no longer continue to hunt. Even his teeth fell off,

making him unable to chew many wild fruits and vegetables.

Ren Zu felt death slowly approaching.

At this time, the Hope Gu said to him, "Human, you must not die. If you die, your heart will be lost, and I will lose my only place of residence."

Ren Zu was helpless. "Who wishes to die? But if the heavens and earth want me dead, I have no choice."

The Hope Gu said, "There's always hope in everything. Catching the Longevity Gu will increase your lifespan!"

Ren Zu had heard of the Longevity Gu long ago. However, he waved his hand helplessly. "When the Longevity Gu stays still, nobody can detect it. When it flies, it is faster than light. How can I possibly catch it? It's too hard!"

The Hope Gu told Ren Zu a secret, "Human, don't give up hope no matter what. Let me tell you, on the northwest corner of this continent, there is a huge mountain. There is a cave on a mountain, and in that cave is a pair of round and square Gu Worms. As long as you can subdue them, there is no Gu in this world that you cannot catch, including the Longevity Gu!"

Ren Zu had no choice. This was his last remaining hope.

He braved all difficulties and finally found the mountain. He then risked his life and ventured through countless dangers to ascend the Mountain. He spent his remaining energy to enter the cave on the mountaintop.

The cave's interior was completely dark, and one wouldn't even see their own fingers. Ren Zu walked in the darkness. Sometimes, he would bump into things, not knowing what they were. This caused him to get injured and wounded all over. At times, he felt that this dark cave was huge beyond words as if this was a world of its own. He felt as if he was the only person in the area.

He spent a lot of time. But he could not walk out of the darkness. Not to mention subduing the two Gu Worms.

On his last wits, almost losing hope, two voices spoke to him from the darkness.

One voice said, "Human, you're here to catch us? Go back, for even if you had the Strength Gu, it would be impossible."

The other said, "Human, go back. We will not take your life. You may not find us even with the Wisdom Gu."

Ren Zu lay exhausted on the ground, panting. "The Strength Gu and Wisdom Gu had left me long ago, and I do not have much lifespan left. So, I'm at my wit's end. But I won't give up as long as I have Hope!"

Hearing Ren Zu's words, the two voices went silent.

After a while, one of the Gu said, "I understand, human, you have already given your heart to the Hope Gu. You will not give up no matter what."

The other continued, "In that case, we shall give you a chance. We will allow you to us if you can say our name."

Ren Zu was stunned. To find their names among all the words in the world was akin to finding a needle in a haystack.

Furthermore, he didn't know how many words were in their names.

Ren Zu quickly asked the Hope Gu, but it did not know either.

Ren Zu had no alternatives and had no choice but to randomly guess their names. He said several words and wasted a lot of time, but the darkness did not respond to him. Evidently, he was wrong.

Eventually, Ren Zu's breath weakened as he turned from an elderly into a dying man. It was like the scene of the evening's setting sun. The sun that would slowly descend had already been lowered halfway across the horizon, becoming a sunset.

The food he had brought was gradually reduced, his brain becoming slower, and he barely had any energy to speak anymore.

The voice in the darkness urged, "Human, you are almost dead, so we will let you go. Use your remaining time, climb out of the cave, and look at the world a final time. But you have offended us, and as punishment, the Hope Gu shall stay here as our companion."

Ren Zu clenched his heart and rejected, "Even if I die, I will not give up hope!"

The Hope Gu was very touched and answered Ren Zu's call enthusiastically, emitting a bright light. At Ren Zu's chest area, a light began to shine. But this light was too weak. It could not illuminate the darkness. In fact, it could not even cover Ren Zu's entire body but only engulfed his chest area.

Yet Ren Zu could feel a renewed surge of energy gushing into his body from the Hope Gu.

He continued to speak, shouting out names. But he was already muddled. He wasted a lot of effort since

he couldn't remember the words he uttered before, repeating himself several times!

As time continued to flow, Ren Zu's lifespan was almost over.

Finally, on his final day, he said the word 'Regulation.'

A sigh came from the darkness as a voice spoke, "Human, I admire your perseverance. You have said my name. I will obey your commands. But only with my brother can I aid you in capturing all the Gu in the world. Otherwise, with my ability alone, it is impossible. Thus, you should give up. You're almost dead. You might as well use this chance to take a final look at the world."

Ren Zu was determined and shook his head. He used all his time to continue saying names as he tried to guess the other Gu worm's name.

Seconds and minutes went by, and soon, he only had one hour left.

But at this time, he unknowingly said the word 'Rule.'

Immediately, the darkness dissipated.

The two Gu's appeared before him. As Hope Gu had said, one was cubic, called 'Regulations.' The other was spherical, called 'Rules.' Together, they made up 'Rules and Regulations'.

The two Gu said concurrently, "No matter who it is, as long as they know our names, we will listen to them. Since you know our names already—we will be at your service, Human. But you must remember, it is important to not let others know of our names—the more people that know our names, the more people we have to obey them. Now that you are the first to subdue us, tell us your request."

Ren Zu was overjoyed. "Then I order you both, go and catch me a Longevity Gu."

The Rules Gu and Regulations Gu worked together and captured an eighty-year Longevity Gu.

Ren Zu was already a hundred years old. After consuming this Gu, the wrinkles on his face vanished, and his frail limbs became muscular again. A vibrant aura of youth oozed from him.

With a belly flop, he jumped up onto his feet.

He ecstatically looked at his body, knowing that he had regained the body of a twenty-year-old!

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Lo Jik sighs.



He is like Ren Zu. He doesn't know the limits and rules of his Trait or the Hope Gu. It's like guessing in the dark. Didn't he spend a long time in his previous life to understand his Trait? He stumbled in the darkness, hit his toes against the rocks, and walked in circles, trying to learn its use. Hope Gu is similar.

All he knows is that it feeds on the Aura of Rejection his body seems to produce after absorbing a Primeval Stone.

'No,' Lo Jik's gaze brightens. That isn't all!

He also knows that the Hope Gu was in his heart, not revealing the Aperture until he released the Aura of Rejection. It was hidden!

Anticipation bubbles in his chest as Lo Jik stares at the Hope Gu. He can sense he's on the right track as he tries commanding the Hope Gu to hide itself.

One must not confuse it with the Gu worm's intended use. Several Gu worms move and play in the Aperture, acting as living beings. Some can hide, too.

The second he thinks of making the Hope Gu hide itself, he feels the Aperture in his heart '*disappearing.*' He gasps in surprise. After all, he can still sense the Black Boar and Hope Gu inside his heart.

'I see,' Lo Jik narrows his eyes, instinctively commanding the Hope Gu to release its light.

It '*brightens*' the aperture and makes it visible again.

*The light of Hope!*

'It's not just the legends,' Lo Jik sucks in a breath of cold air. If Hope Gu contains its light, it can hide everything within his heart, protecting his secrets!

'Let's test my second theory,' Lo Jik smirks as his shoulders relax.

'I asked the Academy Elder—what if other student cheats their cultivation. That's how I'm clear that Gu Masters can inspect each other's apertures in a moment of vulnerability. However, he also said something intriguing. Since cultivation involves nurturing the Aperture's wall, the better the quality of Primeval Essence, the more optimized the results are. So, why don't other students ask their elders to nurture their aperture with superior essence? Why must we toil using our initial-stage Primeval Sea?'

He snickers.

'The Elder said there are no two identical leaves. There's a similar finding in my homeworld that no twins

share the exact same DNA, no matter their external looks! Similarly, everyone's Primeval Essence is different and unique. It contains our life signature or aura. Sending our Primeval Essence into another's body will conflict with the target's Aperture and leave hidden defects, if not outright injuries, should the other party fail to control their Primeval Essence.'

Nobody wants a defective Cultivation!

'However, I have two apertures.'

A thin stream of jade-green essence with a copper-like luster flows into his first aperture. Lo Jik works cautiously, observing if the Primeval Sea from the second aperture conflicts with the one beneath his navel.

'It doesn't!' He gushes.

'This changes everything!' Lo Jik licks his lips. Why?

Until now, he was dividing his efforts to nurture his Apertures simultaneously. It was similar to two C-grade students cultivating at a time. However, streamlining his resources into one Aperture will be equivalent to an A-grade talent's cultivation with loads of money since he still possesses 210 stones!

Once his first Aperture breakthroughs into the middle stage, he can use the middle-stage essence to nurture his heart!

His cultivation will undoubtedly lag since he's focusing on two Apertures. However, his speed will be Heaven and Earth apart from his current state!

Lo Jik chuckles and observes his second aperture.

Hope Gu brightens the space like a sun as the pitch-black Black Boar Gu flies around it, enjoying its warmth. The Moonlight Gu resides in his right palm. Lo Jik observes his fourth Gu worm.

It rests at the bottom of the aperture, indifferent to the green-copper essence. Thin green vines coil around its spherical green body as it releases a hint of regal and archaic aura!

'The Green Copper Relic Gu.'

That's right, he identified the strange Gu worm, and he's thrilled!

'It's a Gu worm that can directly increase a Gu Master's cultivation by a minor stage. If I use it now, I will instantly become a Middle Stage Rank 1 Gu Master.' He sneers. 'But why would I expose myself? This Relic Gu is extremely rare. However, it's easy to feed. It only consumes my essence. I'll wait until both my

apertures are at the Upper Stage before I use it on one of them to become a Peak Stage Rank 1 Gu Master.'

'Well,' he beams. 'Let's continue!'

The Black Boar Gu stops flying aimlessly at Lo Jik's command as thin streams of his essence enter its body. The Black Boar glints, releasing an ethereal, pitch-black glow.

If someone observes Lo Jik now, they will find him surrounded by a pitch-black mist sticking to his skin. He feels a warm current moving through his body before his body turns numb. The situation only lasts a few seconds, leading to extreme irritation and itching flooding his body!

Lo Jik grits his teeth.

It's not like nurturing his aperture where time seems to fly by. Instead, Lo Jik feels that time is moving slowly. However, he persists. Did his body not endure molten candle wax atop his dick to get his third Golden Achievement? Jayda was kinky and dangerous, but he persevered! Can he not do the same again?

His breathing turns rough.

Lo Jik feels a sharp pain accompanying the itching after 15 minutes, signaling him to stop.

He exhales, stopping the Black Boar Gu as he notices his clothes sticking to his body.

Everything in excess has consequences. The Black Boar Gu grants permanent strength to the Gu Master. It's a gradual process. A Gu Master cannot attain a wild Boar's power in a day! Humans are feeble. They need time to adapt to such modifications.

'Still, each use makes me stronger than before.

Lo Jik clenches his fist.

'That's why I have to resort to slapping more as I slowly learn to control my strength.'

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**Alternate Title:** John Wich: Consequences; Other Students: Give Up! We Have the High Ground \**Lo Jik Channels His Inner Vader When He Sees a Group of Younglings For The Picking\**; Extreme Bullying; Earning Buttloads; Mo Bei Learns He Came Alone and Will Die Alone; Fear; Suppressed; Terrorized; The Elder's Scheme; Lo Jik and Fang Yuan are too Chad To Care For 3 Primeval Stones!; Lo Jik Continues To Disrupt Propaganda!; Elder's Worst Student; Learning; Rules and Regulations; Lo Jik Looking At Ren Zu:



It's a Rank 3 Treasure Brass Toad Gu!

Gu Worms possess different shapes and abilities. This giant Toad is a carrier Gu capable of traversing large distances and carrying several hundred kilograms on its back.

An earthen worm as long as 15 meters with its body covered in thick leather follows after the toad, carrying more packages on its long back. A winged, feather serpent blessed with colorful feathers and skin follows after the earthworm. Others watch the robust ostriches walking elegantly and dragging heavy carriages!

The children of the Gu Yue Village laugh and play around these strange creatures fearlessly. A wave of excitement spreads in the Village as other mortals open the windows of their second-story floors to watch the colorful procession as several dozen Gu Masters enter Gu Yue Village, ranging from Rank 1-3! Mortal warriors carry themselves in dignity... as they drag shorter carriages.

'It's here,' Lo Jik whistles. His host remembers this scene, but watching it directly fills Lo Jik with an urge to explore the world despite its fatal dangers.

It's the caravan!

Hundreds and thousands of named mountain ranges occupy the Southern Border, and traversing through various forests and valleys is not a simple task. Qing Mao Mountain itself has multiple restricted and dangerous regions! While a few Legends can explore the world as they see fit, the extensive majority cannot.

Humans are always social, and trade is always attractive.

Different mountains possess various local products that are treasures elsewhere. For instance, Qing Mao Mountain has fertile soil, and Spear Bamboo is a popular local commodity used in fermenting wine, which is popular in other regions. Similarly, other mountains and cultures possess different goods they may trade.

However, trading is difficult given the dangers, and no mortal, not even a Rank 5 Gu Master, can establish safe trade routes throughout the Southern Border! Such need for trade gave rise to Caravans that band together and travel a portion of the region to trade goods from one location to another. Gu Yue Village and similar settlements require a Caravan to import various goods. Meanwhile, Caravans also profit by purchasing local products and selling them for higher prices in different regions.

The Leader of the Caravan catered to Gu Yue Village is Jia Fu. He is a round, middle-aged Gu Master whose eyes naturally seem to squint when he smiles. Dressed

in lavish earthen and golden tones, Jia Fu rides the Brass Toad's head. Even when the ground shakes slightly with each impact, Jia Fu's body remains stable atop the toad.

Only his Brass Toad enters the village's heart as the remaining procession settles on the outskirts.

"Brother Gu Yue Bo!" Jia Fu jumps down the toad with an amicable smile. The distinct aura of Rank 4 Gu Master on the Caravan's leader matches Gu Yue Bo's cultivation, who cups his hand and greets in return, "Brother Jia Fu! Welcome!"

Other Rank 3 Elders of the clan adopt a more polite stance by bending their waists slightly as Jia Fu and Gu Yue Bo hug each other with laughs.

"You arrived later than usual, Brother Jia. I hope you didn't encounter any unfortunate situation."

"Sigh, what can I say, Brother Gu Yue! The weather is harsher than usual, forcing us to delay our travels multiple times. However, it couldn't affect our goods! Hehe! Let's have a fruitful trade."

"Well said!" Gu Yue Bo snickers, welcoming Jia Fu inside the Pavilion.

Other traders work swiftly, setting varied tents and stalls of different sizes, shapes, and colors! A colorful carnival surrounds Gu Yue Village's outskirts as many businesses close early to enjoy the sights and find a good deal.

After all, the Caravan only stays for three days. They change their goods daily, and prospective buyers enjoy browsing through the exhaustive selection. Even if they don't buy anything, many Gu Masters won't mind broadening their horizons.

Lo Jik is amongst the ladder.

His current expenses and earnings from extorting the classroom net him a profit of 5 stones. He currently possesses 215 stones after another week of extortion. His purchasing power is limited, and he wants to scope things for experience. He already owns two rare Rank 1 Gu worms, and feeding the Black Boar Gu is a pain since he has to act for it. He cannot house more Gu worms. An experienced Rank 1 Gu Master will maintain 4-5 Gu Masters, and Lo Jik, a rookie, is already nearing that *'soft cap.'*

A Gu Master can acquire any number of Gu Worms as long as they refine it. However, the cost of their maintenance is what limits a Gu Master's arsenal. They don't only think about the expenses but the rarity of a Gu worm's food, too.

Feeling something, Lo Jik looks back, catching Fang Yuan glancing at him. The Academy Elder promptly excused the classroom at the Caravan's arrival since he had other duties and wanted the class to make the most of the opportunity. There were other Academy students in the crowd, too.

Nodding at Fang Yuan, Lo Jik continues his way.

Lo Jik admits the boy does freak him out sometimes, but he chalks it out to some psychological trauma. It's not like Fang Yuan's life is without issues.

Speaking of trauma—

“Classmate Fang?”

The hair on the back of Fang Zheng's neck sticks out as the youth feels a chill the second he hears the polite voice calling him. He turns around, glaring at the smiling Lo Jik, growling, “What do you want?”

Lo Jik shrugs, goading the boy and possibly making an enemy out of a future elder for the reward beside Fang Zheng. He looks at the brown-eyed brunette, nodding at her before glancing at Zheng, “The same thing as you want.”

Alarmed, Fang Zhen unconsciously steps between Lo Jik and Shen Cui. He wanted to spend time with Shen Cui. He had to reject his friends' offers and beg his adoptive father and mother to excuse Cui from her duties for some time. The last thing Fang Zheng wants is to spend a moment longer around Lo Jik.

“What do you mean?!” The genius barks as worry filters into Shen Cui's gaze.

Chuckling, Lo Jik walks past the defensive Fang Zheng, touching a robe's hem. “Clothes, Classmate Fang. You blessed me with enough money to purchase new clothes. Hmm, you.”

Shen Cui yelps when Lo Jik's gaze lands on her. Fang Zheng clenches his fist, ready to fight.

However, Lo Jik points at Shen Cui's robe, questioning the slick and quiet stall owner. “Do you have something of that color?” He narrows his eyes at Shen Cui, letting his gaze linger thickly. “It looks good on her.”

“Bastard! I'll gouge your eyes out!” Fang Zheng snarls as Lo Jik raises his hand in

surrender.

“Classmate Fang,” he smiles wryly. “I won’t get anything from fighting you. I mean it. That color suits, uh- what’s your name?”

“S-Shen Cui,” the maid stammers as Lo Jik grins at the owner. “I want something that matches Shen Cui.”

“Young Master,” Shen Cui glances away, holding Fang Zheng’s arm, “Let’s leave. Look! There’s a tavern, too!”

“Fine,” Fang Zheng stares at Lo Jik as she turns around, only to find the latter winking at Fang Zheng.

‘You!’

Anger fills his heart as Fang Zheng bites his lips in frustration.

“Hehe, Young Master!” The stall owner snickers. “What a glib tongue you have.” He retrieves a few robes with earthen and green tones as Lo Jik rolls his eyes.

“Forget these. Show me something in red, black, and blue—something that can last long and be worn in winter and summer.”

The stall owner grows speechless at his fucboi behavior.

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‘*Sharing fortune and misfortune.* Heh. I wonder if Gu Yue Lo Jik understands the depths of that sentiment.’

The evening sun slowly sets past the horizon, shading the sky with a deep amber hue for a few minutes until dusk kisses the clear sky, darkening it in blue. The caravan looks entirely different at night as various lights and lanterns uplift the establishment’s charms. Some utilize decorative Gu worms to cleverly enhance their surroundings. Meanwhile, others use their expert taste in color composition to set pleasing interiors.

‘There are only a few noteworthy benefits I can gain from Gu Yue Village through my knowledge about the future. I already took what’s left of the Flower Wine Monk’s remains, refining the Liquor Gu. I also earned the sum of 30 primeval stones due to Mo Yan’s ignorance. Like my previous life, success is getting to Lo Jik. However, things changed for Lo Jik only after this Caravan the previous timeline.’



Fang Yuan recalls the hilarious tale of Unlucky Stone Throw.

In his frivolous ways, Lo Jik enters the gambling rock establishment in the caravan with a classmate. There, the couple encounters the girl's father, who grows furious and smacks his gambling rock at Lo Jik's head. The father takes the girl away, intending to set her straight once they get home. Arrogant and shameless as ever, Gu Yue Lo Jik will pick the free gambling stone.

Nobody could imagine the gambling rock had a precious Gu worm inside it—a Mudskin Toad Gu! Lo Jik immediately sold it for 200 Primeval stones, funding his cultivation. The event made him slightly famous among the villagers, while the girl's father could only wallow in regret.

'You are right, Classmate Lo Jik,' Fang Yuan snickers shamelessly. 'We will share fortunes and misfortunes. Not to mention, the Mudskin Toad Gu is more precious than 200 stones. Lo Jik was young and didn't know its correct value, earning a loss instead.'

Fang Yuan makes his way to the gambling den.

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Lo Jik returns for the night after satiating his curiosity and expending 4 stones. He carries packages of clothes under his arm, slowly opening his cabin's door.

'Hmm. I'll try the gambling den tomorrow. Sure, it's not like my previous world's casino, but gambling is never honest. Heh. Finding a Gu Worm from a rock sounds like a good video game.'

Lo Jik's smile fades when he notices a slip on the other side of the door. Frowning, Lo Jik cautiously walks over to the note before depositing his clothes atop his shelf. Observing how it's nothing strange after pushing the message with his foot, Lo Jik crouches and turns it over to read its contents.

—*Tomorrow night. Same place. Midnight.*—

Lo Jik works his jaws.

'It's a good thing I got new drip,' Lo Jik muses, returning to his mattress for daily cultivation.

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“I’m so grateful, Young Master!” Shen Cui hugs Fang Zheng’s arms as the morning sun rays shine on the duo. The caravan is packed with customers again as the couple sometimes squeezes through the crowd. Shen Cui trills. “I never got a chance to enjoy the market. But Young Master brought me here twice!”

Fang Zheng blushes as he feels a lump in his throat. His heart madly beats when he feels Shen Cui’s soft and warm breasts press into his arms. He swallows hard, glancing away while Shen Cui looks up to him, veiling her sly gaze with ostentatious sincerity. However, fate plans other things since Fang Zheng’s body freezes. Shen Cui blinks, following Fang Zheng’s gaze and finding a familiar youth chewing on a small loaf of red bread with bean paste atop it.

Shen Cui’s eyes cannot help but light up slightly in appraisal.

The youth’s regrowing brown hair fails to look unflattering in his new clothes since he fills them well enough. However, Shen Cui glances away, unwilling to attract trouble despite noticing a slight ‘*spark*’ between them from yesterday.

“What a coincidence, Classmate Fang,” Lo Jik smiles. It IS a coincidence since Lo Jik spent his morning strolling the tavern and trying different dishes. The red bread has a chewy texture and is inherently sweet, which compliments the grounded, nutty taste of the bean paste. If anything—the varied cruising makes Lo Jik more appreciative of this world. He also tried different wines for flavor, including monkey wine, sour shell wine, and sweet agate wine!

“We’re leaving!” Fang Zhen utters instantly when Lo Jik clears his throat. “A moment of your time, Classmate Fang,” Lo Jik smirks as he spreads his hands slightly. “What do you think of my clothes? Your opinion is valuable since you DID purchase it for me.”

Fang Zheng grits his teeth, silently leaving as Shen Cui happens to glance back.

Lo Jik merely beams at her, causing her to hurriedly turn away.

‘Okay. I think Fang Zheng DOES hate me,’ Lo Jik muses. ‘He also probably got a reasonable compensation from the Mo Family, so his cultivation must be progressing smoothly, too. Hmm. He’s also smitten by the Shen Cui.’

For Lo Jik, Love is not a complicated topic. He knows his limits and selfishness. For instance, he liked the Priestess from his previous world not because of her Platinum Achievement. She was kind and caring—*cannot* get better than that. However, Lo Jik refuses to catch feelings for a mortal. He isn’t motivated by discrimination. Mortals are feeble. Lo Jik didn’t know how frail humanity could be until he started using the Black

Boar Gu. Gu Masters of higher levels will possess even more benefits. Such monsters can kill Mortals with a tap of their fingers.

What insanity will grip Lo Jik to catch feelings for mortals?! That's setting oneself up for pain!

He shakes his head. The sweet taste of the bread now feels slightly bitter as he strolls the market with a complicated look.

His afternoon only worsens when he spends 3 stones on a rock, and it has nothing inside it! He figured he'd try his luck since someone got a Gu worm last night.

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She leans against the familiar rock where she once cornered him. Her gaze dazedly lingers on the thin crescent's reflection upon the shallow spring as the fireflies act as the star's companion. The chittering of insects is nothing compared to the spring season since many species burrow into the ground to lay eggs at this time of the year, allowing Mo Yan to reaffirm her decision in silence.

'It was a mistake!' She grits her jaw. 'I was panicking. It's nothing more. I will threaten AND pay him more money to keep it quiet, the old carrot and sticks approach. Hmph! What was I thinking doing that with a guy with no future?!'

Her lips purse together as she involuntarily recalls their kiss.

It... was pleasant.

Mo Yan questioned her female teammates about their first kiss, and their response was questionable.

'Kissing with the taste of soy and garlic?' Mo Yan frowns. That wasn't her experience. He made her feel good, the way his tongue gently moved around and touched mine.' She feels her throat drying.

*\*Snap\**

Mo Yan hears a twig snap. The clearing is broader than before despite the season of Bamboo's growth. It's evident to the battle Gu Master that the youth trained his Moonlight Gu extensively. Staring at the source of the sound since she was already facing that direction, Mo Yan tried calming her pounding heart. There's barely any light around them. However, his silhouette becomes more visible the closer he gets.

Her eyes cannot help but brighten.

She hadn't seen him for almost two weeks. Mo Yan can already point out a few differences. His hair is longer, and his body is no longer extremely skinny. His back must have grown broader and firmer, too.

'Vanquish that thought immediately!' She berates herself and observes his outfit. Dark-blue, furlined hunter's robe fits him well. For once, she's glad his fur-lined boots keep wet mud from his feet.

What she's here to do is the last thing on her mind as Mo Yan finds herself quietly walking around Lo Jik. She silently stands inches away from him, looking him up and down before her hands reach for his collars.

Surprising Lo Jik, Mo Yan methodically adjusts his collars, straightens the kinks around his sleeves, and adjusts the knot of his belt before tightening his dagger's strap around his waist.

"You look better now," Mo Yan mutters once she steps back.

He nods silently.

"H-How are you, Senior Mo—" He stammers after a few seconds before closing his mouth and glancing away, "—Mo Yan."

Her toes curl in her boots as she nods, "I'm well."

"Are you unharmed?" Lo Jik takes a deep breath, acting as if he's regathering wits before questioning her. "I... was worried. I never got to tell you how grateful I am. I promise to pay you back once I graduate... Mo Yan."

She blinks. An unreasonable emotion fills her chest and makes her almost stammer. Suddenly, she exhales sharply, shouting, "Damn it!"

Her reaction surprises Lo Jik as red freckles her cheeks, and she looks away. "You aren't supposed to worry for me! You DEFINITELY aren't supposed to pay me back!" She settles her snappy glare on him. "I didn't plan to get my team drunk in the wine tent at this hour to talk sweet nothings with you! What we did was wrong!"

Lo Jik blinks before adopting the mask of innocence, "Did I kiss you incorrectly? How can I make it better?"

“N-Not that!” Mo Yan flushes, puckering her lips. “It was... good. No- damn! Stop it!”

‘I’m doing nothing—*literally*,’ Lo Jik rolls his eyes internally.

“Just take this compensation and keep it speak to nobody about this! If you do—!” She glares with an implied threat as Lo Jik takes a step back. “I refuse. I don’t need more money. I promise to not tell anyone anything.”

“I don’t trust you,” Mo Yan steps forward. “You WILL take it!”

Lo Jik grows silent before glancing back.

“What?” Mo Yan frowns.

“Nothing. I was checking if there was a rock behind me. I don’t want to get cornered like last time.”

Mo Yan scoffs. “Accept the compensation, and we’ll have nothing to do with each other.”

“I don’t want that.”

“You have to!” Anger appears in Mo Yan’s eyes as she snarls. “Just take it.”

Gritting his teeth, Lo Jik snaps, “I don’t want money if it means I can’t meet you!”

‘Ah! Kill me now!’ Lo Jik cries internally. It’s so hard playing an innocent boy. He would instead refine Shen Cui’s snatch Gu and nurture her walls with his essence!

Mo Yan’s expression freezes as she tightly clenches the pouch.

“You won’t accept it?” Mo Yan questions coldly.

“Never,” Lo Jik stands his ground, not backing when Mo Yan steps forward.

“You won’t accept it even if I threaten you?” Mo Yan demands with a half-snarl as she steps forward again.

“I won’t ever let anyone stop me from... admiring you.”

Mo Yan’s lips quiver as she reaches him. The determination in her gaze falters as she

questions, “So, it’s not money you desire. Remind me, what was it that you wanted? I can’t remember many things from our previous meeting.”

Her hand presses on his chest. The padded feeling of muscle relieves her—it means he is eating well.

She raises her chin, questioning softly, “I’ll have to compensate you with what you desire to seal your lips shut.”

‘Oh, she’s surprisingly good,’ Lo Jik blinks but doesn’t lose focus as he slowly leans into her lips. His hands reach to grab her hands as they share a passionate kiss under the waning moon and dancing fireflies.

They slowly lean back, staring at each other.

“I remember now, Lo Jik,” whispers Mo Yan.

“I would like the same payment again tomorrow,” Lo Jik whispers with a mischievous smirk, causing Mo Yan to blink before she grins at him. She pinches his cheek, snarking, “Cheeky fellow! Hmph, I can’t move freely every day. I should pay you in advance to protect Mo Family’s honor!”

She leans forward and pecks him again, gently stroking the spot she pinched.

‘No...’ Lo Jik leans into the kiss. ‘I wish you pay me tomorrow because the Achievements will refresh, and I could have gotten something new.’

He shrugs.

Well, he can’t have everything.

***[A Taboo Makeout (Bronze/Repeatable): Made out with Mo Yan. Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

Except that~!

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***Alternative Title:*** The Caravan Arrives; Jia Fu; Toads, Worms, and Snacks; Gu Yue’s Import-Export Initiative; Rank 4 Leader; Classmate Fang, Fufufufu; Fang Yuan’s One Creepy MF; The Lovely Shen Cui; Laying It Thick; Dripping Out; Lo Jik’s Past Legend; Sharing Fortune; Gambling Den; Going on an Eating Spree! Message; Meeting



Worms that enhance her senses and lets her scope out the situation. What he got this time was based on her specialization as a scout.

*\*Crash\**



*\*Crash\**

The diary penned the experience of a lone Gu Master who survived various tribulations in the wild, learning from his mistakes and jotting down different techniques for others' benefit. It was insightful. Still, Lo Jik plans to destroy it after memorizing the contents since he doesn't want any issues in his life. The journal also details several nuances of Gu Master's vileness. For instance, there are Gu worms capable of marking other Gu to locate them. Large clans and families do that as insurance for their members' lives and discover the offending party once they harm said Gu Master, looting the Gu from their corpse.

The information shocked Lo Jik. It was a remarkable section of the journal since it allowed Lo Jik to understand that lusting after another's wealth may get him killed in peculiar circumstances.

*\*Crash\**

*\*Crash\**

Feeling something, Lo Jik slowly settles his Primeval sea and opens his eyes.

*\*Pitter\**

*\*Pitter\**

Lo Jik didn't know when the gentle drizzle turned into rageful rain. As if waiting for him to open his eyes, his roof decides to fly away—

*\*Pitter\* \*Patter\* \*Pitter\* \*Patter\* \*Pitter\* \*Patter\* \*Pitter\* \*Patter\* \*Pitter\* \*Patter\* \*Pitter\* \*Patter\* \*Pitter\* \*Patter\* \*Pitter\* \*Patter\* \*Pitter\* \*Patter\* \*Pitter\* \*Patter\**

Cold rain instantly drenches him and his house as he looks at the dark sky.

It's night, and it has been raining for four days straight!

'Fuck.'

Lo Jik sighs, accepting his fate.

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“—and the Yellow Poison Lily also is favorable to feed Stinky Eye Gu, Yellow Feet Gu, and Moist Mould Gu,” The Elder continues with a gloomy expression. One would assume the constantly yawning Lo Jik is an annoyance in the classroom, but it’s something else entirely.

While Lo Jik barely slept last night, forcing himself to attend the Academy and cultivate again after repairing his roof once the rain stopped, it took a toll on him today. He feels his eyes almost shut, and his short, dizzy spells since the Elder’s lecture are similar to a sweet lullaby for the current Jik.

“Hehe, Fang Yuan screwed up!” Lo Jik hears others snicker.

“Yeah. To think Fang Yuan would miss Elder’s class!”

“Even Lo Jik is here. Look at him. He’s clearly tired but knows what’s good for him and didn’t break the rules.”

Lo Jik yawns without bothering to cover his mouth as the Elder slaps his desk, shouting, “No more chattering!” Annoyed yet secretly delighted, the Elder commands, “Guards! Bring Fang Yuan this instant!”

‘You shouldn’t break the rules, Elder Brother,’ Fang Zheng sighs.

“Hmph,” The Elder snorts and continues the lecture while gleefully planning inside.

‘Fang Yuan and Lo Jik’s influence is too terrifying for other students. They didn’t even dare battle Fang Yuan in the combat exercise yesterday until he stepped down voluntarily. He insulted the combat instructor and ridiculed the prize for winning the sparring matches. Hmph, he’s a slimy one. But I have him now.’

The Elder thinks quietly.

‘How should I punish him? Hmm. I’ll make him stand outside for the next three hours. Other students will come and go, watching him stand there. Seeing Fang Yuan get punished will reduce his terror.’

Academy Elder’s gaze glints. ‘As for that scoundrel Lo Jik... no, I’ll let him be. He always has questions when I’m trying to guide the children to become productive in the clan. Hmph. I should take this chance and teach something useful now.’

Elder is correct in his deductions since Lo Jik doesn’t bother with the questions today.

However, the Elder cannot get far on the topic when a soft knock interrupts the lecture.

“Hehe,” a boy snickers. “It must be Fang Yuan. I’ll open the door.”

He jogs to the exit, opening the door with a grin before he stares ahead in shock. His face pales, and a loud shriek escapes his throat!

“AAAAAAAAGHHHHH!” The boy falls on his butt as he whimpers and points towards the door. His shriek is loud enough to make Lo Jik snap out of his dream-like state as he cleans his eyes, too.

A pale hand drenched in blood reaches from the dim hallway, making others suck in a breath of cold air. The Elder’s frown tightens as a stony, quiet boy slowly steps in. There is weight in his steps, black locks hiding most of his blood-drenched face. His clothes stick to his thin frame, and his other hand pulls a bleeding guard through his hair.

The students yell in terror as Fang Yuan lets go of the bleeding guard without an arm.

Appalled, the Elder points at Fang Yuan, roaring, “What is the meaning of this, you deviant?! Answer me right now before I punish and expel you!”

Fang Yuan quietly looks at the classroom. His gloomy gaze strikes terror in everyone’s heart, including Lo Jik’s, who decides against viewing Fang Yuan as a teenager. The boy bathed in the guards’ blood cups his fist, speaking with rousing emotion.

“Please deliver justice, Elder! I was cultivating when these two traitors tried harming me. Cultivation is delicate, and interruptions can permanently injure the Gu Master. These two wanted to break my door and drag me out! They desired to disrupt my cultivation right when I was about to make a breakthrough. Fortunately, I managed to reach the middle stage. I suspect these guards are traitors from other villages and have malicious schemes against Gu Yue Clan’s future! You must do something, Elder!”

The entire class’ expression changes. Their heart shivers in fright, yet their brains jolt.

“Did I hear that right? He advanced?”

“How can that be?!”

“He must be lying!”

“Fang Yuan!” Academy Elder hisses. “Stop lying. I might go lenient if you admit your mistakes now.”

“Please confirm,” Fang Yuan straightens his back.

The Elder’s frown deepens further as he steps forward and puts a hand on Fang Yuan’s shoulder, sending his snow-white essence and inspecting Fang Yuan’s aperture.

“It’s true,” The Elder’s soft confirmation shocks the entire classroom as Lo Jik frowns. He quietly glances at the younger twin.

‘Fang Yuan advanced, but you couldn’t? Dude, work hard and focus on Shen Cui later. Aren’t I doing the same?’ Lo Jik feels speechless. How does an A-grade student lose out to a C-grade scrub in cultivation speed? Granted, Lo Jik is technically A-grade, too. But he only recently found the benefits of two Apertures.’

‘What?’ Fang Zheng’s eyes remain wide open. ‘How can that be possible? If only I could freely use the compensation from the Mo Family. No! Are you unfilial, Fang Zheng? Your Dad and Mom needed the resources to run the house. Didn’t they raise me until now?’

It’s true. Fang Zheng barely saw any of the Primeval stones from the compensation. His aunt-mother came to him and explained how they needed to use the sum for his father’s business.

He grits his teeth, feeling indignant.

Yet everyone has a similar question—*How did Fang Yuan do that?*

The Elder sighs.

He cannot fault Fang Yuan because he’s here with results. However, the Elder could not imagine a child having such a ruthless nature! Fang Yuan cut off one guard’s arm and another one’s leg!

The next few days see other students advance to the Middle Stage. First is Mo Bei, then Fang Zheng, and finally Chi Cheng. However, the Academy Elder focuses on Fang Yuan instead, sending his men to investigate Fang Yuan to understand how the youth surpassed Fang Zheng.

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“Gu Yue Fang Yuan!” The Elder calls Fang Yuan forward, presenting two pouches to the youth under every student’s envious gaze except Lo Jik. If Fang Yuan becomes the Class President, Lo Jik will have to think of a way to tackle him since he isn’t going to

give up extorting the kids.

“This is the reward for being the earliest to advance in this batch,” The Elder smiles thinly, offering the hefty pouch. Fang Yuan quietly opens the cloth bag to inspect and count the money before nodding. However, he doesn’t reach out for the other bag.

“I’m afraid this student does not have the aptitude to be the Class President, Elder. I cannot accept that position.”

Fang Yuan steps down.

“You’re rejecting the title of Class President?” The Elder frowns. “You deserve this, Fang Yuan. The title is a great honor. It’s not something you should reject.”

“Is it mandatory to accept the role?” Fang Yuan calmly questions.

“Well,” Elder cannot use such words since it’s not a rule.

“I reject the position, Elder. I would like my usual stipend and the rewards from Gu Yue Lo Jik’s share.”

The Elder thins his lips and offers the noted amount before staring at the stunned classroom.

“Gu Yue Mo Bei,” The Elder calls, snapping the dazed Mo Bei from his thoughts as the boy quickly steps out. He straightens his back and pushes his chest out in pride once the Elder deposits the bag of ten stones into his hands. “Congratulations,” The Elder smiles. “You are this batch’s President.”

“Gu Yue Fang Zheng. Come forward. You are this batch’s Vice-President.”

“Gu Yue Chi Cheng. Step forward. You are this batch’s Vice-President.”

Since Lo Jik isn’t going to get his stipend, he quietly leaves the classroom. However, his new ‘*Superiors*’ notice it and follow him. Other quick-witted students eager to see some drama quickly leave the classroom, too.

Fang Zheng feels relieved. He worried for days about how he would have to lower his head and greet his Elder Brother. The thought frustrated him to no end. Yet Fate smiles at the sincere ones since his Elder Brother is so arrogant he won’t accept such honor! It’s no secret that Fang Yuan was only hours behind Mo Bei, so he tolerated the new result. Despite being his rival, Fang Zheng respects Mo Bei. The slightly short and

muscular youth is determined and hard-working. He continuously challenged Lo Jik, fearless to injuries and willing to end the two demons' rule of terror.

However, he keeps pace like Chi Cheng, refusing to step past Mo Bei since he doesn't want to lower his head and greet the President.

The trio has a tacit understanding since they do not walk toward the exit but the ration house. Lo Jik always stops by the building to collect his free rations.

"There he is," one of the students whispers. Anticipation flashes in their gazes as the trio of authoritative figures blocks Lo Jik's path, who's busy unraveling the package of his rations to eat while making his way towards the exit. He glances at them with an indifferent gaze yet a practiced and polite smile before walking past them.

The children gape as Mo Bei snaps, "Gu Yue Lo Jik! What do you think you're doing—wait! I'm talking with you!"

Mo Bei quickly follows Lo Jik, hurling insults and demanding he stop! More students quickly follow the commotion, yet their steps falter when they reach the exit. Lo Jik continues forward with ease. His gaze falls on the quiet Fang Yuan blocking the way before he stands beside his dangerous partner.

"I never congratulated you on your advancement, Classmate Fang," Lo Jik breaks the silence for one, offering a biscuit to the boy. Staring at his hand, Fang Yuan coolly accepts the offer before biting it whole, quietly munching while gloomily staring at the students.

"What are you doing, Elder Brother?" Fang Zheng's lips quiver.

"One Primeval stone," Fang Yuan replies calmly.

"Are you kicked in the head?" Mo Bei snarls. "Not only do you fail to show respect to your Superior, you openly extort us?"

"Mo Bei is right, Elder Brother!" Fang Zheng declares. "We are this batch's President and Vice-Presidents!"

"Hmph! Step aside before you do something you regret!" Chi Cheng glares.

Fang Yuan narrows his eyes, "You're right, Little Brother. You are Vice-President. Everyone else will pay one stone, the Vice-President will pay three, and the President will pay eight Primeval stones."

The trio gapes as Mo Bei snarls, frustrated beyond belief!

Why did he cultivate and work hard? To see such a result? He refuses to fall under their thumb again!

“Prepare yourself!” He charges at Lo Jik. However, Fang Zheng and Chi Cheng hesitate to rush Fang Yuan. The sight of the youth dragging an unconscious guard covered in blood is still fresh. The other students’ ugly reactions signal they remember Fang Yuan’s stunt.

“Sigh,” a girl bitterly sighs when Lo Jik makes a quick work of Mo Bei. “Nothing changed.”

“I see,” one of the boys gasps. “Why would Fang Yuan want to become the President? He earns more by extorting us. They previously earned 55 Primeval stones. Now they will earn 66 stones!”

Fang Zheng and Chi Cheng stay rooted on the spot as the remaining students offer their share. One of the boys forced to search the unconscious students also volunteers to pick eight primeval stones out of Mo Bei’s pouch before helping him to the guards so they can take him to the healer.

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The Academy Elder watches everything with a gloomy expression.

‘I wanted Fang Yuan to become the President. It would have separated Fang Yuan from Lo Jik. Why would the Academy bother handing different rewards to different roles in the class if all of them return to their homes with two primeval stones?’ He thinks with disgust rising in his heart. He blinks. Why did he feel that way? How long has he been teaching other students?

He’s faced many students with a knack for delinquency! Yet none of them made the Elder feel this way. He treated them patiently and accepted their vices. After all, can’t the Academy Elder understand that students take longer to process their emotions? They can be angry at one thing and vent it on another. However, all the students respected the Clan’s and Academy’s rules.

There has never been a case in the Academy’s history where the student rejected the Presidency. What did that mean?

Fang Yuan refuses to fall under the Clan's rules and regulations! He spat at the Clan's and Academy's dignity by refusing the role and responsibility of the President!

His thoughts turn darker as he recalls everything Fang Yuan did. Thinking about it—if Fang Yuan hadn't started extorting others, Lo Jik would have never joined in!

A knock disrupts the Academy Elder's thoughts as he scoffs, "What is it?"

"Clan Leader asked you to report in the Clan Pavilion, Lord Elder."

'Clan Leader?' he blinks.

What happened?

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*\*Crash\**

*\*Crash\**

*\*Crash\**

Jade-Green Primeval Tides crash against Lo Jik's aperture wall. It's a strange sensation. It's difficult to describe in words, but Lo Jik feels oddly intuitive about his Aperture. A wave of confidence from unknown origin fills his heart, assuring him that today is the day he will advance if he pushes on. Like many things he experiences in the Gu world, this sensation is new, too.

The light wall flashes continuously as waves of Primeval sea crash and relentlessly nurture his Aperture. The more he commits to cultivation, the more intense that sensation and confidence grows.

*It's almost done.*

*Right there.*

Lo Jik's focus refuses to waver in such a delicate moment as one final wave causes his Aperture to react. The intense, flashing lights of the Aperture's wall connect and fuse together. The previous thin surface of the wall slowly thickens. The flowing lights flow within the water, revealing a pale, milky glow.

A Water Wall!



The Initial Stage possesses a light wall, and the Middle Stage's defining characteristic is the Water Wall!

Lo Jik controls and calms the turbulent sea as he notices almost 8% of his entire essence from both the Aperture remains. However, focusing on the empty space allows Lo Jik to detect a slightly darker variation of Primeval Essence regenerating.

A Gu Master begins their path with light walls and jade-green essence. However, advancing to the Middle Stage allows the Gu Master to utilize pale-green Primeval Essence. The difference is not just in the color! One portion of the pale-green sea is worth two portions of the hade-green Primeval Essence. This is the most significant reason a more advanced Gu Master will usually win against a weaker one.

While their aptitude remains the same, a Gu Master can now use the same Gu twice as many times. A Moonlight Gu consumes 10% of an Initial Stage Gu Master's essence. However, the same Rank 1 Moonlight Gu will only require 5% of a Middle Stage Gu Master's Primeval Essence! One step forward, the same Gu Worm will only need 2.5% of an Upper Stage Gu Master's Essence!

Lo Jik slowly opens his eyes, releasing a stuffy breath he's held for a while.

'It's my first advancement,' he thinks. 'It's barely been two months, and so many things happened already.' He recollects and thinks about the future. 'I was slower than Fang Zheng and others by a few days because of my ignorance. However, it's acceptable. I have a C-grade aptitude, after all. Now, I can use Middle Stage's essence to nurture my first Aperture. It also means my second Aperture will use two stones instead of one to recover completely, increasing the cost of cultivation.'

His expression turns solemn.

'I have several benefits already. Although I don't need to compete with children, I should remain competent. I haven't trained my use of Moonlight Gu for a few days. It was raining for four days before, but I got lazy today. I can't let it become a habit.'

Lo Jik notices another few flaws in his routine, quietly correcting his errors while ensuring he keeps his mask of reckless arrogance.

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**Alternate Title:** The Classroom's Growth; Lo Jik's Roof: *I Believe I Can Fly!*; Drenched; Lo Jik Vows To Make The Heaven Pour As Much One Day; The Relentless Rain;



alcohol, but his breath doesn't. After all, Lo Jik was up and close against Fang Yuan during their first duel, and he sincerely admits Fang Yuan is as sober as they come. So, if the wine isn't for him, it's for something at least. Why else does an orphan living his days out in the dorm purchase vats of expensive green bamboo wine?

It's Liquor Gu's food.

There's also another reason why Lo Jik is sure that Fang Yuan possessed Liquor Gu from before.

They both have C-grade aptitudes and nearly earn the same amount of Primeval Stones. However, Fang Yuan shouldn't be able to advance in that timeline because Lo Jik believes he isn't far off from Fang Yuan. It's not arrogance but Gu World Mathematics. Besides, Lo Jik realized around the same time after the caravan that he could focus on nurturing one Aperture. But he only managed to advance a week after everybody. How did Fang Yuan advance within a few days after acquiring Liquor Worm?

Even if Lo Jik may turn out wrong, he finds it prudent to remain cautious of a suspected murderer. It's not the act of killing that spooks Lo Jik. Unfortunately, his hands aren't clean either. But he refuses to feel safe near a suspect who can murder someone and escape the consequences in the presence of two Rank 4 Gu Masters!

'Hmm. Well, it's not like I'll ever snitch,' Lo Jik exhales. 'And I won't willingly poke the hornet's nest. It's like how the Wisdom Gu used Ren Zu to escape Rules and Regulations. I don't care if I can be his sleazy partner and earn a small fortune with Fang Yuan as my cover. I'm sure he benefits from me enough. I don't want to show my enhanced strength, and one of us cannot take the entire classroom alone anymore. However, we can intimidate them together, earning money effortlessly.'

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A crescent moon hangs in the sky, showering a wide canopy near the Clan Pavilion in light. Under the Canopy lies a hidden courtyard known only to a few. The twisting branches and dense leaves house several critters and birds. The tree's bark is hard to the touch, filled with several ancient veins signaling its rich growth.

Fang Zheng stands underneath it all with a respectful expression. His neutral features display hesitation and remorse as he whispers, "I'm sorry, Sir. However, I cannot imagine Elder Brother charged with such heinous crimes."

Standing near him, leaning against the bark, is a familiar figure—Gu Yue Bo, the Clan's Head!

It's been a week since the news of Fang Yuan's possession of Liquor Worm leaked, filling many with envy and others with bitterness. Fang Zheng is still confused about which category he belongs to. Still, the additional news of him being suspected of another man's murder makes Fang Zheng disgusted. He glances at Gu Yue Bo, dipping his head. "I'm sorry. I should have a clear mind, but I'm distracted."

The one thing Fang Zheng is grateful for is the Clan Head taking him under his wing. Fang Zheng believes he will surpass everyone... in due time. His tutelage under Gu Yue Bo started a day after Jia Fu left the Village.

'Oh, Fang Zheng,' Gu Yue Bo shakes his head internally, recalling his conversation with the Academy Elder after Fang Yuan proved his innocence.

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*A week ago.*

"Sir?" Academy Elder sits on the chair nearest to Gu Yue Bo. He is alone with the Clan Head since others left on the day Jia Fu departed the village.

"I allowed the scheme of sowing discord between Lo Jik and Fang Yuan to test something. Let me tell you a story."

—Ever since Ren Zu got their names and subdued the Rules Gu and Regulation Gu, his first order was for them to capture a Longevity Gu.

Rules Gu and Regulation Gu, one round and the other square, worked together and could capture all the Gu in the world. A Longevity Gu was nothing complex.

Ren Zu used the Longevity Gu and returned to his youth, becoming 20 years old again.

But now the Rules Gu said, "Human, although you subdued us, every time you command us, it will add a rule and regulation."

Regulation Gu continued, "We can catch the Longevity Gu for you. This is the first order. Our new rule and regulation is—that we will not repeatedly catch the same Gu for you."

If Ren Zu wanted to catch a Longevity Gu again, the Rules Gu and Regulation Gu would not help.

Ren Zu nodded, having no choice but to accept.

He gave his second command, "Then, other than the Longevity Gu, please capture all the other ten thousand Gu in the world for me."

Rules Gu and Regulation Gu got this command. Rules Gu turned into a giant circle to encompass the universe. Regulation Gu turned into a massive square, covering the world.

One square and one round formed a giant net, enveloping the whole world.

When they shrunk again and returned to Ren Zu, all the Gu in the world other than Longevity Gu were captured.

Ren Zu was overjoyed. With this, all the Gu belonged to him. From now on, he was the ruler of the world!

But once he opened the net, with a swoosh, thousands of worms flew outside, and the Gu that Rules Gu and Regulation Gu worked hard to catch all escaped fervently.

When Ren Zu closed the net, only five Gu were left.

"Why is this?" Ren Zu was astonished.

Rules Gu and Regulation Gu answered him, "Human, the world has over ten thousand Gu with all sorts of abilities. You have no strength or knowledge. How can you subdue them? We can only capture Gu for you. To subdue them, you have to rely on yourself to get them to work for you."

Next, they added, "This is your second order, so we'll add a second rule and regulation --- From now on, we can only catch one Gu for you at a time."

Ren Zu could only nod and carefully opened the net, only showing a small gap.

The remaining five Gu contained the Strength Gu and Wisdom Gu. Seeing this, Ren Zu was overjoyed.

He regarded Strength Gu, "Strength Gu, you left me back then. Do you have any regrets? If you succumb to me now, I will return your freedom."

Strength Gu said, "Human, you are wrong. I didn't leave, not because I couldn't, but because I wanted to stay. You want to subdue me, but that's impossible. I only succumb to those stronger than me, but you aren't it. However, we can deal again. Give me your youth, and I will temporarily obey you."

Ren Zu was reluctant upon hearing this. He had just gotten back his youth. Was he about to lose it again?

But he desired strength. He knew that with Strength Gu, he would get more powerful, and life would get easier.

Moreover, with strength, he could subdue more Gu.

Thus, Ren Zu accepted and formed a second deal with it.

Ren Zu became middle-aged at once, and the Strength Gu flew out of the web and landed on Ren Zu's

shoulder.

Ren Zu had strength and was full of confidence.

He said to Wisdom Gu: "Wisdom Gu, you left me back then. Do you have any regrets? If you succumb to me now, I will return your freedom."

Wisdom Gu said, "Human, you are wrong. I did not leave, not because I couldn't, but because I wanted to stay. You want to subdue me, but that's impossible. I only succumb to those smarter than me, yet you are not it. But we can deal again. Give me your middle age, and I will temporarily obey you."

Hearing this, Ren Zu refused to do the same deal again.

He treasured his life more. He also knew he would only be left with old age once he sold his middle age. Before long, the Strength Gu and Wisdom Gu would leave him again, just like last time.

Ren Zu refused to deal but did not want to let go of the Wisdom Gu.

Wisdom Gu was anxious, reluctantly giving in, "Alright, Human, you win. I lost to you this time. As long as you tell me what method you used to capture me, I will admit defeat and not take anything from you, being at your disposal."

Upon hearing this, Ren Zu was overjoyed. Before the Rules Gu and Regulation Gu could stop him, he said, "I used the Rules Gu and Regulation Gu to capture you."

Wisdom Gu laughed upon hearing, "I remembered it, so these are called Rules Gu and Regulation Gu. Haha! You cannot capture me anymore now that I know your names."

Saying so, it turned into a flash of light and flew away, vanishing into thin air.

Rules Gu and Regulation Gu begin to complain, "Human, we told u long ago that our name should be known by you alone, not others. Otherwise, we would be used by others. Look what happened. Now that Wisdom Gu knows our names, it spells trouble."

Only then did Ren Zu realize that he was tricked by Wisdom Gu. He was anguished. He knew—he lost the only chance of capturing the Wisdom Gu using Rules Gu and Regulation Gu.—

The Academy Elder quietly ponders on the tale before offering.

"You want me to stop suppressing Gu Yue Fang Yuan and Lo Jik, Clan Leader? You compared Ren Zu with Gu Yue Village and those two with Wisdom Gu. I tried stifling their influence using Rules and Regulations. However, the results are minimal because Rules and Regulations are publicly known." The

Academy Elder frowns with worry. "I admit competition is a good thing, Sir. But those two can ruin the batch's motivation entirely."

"Hmm," Gu Yue Bo nods. "You understand my intentions. But you still don't see the entire picture. The Academy exists for the Clan. The students will graduate and enter the clan as full-fledged members. Not everyone is equally talented, but this batch has some good seeds. Competing with two battle geniuses will polish and prepare them for other tribulations. Take a moment to think."

Gu Yue Bo smiles.

"Gu Yue Clan has existed for a thousand years! Our lineage sees such genius often. Who isn't proud among them? However, did any of them overturn our Clan? No. Gu Yue Fang Yuan and Gu Yue Lo Jik will eventually realize the truth as they mature. The priority is to let them polish Fang Zheng, Mo Bei, and Chi Cheng."

"What if they lose confidence in themselves?" The Academy Elder reiterates his worries.

"Hmph," Gu Yue Bo scoffs. "Then those three are unworthy of any investment from the Clan. What genius cannot endure? What genius cannot survive? If their minds, despite their talents, are so fickle, then they aren't unpolished jades. They are merely shimmering glass."

Thinking for a moment, Gu Yue Bo adds. "I shall overlook Fang Zheng's studies from tomorrow. Keep doing your best."

The Elder's gaze shines as he eventually nods.

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"My punishment ends tomorrow," Mo Yan smiles as she lies beside Lo Jik on a cleanly sliced stone slab. A thick blanket cushions their bodies underneath as she rests her head atop Lo Jik's chest, quietly gazing at the moon with him. "And you advanced tonight right before meeting with me." Her smirk broadens as she sits up, staring at Lo Jik. "You need to do better. Although I will only meet Mo Bei tomorrow, I hear he's practicing hard."

Lo Jik gapes, blinking, "You're here to distract me! How could you?"

His words make Mo Yan giggle as she raises the blanket over them, sighing in contentment. While she knows of their competition, Mo Yan's grown calmer since Lo Jik never *'bruised'* her brother. She is also pleased since Lo Jik's cultivation pace isn't subpar compared to his C-grade peers, except Fang Yuan. In fact, Lo Jik is the quickest C-grade student to advance in the academy after Fang Yuan.

"I wish we could get you a Liquor Worm," she snickers. "You would have surpassed that Fang Yuan and

his younger twin. What about his A-grade Aptitude? Even my Brother beat him.”

Lo Jik chuckles. “He’s unfortunate enough to have someone who distracts him, too.”

“So, is that all I am?” she pouts, “A distraction.” Mo Yan looks up, looking him in the eye. “On a serious note, if you keep this pace, you will have an Upper Stage cultivation at least. However, you can always ask for my help. I wouldn’t—”

“No,” Lo Jik shakes his head firmly. “It’s not pride,” he admits. “I worry that if someone finds out about us, they will naturally think I’m doing all this for your wealth. You won’t be implicated if I take none of it, right?”

Mo Yan’s expression slightly sours, but his concern almost melts her in his embrace. It’s honestly exhilarating how peaceful it is to be with him despite the difference in their status because he never asked for her wealth.

“Oh, you,” she sighs. “You are smart and capable. If only Heaven blessed you with a B-grade aptitude.”

“Heaven is fair,” Lo Jik smiles. “It needed to lower my aptitude to C-grade to balance the rest.”

“Hah! As arrogant as ever!” She snarks, patting his cheek. “What’s so good about you?”

“Why don’t you tell me?” Lo Jik tilts his head.

“I wouldn’t know a thing,” she shrugs. “After all, I never meet you behind your house, and we never lay on rocks to gaze at stars.”

Lo Jik touches her hand, holding it and intersecting his fingers with hers. “So, I never did this. Hmm. It feels nice.”

Her cheeks turn red as her fingers slowly close around his, tightening their hold under the blanket.

“Um, Mo Yan?” Lo Jik clears his throat.

“What is it?”

“I wanted to ask if we could do... other things?”

Mo Yan blinks before a complicated look appears in her eyes. “Lo Jik... I cannot do that. My grandfather will undoubtedly kill me if he finds out I slept with a man before my marriage. I know,” she offers. “Maybe I can find a beautiful mortal for you. We have many servants.”

Lo Jik stares at her blankly after hearing her offer.



'Okay,' he notes. 'So a threesome is probably on the table if the conditions are right. That's nice to know.'

He thins his lips before shaking his head. "Not that. I understand it would be wrong. I wouldn't even ask such a thing until I'm worthy of it. How can I do that as a Middle Stage Rank 1 Gu Master?"

Looking embarrassed, Lo Jik leans into the confused Mo Yan, whispering something into her ear. Her eyes widen briefly before similar curiosity and interest flash in her gaze.

"Well," she hesitates. "It's understandable if you want to try that. However, I'm not... neat. I don't know if you'll..." her ears heat up as she looks down, muttering even softer, "... like it."

Lo Jik beams, "There's not a part of you I won't like!"

Mo Yan feels moved, eventually nodding as she adds. "Maybe it's a good *'gift'* for your advancement~!"

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The sound of fists knocking into a wood echoes in the Mo Family's courtyard as Mo Bei slowly stops, retrieving a towel to wipe his sweat. Bright lanterns in different spots within the garden illuminate Mo Bei's drenched body as he concludes his training.

His gaze reveals excitement as he hears his Grandfather's voice behind him. "It seems you can't wait to see your sister again."

"Grandfather!" Mo Bei turns around, grinning. "Of course, I can't wait to meet her! She told me she never got to become the President of the Academy and wanted me to fulfill that desire. I also have to tell her how Fang Yuan and Lo Jik are slowly becoming passive when dealing with me, Chi Cheng, and Fang Zheng! I will surpass them in no time."

Mo Chen chuckles, happy to see his grandson in such high spirits.

"Come inside. I'm sure Mo Yan can't wait to see you, too,' Mo Chen chuckles. "She's been acting more reasonably lately, and you're improving quickly! Hahaha! Fate finally smiles at my Mo Family!"

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It's not just insects pleasantly chirping under the clear night sky bejeweled with stars and the crescent moon. Mo Yan's body shudders as she feels her entire being exude a warmth she never felt before. If Mo Yan hadn't investigated Lo Jik before when trying to get him and Fang Yuan punished for hurting her brother, Mo Yan would have doubted Lo Jik was a shameless womanizer due to his skillful fingers.

She bites her bottom lip, containing her voice as her back rests against his chest. His lips gently pepper her earlobes with pecks and soft nibbles. Her robe is mostly disheveled, the wrap around her breasts undone, and her exposed, slightly toned midriff contracting and shifting as her pale chest heaves up and down.

A hand hugs past her left side, working under the right side of her robes as she watches with a lust-addled gaze how the indentations of his thumb through the fabric flick her cherry topping, often cupping and squeezing her breast.

His other hand lies firmly caught betwixt her pale thighs as she blushes in embarrassment at the sight of her slightly unkempt carpet. But Lo Jik only has praises for her. It's sweet and addictive how he treats her.

She feels his digits rub her wet entrance, sometimes playing with her poking nubbing—even gently sliding his calloused fingers into her snatch.

She softly mewls as he rubs her wet mounds. Her hips buck into his hand, shamelessly dry-humping her lover's hand. Every passing second makes her increasingly aware of the sensual pool of pleasure nursing in her core. His hot breaths please her and the sensation of his thick club against her back gives Mo Yan a good idea of how she can reciprocate him later.

It's fine as long as she's a virgin, right?

Illicit thoughts cloud her mind as she gasps for air, breathlessly moaning, "O-Ohh~ Hnngh! J-Jik! Kiss me," she begs as she tilts her head to slightly face him. He readily takes her lips as the pleasure intensifies. Mo Yan feels tears forming in her eyes as she closes them, tightly squeezing his hand with her thighs until her back arches in the air. Her knees instinctively spread apart as she faces the shallow spring, gushing as she squeals in his mouth, luridly sucking his tongue by the end of it and pinning him against the flat rock to engage in a deep, passionate kiss.

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**Alternate Title:** Wisdom Path Uses Clues and Deductions; Lo Jik Seeing Through The Curtain of Lies; Intimidated; Snitches Get Stitches; Similar Circumstances; The Extortion Celebration Day Goes Hard; Lo Jik Celebrates Weekly Bullying; Using Each Other; Sleazy Partners; Fang Zheng's New Sugar Daddy; Under The Moonlight and Tree; Rules Are Dead; Murder Suspect; Liquor Worm Gu; Rare Gu Worms; The Honey Trap; Under The Stars; Mo Yan Offers Other Girls, Kek!; An Offer; Embarrassed; An Orgasm; Lust and Desire; Mo Bei Is Eager To Meet His Sister; His Sister Is Eager, Too; Mo Bei Works Hard; Mo Yan Works Harder; Into The Spring; Mo Yan's Got It; Ren Zu Doesn't

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A/N: Am I the only one who thinks that Ren Zu's life goes downhill from here? Like dude should have been happy with Hope Gu since his only problem was the predicament. Then he had to try using attitude gu and



He sighs deeply.

'I can store it till next year's caravan and sell it discreetly. That checks it. I must refurbish my cabin and be secure since I can't carry the crystal around. Or I take the risk and store it inside my shelf. Everybody knows I'm piss poor with a roof that gives up on existence whenever the rain gets harsher. Nobody will expect me to possess such a shard.'

Licking his dry lips, Lo Jik retrieves his second silver-ranked gift.

His expectations curb when he watches the silhouette of a familiar creature form and drop on his lap.

A Green Copper Relic Gu!

Yet, Lo Jik isn't overly happy. His expression turns contemplative after he refines the Gu worm and stores it in his Second Aperture.

'Hmm. If I'm not wrong, the reward types are based on my partners and their situations. Meanwhile, its *'intensity'* is based on my situation. In simpler terms, my partners dictate the catalog of rewards my Trait will work on, while my own rank dictates what level of gift I receive. My partners represent the horizontal side, while I determine the vertical peak. Why else would I still get a Rank 1 Gu Worm worth some Rank 2 Gu Worm's cost instead? A Rank 1 Gu Worm's cost is between 300 and 1000 stones. However, special Gu Worms like the Relic Gu are worth more than what their rank dictates since they increase cultivation by a minor realm.'

'It also means that there aren't many options as a Rank 1. If there were more options, chances are my gift wouldn't be the same.'

Of course, all of this is his conjecture and not cold facts.

'I would strive to reach Rank 2 as quickly as possible. However, I may not get Silver Achievements if Mo Yan remains the same. She's littered with responsibilities and missions, while he values her Family's name more. Can I nudge her into some sense of individualism? I still have 6 months before I graduate and can delay other Silver Achievements like the penetration one until then. I can also slowly make her more selfish for herself. The chances of me getting a Silver Achievement as a Rank 2 Gu Master are high if Mo Yan happens to be a Peak Stage Rank 2 Gu Master because, despite slightly closer cultivation, she's still from a better family and has better aptitude.'

Lo Jik quietly plans things out before focusing on two individuals.

'Fang Zheng and Mo Bei. One needs to be as focused on cultivation as possible, and the other has to be as frustrated as possible to make him lash out at others, especially loved ones.'

Lo Jik's gaze glimmers as he glances at his second aperture. A copper relic Gu slowly floats under his command before releasing a piercing green light that nourishes the Aperture walls at a pace visible to the naked eye!

The flowing white light shudders and expands. Its speed increases as the aperture wall thickens. Under the Gu Worm's effects, the expanding flowing light within the water wall slowly merges with each other, leaving no spot unchecked before its speed slows down. The thick wall and the milky-white surface without dancing shadows or flickering, moving light give it the feeling of an actual wall!

Upper Stage Rank 1 Cultivation!

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*\*Crunch\**

*\*Crunch\**

Lo Jik munches on his rations as he glances within his second Aperture. It's completely different from how he started. The Hope Gu doesn't give any light and hides the Aperture within his heart while the round and cute-looking Black Boar Gu flies as if nothing can bring it down from its perpetual high. The significant difference is not the lack of two Green Copper Relic Gu Worms but the state of his aperture wall.

It's still solid but no longer has a milky, smooth surface. Instead, Lo Jik observes a slightly glowing crystal wall, reflecting upon the inky, Black-Green Primeval Essence! The slight reflection reveals a copper-like luster on the sea's surface.

Jade, Light, Dark, and Black!

A Rank 1 Gu Master's essence experiences such changes.

Peak Stage Rank 1 Gu Master!

Unwilling to squander his growth, Lo Jik naturally used the Gu Worms to advance his cultivation.

It's been another week since his meeting with Mo Yan. However, Lo Jik hasn't been free.

He's built a 'new' reputation for himself. He purposely looks for trouble with others, especially Mo Bei and Fang Zheng. But he isn't kicked in the head. Wouldn't his relationship with Mo Yan ruin if he fucks around with her brother?

That's why he chooses to antagonize Mo Bei indirectly and Fang Zheng directly. However, Lo Jik understands that doing so risks his partnership with Fang Yuan and their entire extortion business. After all, they terrorized the students' hearts to make them give up without a fight. Antagonizing them is the opposite of that.

However, being a Peak Stage Gu Master, his needs to cultivate his first Aperture are no longer proportional to others. He's already saving his Primeval Stones instead of using them to nurture his First Aperture since using the Essence of Peak Stage Aperture is 4 times as effective!

One session of cultivation for Lo Jik is similar to four rounds!

His weekly costs have instead fallen to eight stones, allowing him to net a profit of 28 stones per week!

"If it isn't the Class President," Lo Jik snickers sarcastically. "Lead the class with your mighty example and pay up."

Mo Bei's features scrunch in anger, his eyes flickering with indignant rage. He never intended to give up since he always goes down with a fight. However, when Lo Jik puts things like this, it makes others feel he plans to give up.

Mo Bei's respect in the Classroom is at an all-time low! It's not just his sarcastic remarks. Lo Jik made his ambition to destroy propaganda AND show Mo Bei up. Whenever the Academy Elder has any questions for the students in the classroom, Lo Jik will answer the quickest before making some quiet remark about how the President should be the one to answer such questions. Of course, his 'quiet' comments will resound in the classroom, leaving Mo Bei with unwarranted anger.

And if Mo Bei is angry, then Fang Zhen is LIVID!

As expected, Lo Jik glances at Fang Zheng, sneering while making an indecent hand gesture and mouthing Shen Cui's name.

That's all.

That's all it took for Lo Jik to make a focused and committed man out of Fang Zheng.

'Hmph, he is still a kid,' Fang Yuan snorts internally. Unlike Lo Jik's beliefs, Fang Yuan isn't discontented by such a shift of events. 'Gu Yue Lo Jik is showing more and more of his previous life's nature. He wastes money on lavish meals every weekend, openly jeering others for their poverty after extorting them, and feels superior to Fang Zheng and Mo Bei. Fang Zheng because he has an A-grade Aptitude, and Mo Bei because he's the Class President. After winning many times, his ego cannot handle others being superior.'

He narrows his eyes.

'If I didn't display my skills, his fangs would turn on me, too. Humans die for wealth and fame, and Lo Jik is no different. Of course, he will become a dangerous beast when he curbs this side of him and matures. However, it's better to work together. If I turn on him now, the balance will crumble, renewing the student's hope to battle me. Hope is always dangerous.'

How could Fang Yuan know that Lo Jik is doing all that to motivate Mo Yan to become an individual by isolating Mo Bei to make him lash out at his loved ones?

"Bastard!" Mo Bei shouts as Lo Jik snickers, effortlessly catching his fist with a hand and sweeping the legs from under him.

"Ugh!" Mo Bei groans. However, Lo Jik ignores the recuperating Mo Bei before avoiding Fang Zheng's sucker punch, kneeing him in the stomach before tossing the sacrifice to Fang Yuan, who plants his foot atop his Twin's face, kicking him on the ground.

A chill spreads down Chi Cheng's spine as he watches Lo Jik and Fang Yuan simultaneously staring at him. His expression turns ugly since he's the only one out of the trio who hasn't fought. If he doesn't fight, others will consider him a coward, and his social standing, compared to Mo Bei and Fang Zheng, will decline.

"You soulless villains!" He shouts as he clenches his clammy fists. "Today is the day you meet defeat!"

All Fang Yuan and Lo Jik met that day was the students lowering their heads and paying their tolls with peaceful looks on their faces.

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"Fight!"

Mo Bei growls. His fists no longer pound a wooden puppet. Instead, Mo Bei keeps

punching a mortal servant till he breaks his nose and jaw at the cost of his bloodied and torn knuckles. He snarls and raises both his fists to end the worthless servant's life as other servants and guards watch fearfully.

"Little Brother!"

"Stop this instant!"

Two shouts erupt in the garden as Mo Chen and Mo Yan appear, quickly separating Mo Bei from the unconscious servant as the Elder snaps at the guards, "Take him to a healer! All of you, leave!"

Others disappear from their sight as the guards carry the servant to a healer, leaving the Mo Family in the garden.

"Brother," Mo Yan smiles comfortingly. "Winning and losing are part of—"

"Shut up!" Mo Bei snaps, shoving Mo Yan's hand away from his shoulder as Mo Chen frowns. The boy snorts, unwilling to look at his family as he exits the garden.

"Grandfather, if this continues," a complicated look appears on Mo Yan's face as Mo Chen narrows his eyes.

"No, it's good."

Mo Chen's word surprises Mo Yan. Noticing her surprise, Mo Chen scoffs. "Don't think I forgot your temper, Lass. Mo Bei is your brother. Now look at you? You take missions seriously and have stopped your temper tantrums. It won't be long before you advance again."

"As for Mo Bei, he is facing defeat in martial arts and academics, too. Will his anger help him in learning and memorizing information? Our Mo Family has several different journals and records. We also have compiled all the knowledge taught in the Academy. Now. Mo Bei focuses on all three aspects—mind, body, and spirit."

Mo Yan frowns with worry.

"Leave it, Mo Yan. Interfering now will only make him angrier."

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"Why don't you talk to him?" Lo Jik makes a show of gulping as Mo Yan's eyes flare in



anger as she points at the kneeling boy, "I'm not finished!" Her soft hiss barely fill the small clearing within the grove.

"I stopped hurting him," Lo Jik frowns, interrupting, "for you. What else do you want? You don't see me throwing a tantrum when I have difficulties, too. But suddenly, things change if Mo Bei cannot handle his anger?"

Mo Yan purses her lips. Her answer would have been a 'Yes' if it were anyone else. However, she can't effortlessly act like her usual self. She likes her brother and Lo Jik. Sure. Her love for her brother comes nothing close to her feeling for Lo Jik. However, they are two different spectrums of emotions.

"Do you want me to not excel?" Lo Jik questions as Mo Yan snaps, "That's not it!"

"Mo Bei is already the President and has the class' admiration," Lo Jik sighs. "And while I don't show it, he has many admirable qualities. He has B-grade aptitude, never gives up, and when focused, he can challenge me and Fang Yuan."

Mo Yan's eyelids jump in surprise as Lo Jik continues. "He even gets to be with you longer than I can imagine. He has it all. But I cannot stop, Mo Yan. How can I ever be worth your gaze and time if I don't improve myself?"

Mo Yan's anger evaporates as she crosses her arms, indignantly taps her feet, and looks away.

"Hmph, glib tongue will get you nowhere!" She snorts.

"Can we..." Lo Jik clears his throat, "look at the stars?"

"Hmph, no! That's your punishment!" She promptly turns around without giving him a chance to say anything. Her lower lips twitch in anticipation as she mourns in her heart, 'To think I even cleaned myself down there. Tch.'

Being her team's leader and scout, she carefully moves so nobody can follow her behind Lo Jik's cabin. She slips into her room in darkness while recalling Lo Jik's words.

'It's true. Lo Jik has many reasons to admire Mo Bei.' She desires for her brother to get along with Lo Jik. 'If I can help Mo Bei see that...'

She frowns.

'However, Grandfather said not to interfere. Last time I did that... No, it's not like last

time. I'm not attacking anybody. I'm allowed to talk with my brother, right?'

Still, a slightly selfish thought enters her mind.

'I couldn't spend time with Lo Jik at all. He was right. I can only meet him once every week so as not to raise any suspicions. Things would have been different if Mo Bei wasn't so angry. I still have three days until the next mission. Let's find brother tomorrow.'

*The Next Day.*

"Are you busy, Mo Bei?"

Mo Bei frowns at his Sister's arrival. He opens the door to his room as she smirks at him and steps in, giggling, "Hehe~! See? Your Sister knocked this time."

Mo Bei instantly flushes as he recalls how Mo Yan caught him in the 'act' before.

"What are you doing?" Mo Yan questions as she sits on his bed while he returns to his desk, grunting, "Studying."

"You might be the most studious in our line," Mo Yan snickers. "Can I help you with anything?"

"No," Mo Bei mutters, "I'm fine. Why are you here, Sister?"

Mo Yan sighs as she watches Mo Bei keep his head low and study without sparing her a glance. She can't help but recall Lo Jik's words. She spends little time with him, but he values it. Meanwhile, Mo Bei refuses to spare her any look. Studies are important. However, does Lo Jik not study and revise? How else does he memorize things?

"You shouldn't feel so pressured, Mo Bei," Mo Yan whispers. "You are your batch's President. You beat an A-grade student in Cultivation. Think about it. Does Fang Zheng possess your martial skills? He always gets folded like a wet noodle. But you improve and present a challenge. You will eventually grow stronger!"

Mo Bei quietly clenches his fist and grits his jaw. A wave of warmth appears in his heart as he feels guilty for treating his sister and Grandfather so coldly these days.

"As for Gu Yue Lo Jik," she scoffs. "What does he have over you? He is poor and struggles in life to the point he has to extort his peers, making his life difficult once he graduates."

'And he's an arrogant piece of shit,' Mo Bei snarls internally.

"But does he not train and study?" Mo Yan's stuns Mo Bei. "He cultivates. He was the quickest among the C-grade students to advance, and he didn't let his living situation affect his diligence. If you ignore everything and focus—"

"Get out," Mo Bei whispers.

"Hmm?" Mo Yan blinks in surprise.

"I said get out!" Mo Bei yells, turning around with red eyes. "Leave my room! Now!"

Mo Yan's eyes widen. Surprise and anger appear in her gaze as she stands up, staring her brother down. "What did you say?"

"Hmph!" Mo Bei snorts. "If you like praising that poor son of a bitch, go to his broken hut! Leave my room!"

Mo Yan gapes before she snorts furiously and stomps out, smashing the door away.

"Wank off with your door open!" She shouts back as embarrassment and fury fill Mo Bei's veins.

*The Next Day.*

"I said I'm sorry, Mo Bei! Open the door!"

Mo Yan frowns before she gives up with a snort.

'Fine! Be that way! Can't you have a bigger heart?'

*The Next Day.*

"I'm leaving for my mission, Mo Bei... Do well in your studies," Mo Yan sighs as she still doesn't hear a response. She knows Mo Bei is awake and getting ready for the Academy. "Today is the day you get to pick your second Gu Worm, right? Choose something that complements your goals and path."

For once, Mo Yan wishes she could shower Lo Jik with such concern. Mo Bei won't even look at her. Why is she wasting time on someone who refuses to understand simple things? Mo Yan understands anger. Isn't Mo Yan quick to anger, too? But it never

honestly blinded her, or she wouldn't be a scout. Scouting terrain and looking for enemies is a meticulous task that doesn't rely on Gu Worms alone but on observing tracks and calm intuition, too.

She chews her lips in frustration, adding gently, "All the best, Mo Bei."

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"Lord Clan Leader," Fang Zheng cups his fist and greets Gu Yue Bo. While nights in Qing Mao Mountain are still chilly, the arrival of summer removes the need to wear heavy, warm clothing. Fang Zheng is dressed in brown robes with a black belt around his waist. Despite his setbacks, the boy reveals a determined look.

Gu Yue Bo nods and smiles, "The students picked their second Gu Worm today. Which one did you choose?"

"Reporting to Sir, I chose the Bronze Skin Gu!"

"Hmm." Gu Yue Bo strokes his beard. "Your first Gu Worm was the Moonlight Gu. And your second one is the Bronze Skin Gu. Now, you can attack and defend. It's the orthodox path. Two pursue two complements reveal your pure and steadfast nature. To attack the enemies and protect the innocents, similar to Yin-Yang, Hot-Cold, Up-Down."

Embarrassed, Fang Zheng flushes and looks down at his boots, laughing awkwardly, "I just picked it out without much thought, Sir."

"You believe I'm praising you for no reason?" Gu Yue Bo smiles. "Fang Zheng, one's actions reveal their nature. As you grow, you will come across individuals who say one thing and do another. It is through their actions you will determine the truth."

Stunned, Fang Zheng couldn't help but exclaim, "It's like that?!"

"Gu Yue Mo Bei chose Yellow Camel Longhorn Beetle Gu, allowing him to increase his endurance. It reveals his nature to never back down from challenges. Gu Yue Chi Cheng chose Dragonpill Cricket Gu, increasing his jumping power. It indicates his behavior of avoiding confrontations. Do you understand now?"

Fang Zheng gapes slightly before frowning deep in thought and questioning, "What about my Elder Brother and Lo Jik? What Gu did they choose?"

Gu Yue Bo sighs internally. As a Clan Leader, his actions cannot be partial to anyone. He explained Mo Bei and Chi Cheng's ability to let Fang Zheng analyze them since they

are his close rivals. However, Fang Zheng's heart and mind cannot look past the two C-grade battle geniuses.

'Ordinarily, it would be a bad thing. However, it can be the break Fang Zheng needs.'

Gu Yue Bo glances at Fang Zheng meaningfully, replying, "Your brother chose the Little Star Gu to increase his Moonblade's potency and distance. It shows his extreme and aggressive nature."

Fang Yuan nods. That sounds like the Fang Yuan in his mind.

"And Lo Jik," Gu Yue Bo smiles. "He chose the Iron Skin Gu."

Fang Zheng's expression freezes. Moonblade and Iron Skin Gu?

'Bronze Skin, Iron Skin, Rock Skin, and Beast Skin Gu are of the same family and increase a Gu Master's defensive power. However, the Beast Skin Gu is the weakest and cheapest. Compared to my Bronze Skin, Lo Jik's Iron Skin Gu is weaker! It's as the Clan Leader said before. I'm better at Cultivation. I can use my talent to accumulate more rewards from the Academy. Meanwhile, Lo Jik and Elder Brother will continue falling short!'

Observing the look on his face, Gu Yue Bo nods.

"Look at this, Fang Zheng," Gu Yue Bo reveals a Gu Worm in his hand, dazzling Fang Zheng with its appearance.

The Gu looks beautiful at night, emitting a faint jade glow, its oval body flat and wide. Meanwhile, its head is small, and its back mimics jade carvings!

Rank 1 Jade Skin Gu.

Fang Zheng stares with wide eyes. Jade Skin Gu is a rare Gu Worm, similar to Black Boar, White Boar, and Liquor Worm Gu. In some scenarios, due to its life-saving nature, it's valued more than the rest! And in the family of Gu Worms like Bronze Skin and Iron Skin, this Gu boasts the most robust defense at the Rank 1 stage!

"I'm willing to give this Gu to you. But it's not a gift, Fang Zheng. There are no free lunches in the world. I want you to do one thing for me."

"Y-Yes?"



***Title: It's Been Fun***

The Academy has another seven-day break for the students to refine their Gu Worms. Inside Lo Jik's Second Aperture is a new arrival. Its oval body is flat, and its head is small. The Gu Worm's back seems carved from iron as it exudes a black-iron luster. Unlike the lively Black Boar Gu, this Gu Worm rests at the bottom of the sea.

'The Iron Skin Gu raises attack and defense by covering the Gu Master in an iron-like texture. Its drawback is that it continuously consumes my essence.' Lo Jik muses as he walks to the village's exit with a bow slung across his back. 'It eats 100 grams of iron every three days. 1 Primeval Stone is worth 50 grams of Iron. So my cost of living rose from 6 to 8 stones. I still don't need Primeval stones to cultivate since the Black-Green essence is incredibly potent. If anything—I must slow down and let guys like Fang Zheng, Yuan, Mo Bei, and Chi Cheng pass me to maintain my position.'

Lo Jik stops near the village's exit, contemplating. 'I should use these seven days to train my coordination and multi-tasking ability. The more I cultivate, the more I realize the need for multi-tasking once I prepare to advance to Rank 2. Going out of the village to explore the safer portions to hunt is a good cover. Gu Yue Lo Jik is arrogant and thinks he's above the world. Naturally, he will slowly become lazy and spend his time enjoying a good sport.'

He steps out. 'Everyone has a certain talent. The previous host had great aim and trained extensively. I might use it and train it further, too. Aren't there multiple Bow Gu Worms? This talent can be another avenue of growth!'

Several Bow-type Gu Worms flash in his mind.

There are two other reasons why he is leaving the village for hunting.

'I need to burn and destroy that journal since I've memorized the contents. It was more valuable than I gave it credit once I reached the section of a few quality-of-life Gu Worms and their recipes. There's also another matter. I also must find the Black Boar Gu's food in the wild since I won't be extorting others due to the weekly break.'

His heart thrums with excitement. 'I've been using the Black Boar Gu nonstop! I wonder how strong I am compared to an actual boar.'

<<<>>>

While the Mo Family has many servants, the Main family has their personal '*picks*.' For instance, the Late Gao Wan was Mo Yan's go-to guy for matters of minor importance. Every ladder of social hierarchy has its nuances. While all the servants are under Mo Chen's employ, they are encouraged to pick the next generation they wish to be loyal to. It promotes responsibility and accountability for youths like Mo Yan and Mo Bei.

Mo Bei, too, has a personal servant.

"Report, Cao," he glances at the fair-skinned girl in blue robes. He recalls how Mo Yan brought him the maid Cao after catching him in the act. He was embarrassed! However, eventually, Mo Bei silently appreciated his sister since Cao could help relieve him of his tensions. She was a beautiful and earnest girl who did everything he asked. Still, Mo Bei never let himself fall for her since he recalled his Grandfather's lecture about marrying into suitable social levels. At best, for her service, Mo Bei planned to make her his concubine once he married someone.

Maid Cao blinks her round black eyes, nodding cutely, "I followed that man discreetly, Young Master. I told you how several other servant girls like us watch him chat and laugh with stall owners in the vegetable bazaar. I asked around for him. Of course, Cao didn't let others get suspicious and masked my concerns as a curiosity."

"And?" Mo Bei questions impatiently.

"They say Gu Yue Lo Jik does not act like a Gu Master. He takes an interest in their stories and has witty responses. His questions about different fruits and vegetables, how they are cultured, and many other things make him stand out. I also visited the tavern he frequents weekly. Despite being a regular customer and attracting a few waitresses' favors, he denied close contact."

"Of course he did," Mo Bei snorts. "A Gu Master wouldn't let anybody touch him."

"Young Master," Cao shakes her head. "He still conversed with those waitresses, chatting about their lives, and instead left them with a warm impression. It's as if all mortals have nice things to say about him."

Mo Bei's expression shifts before it turns cold.

"I see."

'That bastard!' Mo Bei curses the youth. He never hated anyone more than Lo Jik. The



final nail in the coffin was Mo Yan praising the boy. Why?! Mo Bei cannot bear that!

'Why does MY Mo Yan have to think about anyone else? I'm Mo Family's heir! ME! Lo Jik grew as a mortal without any Gu Master to raise him. Hmph! He still has compassion for mortals who are strangers. How stupid! He also has disdain for someone above him. That's why he screws around with me and Fang Zheng. I understand.' Mo Bei's gaze darkens. 'He's a traitor to his class. He's a traitor to what a Gu Master represents!'

"Young Master," Cao whispers. "You look stressed." She steps forward, gently massaging Mo Bei's shoulders. Since Mo Bei is sitting, he feels her soft breasts brushing his forehead. Letting out an indignant huff, he lets Cao slowly sit on his lap once she releases his *'mighty'* Gu.

Unknown to him, an eager glint alights Cao's eyes as she thinks internally, no longer acting the part of a cute, innocuous maid.

'Mo Bei is the Family's heir. If I earn his trust and favor, I will become the servant's head after he inherits the estate. If Mo Bei hates Lo Jik so much, that man must go—forever! He left the village today, didn't he? Let's follow him around and see what I can do. I will only act at Mo Bei's behest after planning concretely, giving him the illusion of control and a feeling of accomplishment.'

"Cao?" Mo Bei grunts. "What's wrong?"

"Hmm? A-ah!" Cao gasps. "No- Nothing, Mastah~! It felt too incredible, and I could only marvel at it silently!"

<<<>>>

*\*Phew\**

A lone red-back rabbit's ears perk in attention as it quickly raises his head—

*\*Kchhk\**

An arrow pierces past the spot where the rabbit raises its head, killing the animal instantly.

Lo Jik observes while hiding almost 70 meters away in a bush. A rabbit should easily hear him coming unless it's feeding on a drugged bait.

'This body's muscle memory is the real deal,' Lo Jik narrows his eyes. Yes, he's a good

archer. But this body's experience and memories let him predict where the Rabbit's head will be once it inevitably hears the shot arrow and raises its head. He slowly walks out of the bush and nears the successful game. One look at his surroundings reveals sparse Bamboo shoots among tall, viridian trees and bushes of wildflowers.

Summer sun shines its brightest in the afternoon, making Lo Jik slightly sweat as he steps on the lush grass and pulls his arrow from the rabbit's corpse. He uses the grass to wipe the blood off the tip before quickly inspecting it.

'It's no good. The arrows will continue to chip.' He narrows his eyes. 'Unless I make things more challenging for myself.'

Even if the Gu Masters regularly clear the area around the Village, Lo Jik has no intention of sticking around the corpse. Since his day is only beginning, and he plans to hunt more, he leaves the rabbit's corpse as is and continues ahead.

This body's host used to be a hunter. However, it doesn't know the entire Mountain's map. Qing Mao Mountain houses several beast groups, including bears, boars, wolves, deer, and rabbits. These beast groups slowly disperse at daytime in short numbers to feed before returning during the night.

Despite his experiences, Lo Jik doesn't intend to prowl deep within the forest.

Bears can be superbly silent and agile, making them dangerous predators. A wolf group is relentless once it picks your scent. Boars have tough hides and explosive speed, making them one of the more difficult beasts to tackle once the surprise attack fails—IF you can surprise them.

The risk is too significant.

Lo Jik would instead loiter around the village and see Black Boar Gu go hungry, not using it until the next feeding session, than risk encountering such beasts in unfavorable circumstances.

Hours fly by, and Lo Jik returns with a rabbit's corpse. His most prominent gain today would be his training since Lo Jik didn't only use archery. Once his mark got unstable and dizzy, Lo Jik used his feet to target the creature with Moonlight Gu.

A Gu Master can use this Gu from any limb! Lo Jik plans to extend and vary his use of the Gu Worm since he has experience of another world with strange elements called '*Traits*.' His creativity is nothing to scoff at.

Martial Arts and using Moonlight Gu in varied kicks make a dangerous combo—he knows it!

<<<>>

*Evening, the Second Day of the Break.*

'I almost caught that deer in the eye,' Lo Jik licks his lips as he carries an entire deer on his back. 'Deer is more cautious. Hunters can only capture them using traps since their vision and hearing are incredible. Hunting will be easier if I have Gu Worms that pad my footsteps and control my scent. However, I would also have to feed them. It's not cost-effective.'

<<<>>

*Evening, the Third Day of the Break.*

Lo Jik walks with three rabbits tied to his waist.

'I spent too many arrows and a lot of time to get this trick shot down. I'll have to compensate by training my multi-tasking by absorbing a stone while I nurture my aperture.'

He recalls how he managed to get three rabbits with one arrow.

He was lucky, but Lo Jik understands that trick shots are always built from getting lucky the first few times and HOURS of practice. It's exhausting, but Lo Jik is content. He might just major in a Bow Gu Worm after graduation. It's not like things are set in stone for him since Moonlight Gu isn't his Vital Gu.

<<<>>

*Afternoon, the Fourth Day of the Break.*

\*Squeeeeeeeee\*

The black-furred Boar squeals loudly when an arrow pierces his eye. The Arrow gets stuck in the spot as the boar thrashes around before charging a nearby tree and headbutting it as the tree's trunk splinters and shatters upon contact, falling beside the angry boar. It continues to look around hazily, not minding the rabbit's corpse it was feeding on before.

'Drugged and injured,' Lo Jik slowly steps out of the bush, tossing his bow and quiver aside while keeping his dagger as a backup, not to mention his Moonlight Gu.

'Prime for practice,' He swallows the lump in his dry throat as the Boar notices him at once, stamping its limbs before charging the offending youth.

Lo Jik quickly clenches his fist, stifling the bout of nervousness. Lo Jik wanted to battle a beast ever since he heard about the Combat Instructor's experience with dealing with animals.

Sidestepping, Lo Jik quickly tries grabbing onto the Boar's tail. He doesn't have much expectations and prepares to let go should he be dragged forward—

The beast roars indignantly as Lo Jik's feet barely drag forward, quickly stopping the boar's explosive charge with both hands.

'It's... light,' Lo Jik suddenly swings his body, carrying the Boar's weight effortlessly before smashing it into the ground, causing it to squeal painfully. Without further wait, Lo Jik launches three Moonblades charged with his Peak Stage cultivation, easily slicing open the beast's neck!

A Moonblade used by Initial Stage Rank 1 Gu Master can only cut straw puppets or leave minor injuries to human skin. A moonblade from Middle Stage Rank 1 Gu Master will effortlessly leave deep gashes on a human's body. Human bones and flesh mean little to the moon blades sweep by an Upper Stage Rank 1 Gu Master, finding troubles deeply cutting a beast's bone instead. A Peak Stage Rank 1 Gu Master and above can display a Moonlight Gu's peak performance, efficiently rendering ordinary beasts defenseless in their terrifying wake.

Lo Jik stares at the Boar's corpse, noting in his heart.

'I can probably take on almost 4-5 times that weight.' Lo Jik glimpses in astonishment. He's been controlling his strength and never knew his limits. He quietly points at the Boar's corpse, letting the Black Boar Gu fly and dine on the Boar's body in minutes.

'I'm close to reaching the limit of the Black Boar Gu. I also shouldn't confuse my lifting strength with the actual one. Bodybuilders can easily lift twice or thrice their weights, but this world is filled with violence, and I have to think in terms of combat strength. So, it's nice to have a Boar's peak performance, but I should also learn how to properly apply this newfound strength in combat.'

He retrieves his dagger and masks the holes in deflated Boar's corpse with dozens of slashes before leaving.

<<<>>>

*Morning, the Fifth Day of the Break.*

Lo Jik makes his way to the exit with a pep. He correctly assumed he was nearing the Black Boar Gu's limit since he hit that hard cap last night! However, the Gu worm isn't useless. One may assume that it makes mathematical sense to stop feeding the Gu and letting it starve.

However, being shortsighted won't do!

Rank 1 Gu can advance like Rank 1 Gu Masters.

'Although the Academy will never release complete recipes, the Academy Elder revealed the advancement routes of popular Gu worms. The Black Boar Gu can advance to Rank 2 Black Mane Gu and the famous Rank 3 Steel Mane Gu. Why would I sell it? It's a good investment!'

*\*Splash\**

Lo Jik stops as he feels his back getting wet.

"A-Apologies, Young Lord!"

He slowly turns around, glancing at the kneeling girl with a basket of ripe Dripping Berries. These berries always need to stay in a small pool of liquid to remain fresh. They are easily cultivated in Qing Mao Mountain due to the constant rain and thin streams flowing down from the Mountaintop.

Lo Jik looks around as other passersby hurriedly glance away, unwilling to help the young girl up.

"Please!" The girl begs. "I lost my footing and committed a grave sin. Have mercy, Young Lord!"

"Alright," Lo Jik scoffs. "It's no problem. Here, look at me."

The girl slowly looks up, revealing her soulful black eyes and tearful face full of fear. "It's alright," Lo Jik sighs. "Just watch where you're going."

Lo Jik turns around.

'What a shitty way to start the day,' He sighs. 'Well, it's very sunny. My clothes will dry quickly.'

He looks back at the sniveling girl as he muses. 'Huh. I've seen her shopping at the Bazaar a few times. Must be somebody's maid.'

<<<>>>

Practicing caution like usual, not letting his newfound strength steer him into the depths of the Mountain's forest, Lo Jik quietly observes his surroundings. Beyond him is a small, grassy clearing beside a small rock formation. The surrounding tree branches sway and rustle. The gentle shade over the clearing will make anyone want to rest and nap. The animals are no different. This spot attracts wild squirrels and rabbits multiple times a day. However, Lo Jik has yet to see one.

'Should I retrieve the bait?'

He's been sitting in the same position for an hour now, only moving his legs slightly before they go numb. He's ready with his arrow to avoid moving too much. The quiver on his waist is filled with chipped Arrows, now only usable on small creatures.

His breathing is steady and deep, almost melding with nature around him.

Lo Jik's concentration and focus hit his peak, patiently awaiting a mark. Hunting through a bow needs these traits. A Gu Master must have adequate patience and not let power corrupt his mind. He wonders about Ren Zu. Had Ren Zu stopped and contemplated before taking action, the man would have never revealed the Rules and Regulations Gu to the Wisdom Gu. Taking a step before that, had Ren Zu been patient after capturing 10,000 Gu Worms, he may have tamed several hundreds of them!

It's an unnatural state of alertness and contemplation that Lo Jik finds himself in. His heart steadies within his chest, and he feels at peace.

Only THEN does Lo Jik hear a very soft snarl.

His ears pique in alarm, and his thoughts snap like lightning. There's only one beast on the Mountain whose snarl can reach the prey before the sound of their hefty paws—silent and deadly, agile and monstrous—*Bear!* Even though Lo Jik thinks of many things and realizes he is no longer the predator but the prey, he disregards the question as to why and how a Bear is in Gu Yue's vicinity. He exerts pressure on his legs before zooming back, turning around, and taking a mad charge!

If he has thoughts of trying to take on the bear after finding a favorable terrain, his thoughts stir, and his pupils shrink to the size of a pin as trees collapse in the distance. A hill-sized dark shadow covers hundreds of meters in length with a single leap!

Its sharp, deadly maw snaps right beside Lo Jik, its head bigger than an ordinary boar, and its body easily bigger than an Elephant as the youth hurriedly uses the Iron Skin Gu. A black metallic luster covers Lo Jik as he evades one paw as large as his abdomen, feeling acute pain when the other lacerates his back instead of tearing him apart had he not used the right Gu at the right moment.

His flight of fight response long tested by many, and his pain tolerance cultivated by the men he wronged, Lo Jik ignores his torn quiver and runs without any other thought.

\*Grrrrrooughhhhhhhhhhhhh\*

A loud roar shakes the forest, and Lo Jik hopes it alerts the authorities responsible for clearing the woods because they FUCKED UP!

The color drains from his face as he feels blood drenching his back. Even the defensive Iron Skin Gu cannot stop its claw. It merely prevented Lo Jik's immediate death.

But the sudden unfortunate tribulation is far from the end as the mountainous bear charges at Lo Jik with the intent to devour.

Why?

When did he become a popular commodity in the Bears' market, and why didn't anybody tell him?!

However, Lo Jik didn't live an entire life escaping different enemies and only dying after one unintentional mistake. No.

He survives.

He WILL survive!

Lo Jik's heart refuses to give up, not just because of Hope Gu. He hurriedly lunges sideways, rolling through grass and mud, and turns his direction while the massive bear dexterously turns around. A boar cannot change its direction mid-charge. However, a bear is different!

Gritting his teeth, Lo Jik continues twisting and turning through the dense forest until his legs give out—

‘What?!’

He exclaims in his heart.

The bloodloss!

He’s bleeding even now, and it finally got to his body!

His thoughts turn into disarray.

Is this how it ends?

No!

He’s finally making progress!

A stubbornness grips his heart as Hope Gu inside him brightens with an intense light that barely illuminates his chest. An unconventional force fills his veins as Lo Jik narrowly rolls away, avoiding the bear’s paw smashing into the ground.

The impact craters the ground.

“Stop! You foul beast!”

A Gu Master?

Lo Jik cannot look away as he tries moving his body.

‘The heart is willing, but my body is burned out,’ Lo Jik sighs, suddenly grinning as blood fills his mouth. ‘Well, it’s been a few intriguing months.’ His heart accepts the situation.

‘I did everything I could.’

Time seems to slow as the bear’s paws zoom into his face.

‘No regrets before, no regrets now.’

The beast’s paws smash into Lo Jik’s head, killing him instantly as the impact tears his





However—with everything said and done, only one name remains in Fang Yuan's mind.

'Gu Yue Zie Qi. I'll remember you.'

<<<>>>

Lo Jik's chest rises and falls as he quickly turns around and watches Gu Yue Village. He's merely on the outskirts. What happened?

Sweat pours down his body as he recalls the sensation of having his head caved in. He feels the acute pain in his back without any claws or tears. He recalls his thrill and fears when that beast hunted him.

A Beast King!

The Gu World doesn't have ordinary beasts alone. The Gu Yue Village would expand madly despite the wildlife threat if this wasn't the case. However, every organism has its manner of growth and survival. Wild animals grow unlike humans, turning stronger, fiercer, and slightly more intelligent with age. Their claws will eventually rend steel, and their bites will crush diamonds!

However, that doesn't make the wildlife threatening to a Gu Master.

Gu!

A Beast—with a certain age, power, and influence—attracts Gu Worms to its body. The Beast and the Gu Worm enter an implicit agreement where the Beast houses the Gu Worm and protects them. Meanwhile, when sensing danger around the beast, the Gu Worms will work with the beast to defeat the external threat.

Of course, a beast does not have an Aperture. So, how could it use a Gu?

The answer is a Gu Worm's properties.

Until a human refines them, wild Gu worms can use the essence in the air to invoke their abilities!

This is what differentiates a Beast from a Beast King! Even an Ordinary Beast King needs a team of 3-4 Rank 2 Gu Masters to tackle! No matter the burst of energy from the Hope Gu, Lo Jik could never contend with such a creature—or escape—evidently.

It happened.

He was chased by a damn Bear King!

Was?

Did it happen, or has it yet to happen?

Lo Jik stares at the sun before touching his back, feeling the dampness from the girl spilling water on him.

'It happened. I died. Why am I back, not only alive but in time, too? Did Hope Gu do it? It can't be. The Legends around the Hope Gu are far from time. Why can I remember my death?'

Lo Jik frowns before a cold glint flashes in his eyes. Since this isn't his first rodeo with death, emotions fail to control his actions as he calms down, cracking a vicious grin.

'What a *shitty* way to start the day.'

He promptly turns around and enters the Village.

Fuck that.

He won't go in the wilds for a while.

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Mo Bei sports a terrible expression as his face is as pale as a paper. He grits his teeth. Yet he doesn't feel unwilling. It's just unusual, is all.

"Are you sure?" Mo Bei softly questions as Cao kneels between his legs, smiling pretty. She nods gently, explaining, "Reporting to Young Master. Cao splashed Lo Jik with the odorless concoction. You might not know it yet, Young Master. However, Hunters and Doctors in the Village have different drugs. A few brews on the bait make the target dizzy, while a few attract them to a specified location upon a trap. My elder sister's husband's aunt knows concoctions related to bears."

She slowly undoes his trousers. "Bears are very dangerous. They are fast and silent. Their noses are extremely sensitive, too. My Brother-in-Law's family has been pharmacists for centuries and developed a line of medications that attracts different bears while repelling others. The one I splashed on Lo Jik will draw a Bear King from tens of kilometers away since their senses are better than regular beasts."

"What if the Bear King attacks the Village?" Mo Bei gasps as Cao gives her little partner gentle strokes, blowing hotly against it.

"Bears are intelligent creatures, Young Master. They stalk and study their prey before attacking. I saw Lo Jik leave. However, even if he returns before entering certain depths of the forest, the Bear King will not

attack the Village after noticing the guarding Gu Masters.”

Mo Bei’s expression eases as he nods. “And if Lo Jik attracts the Bear King, he won’t survive. He’s only arrogant about his martial arts. I’ll see how arrogant he is when the Bear King devours his corpse.”

He looks down at Cao, who takes him inside her warm mouth. Mo Bei gently pats her head and strokes her cheek. “You did great, Cao.”

He beams as she moves, her cheeks sinking in.

“I’ll be sure to make you my- ugh!”

Mo Bei groans as his body shudders. Cao quickly laps it up before pulling back and smiling with her lips tight shut as she poses and gulps loudly.

“I’ll definitely make you my concubine,” Mo Bei vows aloud, making Cao blush.

<<<>>>

“Shout, and I’ll kill you right now.”

Cold words, followed by the touch of a chilly metal tip against her back, stop the humming Cao in her tracks. The evening sun set long ago, casting dusk’s gloom upon the Gu Yue Village. Meanwhile, the cheery Cao returning to the Mo Family’s Estate cannot help but tremble as she recalls the familiar voice. The basket between her arm and waist almost falls as she feels the sharp tip poking into her flesh through her clothes.

“If you want to live,” the voice sincerely whispers, “you best follow my instructions. Believe me. Nobody will miss your headless corpse a few trails away from the bazaar.”

Fearful of her life, Cao acts naturally. She might be young, but life is a good teacher. Cao wouldn’t have been a modest schemer if it wasn’t! She paces quietly as the suspicious figure leads her into a shabby cabin. There, she notices a brand-new wooden chair alongside rolls of hemp rope.

“Sit.” The man behind her takes the basket from her as Cao trembles, sitting on the chair. Only now does she gaze upon Lo Jik’s impassive features. Her eyes widen, and her lips gape as Lo Jik calmly walks forward and picks up the hemp rope.

“Work with me, and you’ll live. Shout, and I’ll stab your throat with my dagger, letting you choke on your blood instead of instantly killing you.” His peaceful tone doesn’t reduce the chill spreading through her spine as Lo Jik ties her feet and hands to the armrest. As he works, he smiles and chats.

"I bought this chair today—for you. You should feel honored."

"Lord Gu Master," Cao begs softly, tears forming in her eyes. "Cao is sorry for splashing you with water this morning. Please forgive Cao," she slightly raises her chest, begging, "Cao will do anything."

Lo Jik exhales sharply before crouching ahead of the girl named Cao. He recalled seeing her in the bazaar and waited for her there until the evening.

"Cao," Lo Jik smiles comfortingly. "I want you to tell the truth, or I'll do the same to your other thigh." His hand slowly balls a thick strip of cloth.

"What—" Lo Jik instantly presses the thick ball of cloth and his hand against the girl's mouth before stabbing his dagger into her left thigh!

Cao struggles against her restraints instantly, her loud shout barely a meek muffle at this point!

Time passes as Lo Jik doesn't pull his dagger out. Instead, he lifts his hand from her mouth, letting her shuddering gasps fill his cabin's interior. Meanwhile, her tearful face stares at him fearfully.

"Once you tell me the truth and leave, be sure to use disinfecting medicine," Lo Jik smiles, giving her slight hope. "I don't wash my dagger."

She quickly nods, trembling.

"The truth."

Lo Jik smiles.

A dagger in the thigh does wonder to a woman's integrity as she spills the bean. She revealed how Mo Bei forced her to mark Lo Jik in a concoction odorless to humans before letting a Bear King kill him off. However, Lo Jik also knows Mo Bei better than the wench and understands that he isn't intelligent enough to think that far.

It's fine. Lo Jik likes this story better.

"Alright," Lo Jik nods firmly, retrieving ink, quill pen, and bamboo paper from his shelf. He turns her chair to face the wooden furniture and places the material atop it.

"I want you to write what you said and leave Gu Yue Village tonight, or the Mo Family will kill you."

"Y-Yes," she nods, secretly relieved.

Her thoughts grow vicious as she pens the tale.

'Mo Bei isn't right about many things, but he did get it correctly. This fool is a traitor to his class. After leaving this maniac's house, I will quickly take Mo Bei to Mo Chen and reveal that Lo Jik played with me. Mo Bei is a smitten fool. He will demand Lo Jik's head. I will also tell them Lo Jik forced me to write an insidious lie about the family and intends to use it against them. It will force Mo Chen's hand.'

Mortals develop their sense of survival—depending on another's knife to butcher a chicken.

"Here," Cao whispers meekly with a pale expression as blood slowly flows down her pale thighs.

Lo Jik looks over the parchment, nodding in contentment. Cao went above and beyond by adding the recipe for that Bear lure.

"Good. I will pull the knife out and cover your mouth to muffle your scream."

Cao nods, relieved beyond belief.

Her eyes widen as her body trembles in pain as she screams into the ball of cloth the second Lo Jik takes the knife out of her thigh, causing a fountain of blood to erupt. Yet, instead of taking the gag off her mouth, Lo Jik suddenly drives his dagger into her comely chest, penetrating her heart!

Cao's eyes widen as she stares at Lo Jik.

"Did I give you Hope?" Lo Jik smiles gently. No hatred can be seen on his face. He leaves the dagger embedded into her chest. "Sorry. I lied. How else could I have made you cooperate?"

Tears flow down the girl's eyes as Lo Jik sighs. He could never let someone with fatal intentions live, not before, and not here either.

Life slowly drains from her eyes as Lo Jik removes the gag and—

*\*Riiiiipppppppp\**

He tears her clothes, revealing her pale form. Lo Jik slowly unravels his outfit before draping his clothes on her. He never moves the dagger, letting it stick out against the robe's surface as he calmly tears the letter she wrote in two unequal halves. He stuffs the small half into her collars before sighing and collapsing on his bed.

He's still naked but too mentally exhausted to do anything.

Too much happened today.

He is sure bloody scent will fill his cabin by tomorrow, but he no longer cares.

'I'll just build a new damn cabin!' He scoffs.

So the world will look back and marvel at the day when a naked Lo Jik shared a cabin with a corpse.

'I was too unlucky today. Imagine that. I'll be lucky tomorrow. Mo Yan said she would return in five days. I hope she is there tomorrow.

He smiles peacefully and enters a deep sleep.

<<<>>>

Mo Yan returns early, as scheduled. Her need for a warm bath after a grueling mission to scout the wolves' activities leaves her unaware of her surroundings once she enters her home estate. So, she fails to notice the tense environment and unusually anxious servants greeting her.

'I wonder if Mo Bei's calmed down.'

Leaving on bad terms left her with a distaste for the entire week. Mo Yan wishes to quickly patch things up with Mo Bei.

'But I should report to Grandfather,' Mo Yan exhales once she notices Mo Bei isn't in the garden training his knuckles off.

A loud yell greets her the second she enters her Grandfather's study.

"Who DARES interrupt me now?!"

A wild breath of a Rank 3 Gu Master pins her, making her breath catch in her throat as it disappears just as quickly, making Mo Chen sigh.

"It's you, Mo Yan. Come in."

She blinks, entering the study before noticing her brother pale as paper and a corpse lying beside him. She frowns, her protective nature taking over her worries as she looks at her wrathful Grandfather.

"What is going on?"

"Ask your Moron Brother!" Mo Chen hisses as Mo Yan blinks again. She forces herself to return to her usual attentive state as she glances at Mo Bei. Observing the corpse beside him, Mo Yan frowns.

'Wait a minute,' Mo Yan focuses on the girl's robes. It's bigger than her body, so it doesn't belong to her. She remembers this outfit. Her expression twists in confusion as Mo Yan reaches out for the collar, yanking it away to reveal a VERY familiar dagger embedded in the woman's chest. Mo Yan and Mo Chen care little about the corpse's exposed breasts. However, Mo Bei suddenly covers his mouth before turning aside and puking his stomach out!

"Isn't she Mo Bei's toy?" Mo Yan looks at the hurling Mo Bei. "Who killed her?"

She already knows who did it. She wants to understand the 'Why?' since the guy she likes is not unreasonable.

"Bastard!" Mo Chen yells at Mo Bei, surprising Mo Yan again. It's the first time Mo Bei is receiving such a treatment. However, it's not Mo Yan's first time since she used to do a lot of stupid shit.

"Explain to your sister why Gu Yue Lo Jik killed your fucktoy instead of vomiting in MY study!"

Mo Bei shudders, tears forming in his eyes as he quickly nods. He hurriedly wipes his mouth before explaining.

"It's all Cao Cao's fault! She said I wouldn't have anything to worry about if Lo Jik's done! Cao followed Lo Jik for days before noticing how he's hunting in the forest and his compassion against for the mortal servants before deciding to use a Beast King's lure on him—"

*\*Pah\**

Mo Chen blinks in surprise as Mo Yan delivers a tight slap to Mo Bei!

"Sister!" Mo Bei gasps, only meeting Mo Yan's cold stare filled with fire so hot that Mo Chen's anger pales in comparison. "Next!" she demands, making Mo Bei shudder.

"L-Lo Jik killed her! He's a murderer! Grandfather! Please, you must find justice for me!"

Mo Yan grits her teeth before looking away.

She can't look at her brother after what he did.

"The problem is this," Mo Chen snorts, handing Mo Yan a strip of bamboo paper stating—

*Young Master forced me to intentionally harm Gu Yue Lo Jik due to his jealous nature—*

The rest is torn away.



Forcing herself to calm down, Mo Yan mutters, "A strip of paper and a dead maid's ramblings aren't worth anything. The Clan won't do a thing. However, if the rest of the confession falls into the wrong crowd, it will drag the Mo Family's name through the mud," she looks at her brother, stating icily, "*And yours.*"

"Exactly," Mo Chen sighs. "Lo Jik left the corpse by the estate's back door, allowing a servant to discover her the second they opened the door. He also intentionally sent us a small strip of paper alongside dressing this wretch in his clothes."

"Why do his clothes matter?" Mo Yan frowns before her eyes widen. "I'm sitting in a room with a Beast King's lure?!"

Mo Chen scoffs.

"Calm down. Beast Kings are too intelligent to attack a Gu Master's institution."

The Mo Family's Elder massages his forehead. "It's clear that Lo Jik doesn't want to blow this matter. But he's angry. Why else would he send a corpse with his tainted clothing and a threat in the form of a note written by this whore?"

Mo Bei's body shudders as Mo Chen insults the girl he likes... *liked*.

"Since he doesn't want to expose the matter, there's a chance to settle things quickly and discreetly. I will send someone to hear his demands—"

"Grandfather," Mo Yan interjects. "This matter is too important. Gu Yue Lo Jik has the Academy's attention due to his battle potential. Sending a servant may be seen as an insult. You cannot lower your head, and Lo Jik might kill Mo Bei."

Fright fills Mo Bei's eyes.

"It should be me," Mo Yan nods.

"Elder Sister! No!"

"Shut up this instant!" Mo Chen roars at his grandson before looking at Mo Yan, "Why you?"

"I'm a familiar face," Mo Yan sighs. "I've seen his cabin, and I've seen his living conditions. Lo Jik also spoke up for me. Compassion isn't lost on him. He'll be willing to talk with me. Not to mention, I might persuade him to reduce his wild demands."

Surprise and pride prevail in Mo Chen's gaze as he nods.

Fearful, angry, hateful, and frustrated when it comes to Lo Jik, Mo Bei cannot help but utter, “He is a liar. He will extort the family like he extorts my classmates before harming us!”

Mo Chen stares at Mo Bei for a while before questioning, “Do you remember the story about Ren Zu when he unintentionally lets Wisdom Gu escape?”

Mo Bei looks at his Grandfather, who recounts—

Ren Zu had the Rules Gu and Regulation Gu and could capture all the ten thousand Gu in the world, obtaining Strength Gu but losing Wisdom Gu.

At that point, his net still contained three Gu. He opened and saw the Attitude Gu, Belief Gu, and Suspicion Gu, respectively.

Ren Zu was unwilling to let them go. Thus, the three Gu could only bet with him.

Once Ren Zu opens the net, they would run out in three different directions, and whoever is captured by Ren Zu would be subdued. Guess. Who did Ren Zu catch in the end?. It’s the Attitude Gu!—

Mo Chen firmly stares at his Grandson, explaining, “Lo Jik meticulously displayed his attitude about wanting to settle things peacefully. Why would I suspect that attitude? And why would you not believe it? Our world is riddled with lies, and Attitude alone makes things work.”

“I will rest for a while and promptly leave.” Mo Yan nods. There’s another reason why she said she should be the one to meet Lo Jik. Turning around as Mo Bei stiffens, Mo Yan cruelly yanks the dagger out of the woman’s heart, letting Mo Bei glance at the fatal wound in his lover’s bosom.

He desperately looks away, meeting Mo Yan’s icy stare.

How dare you attempt to take my lover’s life? Karma stings, doesn’t it?

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**Alternate Title:** River of Time; It Proves It—We’re All Fish!; Mad Lad Fang Zheng; The Mysterious Zie Qi; More Changes; Cao’s Plan; Simp!; A Worthy Concubine; The Blade; Cooperating With Hope; Tying Without Resistance; Simple Torture Technique; The Note; Vicious Thoughts; Hope Is a Great Asset to Use; In The Heart; Damn, Lo Jik and a Corpse?; The Lure Recipe; Mo Yan’s Return; Anxious Estate; The Elder’s Pressure; Mo Bei’s Being Grilled; Mo Yan is Used To The Drill, Lol; The Admittance; Confession Letter; Demands; Mo Yan Steps Up; One’s Attitude; The Slap; Angry Mo Yan; Unfortunate Events Always Succeed With Fortunate Ones; Back To Life; Remembering The Future That Never Was?; Compassionate, Not Naive; A Threat Resolved



should meet each other, Senior Mo.”

Mo Yan’s eyes widen as she turns in his direction, gasping, “What? Why?!”

“That Servant Girl wanted to be a mere concubine and tried killing me for it. Had she been on Mo Bei’s level, she would never have had to resort to such acts. I realized that there are some things feelings alone cannot traverse. I’m below your status, Senior Mo—”

“It is YAN for you!”

Lo Jik grows silent as Mo Yan’s ragged breathing echoes within the cabin.

“We’re not powerful, Yan. I’m a C-grade Aptitude Student with a low chance of reaching Peak Stage Rank 1 cultivation by the end of the year. Meanwhile, you are an Elder’s Granddaughter and will eventually advance to Rank 3. But how long will that take? Fate and Love are fickle. If we stop now, you will have a chance to find someone better. Someone as talented and socially inclined as you.”

Mo Yan doesn’t speak a thing. Several emotions color her gaze in this dim space. Tears build in her eyes. She’s exhausted, frustrated, and completed a mission recently. She feels like crying and venting it all out at once. Why did her Brother have to make an attempt at Lo Jik’s life?!

“Eventually,” Lo Jik continues with a light-hearted tone that ‘*SURELY*’ hides the depths of his emotions for her. “Maybe I will work under your employ?”

Her gaze turns hazy, with tears slowly sliding down her cheeks.

Lo Jik sighs softly.

“Thank you for understanding—mmph!”

A pair of hands press his cheeks while a pair of lips overlaps his! He acts surprised, not understanding where he should put his hands as Mo Yan slides her tongue past his lips, meeting his shocked member before grunting into his mouth. “Never say that again. Mo Yan’s love is not fickle. It is merely unreasonable.”

She feels his lips open as if wanting to say something when Mo Yan begs softly, whimpering, “Please. Don’t do it to me.”

“It’s for your good,” Lo Jik whispers.

“You’re barely a graduate! What would you know?!” She snaps, pressing her forehead into his.

“I know you’ll marry someone else when your Grandfather deems so,” he chuckles bitterly. “What then? I can’t stand that thought! Isn’t it better if we stop now? The pain would be tolerable. Your brother already tried killing me. Your Grandfather won’t need schemes to kill me once he realizes the truth.”

Mo Yan’s heart clenches at the thought. She feels bitter because she knows it’s the truth. Unless...

“That won’t happen,” she whispers with determination. “You’re kind and caring. You want me, respect me! You make me feel good when I haven’t done a thing for you. I don’t want that anymore!” One of her hands snakes down. “You never expect my help financially. I can help you in other ways—”

“No!” Lo Jik rejects. Fuck no! All the Penetration rewards from oral to anal for the first time have a high chance to be Silver Achievements! There’s no way Lo Jik is doing them now and earning Green Copper Relic Gu!

“Y-You don’t want me?” Mo Yan whispers with hurt and pain in her voice.

“I want to be worthy,” Lo Jik replies. “I don’t want you to be with a worthless Rank 1 Academy Student! I want you to be with the Class Champion!” He seizes her lips. Her eyes widen as he hugs her waist. Oh, he wants her. She can feel his desires hitting her crotch. However, her heart melts with the respect and kindness he shows her, going as far as wanting to improve even more before doing anything else.

“You’re such a fool,” Mo Yan whispers lovingly. “Don’t scare me like that again.” She strokes his cheek. She may not be able to see him clearly, but she knows the veil of darkness hides his bright, relentless love for her. Knowing this and still bitter over her Brother’s stunt, Mo Yan whispers, “Let’s discuss your demands.”

“Can it wait?” Lo Jik chuckles wryly. “I intend to destroy this cabin and rebuild it again. It will take a long time.”

“Good!” Mo Yan presses him against the wall, peppering his neck with kisses while gently toying and teasing his firm Club Gu with her knee. She coos, “Let’s start with your first demand. Ah, how greedy of you! Do you want to rent one of our properties for free for the next three years? Hmph! Just you wait!” She lets her hands wander his chest while he firmly squeezes her pert ass before delivering a soft spank.

“Ah!” she yelps. “And now you want two,” she whispers, “full bags of Primeval Stones, or you will reveal Mo Bei’s dirtiest secret about not lasting more than 3 minutes?”

“Wait, what?” Lo Jik blinks, snapping out of the roleplay as Mo Yan snickers viciously.

“Heh! That cunt whore of his was someone I gifted to him! I made her spill many beans to me should Mo Bei ever think he has a right on me because he’s the next heir.”

“Back up!” Lo Jik’s brain buzzes. “WHAT?!”

“Hmm,” Mo Yan shrugs. “I’ve caught Mo Bei looking at me like that. That’s why I gifted him a maid to control his urges. Who knew she would concoct such a vile scheme?!”

Lo Jik mutters flatly, “So you were telling the truth that night about setting me up with another woman to have sex with her?”

“Of course. Why would I lie? Why? Do you have someone in mind?”

“Nope.”

“Liar!” Mo Yan pecks his earlobe. “But it’s fine. Just tell me, and I’ll bring her to you.”

Shen Cui’s image briefly flickers in Lo Jik’s mind before he sighs. “Sure, I will let you know when I’m done busting my ass cultivating to have the best night with you.”

“I offered, Jik.” She giggles. “Don’t blame me.”

“Does the offer still stand?”

“Nope~!” She gently pats his erection. “Now Mo Yan only has eyes for the Class Champion. You better focus, or someone else will whisk me away.”

“Hah! Never!”

For someone who died not two days ago, Lo Jik was a picture of confidence.

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Only Gu Yue Clansmen can own property in Gu Yue Village. They can employ servants and guards from the mortal villages. Some of them can marry into the Gu Yue name, leaving their status of servitude. That’s what Cao wanted.

So, Lo Jik's cabin isn't just built without consent. That small plot is his property!

Similarly, the Mo Family holds several properties. Their acquisitions are only matched by the Chi Family. One of the properties is a well-built wooden cabin beside a small spring, creating a pleasant ambiance within the private grove. The cottage endured the test of time and weather as thin moss grew around its base. The tilted blue tiles ensure no water will seep through the roof, and the chimney signals the fireplace to keep the occupants warm.

It's not crazy, but it's a massive improvement from Lo Jik's previous cabin.

Lo Jik calmly places his clothes into his cupboard, flipping one of his robes to reveal the fist-sized Azure Moonshard.

He then places two pouches filled to the brim with 400 Primeval Stones each!

Attempted murder without cause is punishable in Gu Yue Clan. Of course, such rights only exist for Gu Masters. Indeed, Late Cao's confession cannot be taken for a word. But the Mo family will have to spend considerable resources to remove the blemish from their Heir's records. It's just better to pay Lo Jik off since he showed a sincere will to keep the matter low-key. Of course, there's the person of interest—Mo Yan. Her addition made the situation smooth.

Aside from his newfound wealth of 800 Primeval stones, Lo Jik skips over the parchment with the recipes for Beast Lures, namely—Bear and Boar.

Lo Jik is interested in these. He won't summon anything crazy like Beast Kings, but he wanted to battle and practice against their regular variants.

The recipes are slightly rare.

'Not only that—this is Mo Family's property. Others will think twice before trying to steal anything. Of course, I must be wary of the Mo family, too. What if this place is bugged out?' He narrows his eyes and decides to sweep the property extensively before sighing.

'I didn't find anything. But I should only use my Trait after covering myself with a blanket.'

He smiles at the thought of his Trait.

'That stupid Bastard actually had someone capable. Cao learned my pattern, noticed my flaws, and acted viciously.' He slumps on his mattress. 'You can't underestimate anyone

in this world. I thought my acting was correct. I'm usually carefree. So, I believed being slightly compassionate to mortals would be a nice tie-in to my past. The actual issue was I didn't question things immediately and had too little experience. If I had a scouting Gu Worm...'

Thinking of this, Lo Jik turns in for the night and covers himself with the blanket.

The next thing he does is retrieve his Bronze-Ranked gift.

His Bronze-Ranked rewards till now have been the Black Boar Gu, a scout's journal, and an Azure Moonshard. So, he's surprised when he watches the white disc the size of a palm settle on his chest.

A Rank 1 Gu Worm.

'Well,' Lo Jik rolls his eyes. 'Finally a scout-type Gu... but with a twist.'

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"Gu Yue Fang Zheng!" The Academy Elder calls Fang Zheng up under everyone's view before depositing a pouch of 30 Primeval Stones in the boy's hand. The Elder beams, "Congratulations on reaching Upper Stage Rank 1 cultivation. Keep up the good work."

Fang Zheng puffs his chest with pride before nodding and sweeping the classroom with his eyes. He watches the indignant Mo Bei, frustrated Chi Cheng, a sleeping Fang Yuan, and yawning Lo Jik.

'Hmph!' Fang Zheng scoffs internally. 'I won! And I will continue winning from now on!'

As Fang Zheng returns to his seat, the Elder Announces, "Listen Everyone! You spent solidifying your basics the past half year and have two Gu worms. However, a Gu Master forges themselves with battles and combat experience. We will conduct your half-yearly exam in three days. Your test will be to hunt wild boars and extract their tusks. The Academy will purchase each tusk for 10 Primeval Stones!"

Lo Jik blinks in surprise.

It should be known that 1 Primeval Stone can purchase 20 Tusks! Such a reward is basically encouraging students to go all out!

As expected, the classroom burst into commotion at once as the Elder called other students forward before handing them their stipend.



Fang Yuan is in deep thought as he blocks the gate.

'Last time, he wasn't next to me. A Bear King wandered near the village and killed Gu Yue Lo Jik. The nearby Gu Master stationed was attracted by its roar and called other Gu Masters for backup. But it's not simple. Mo Bei actually accused Lo Jik of being a murderer once the classes began, challenging Lo Jik before getting beaten... brutally. Lo Jik did not hold his punches this time for some reason. It's too coincidental to not be connected. However, things are already different than my past life.' Fang Yuan glances at the ration-munching Lo Jik.

'Now he has a residence in the Mo Family's rental property?' Years of experience allowed Fang Yuan to realize that the matter of Bear King was related to Mo Bei, and Lo Jik's sudden elevation in living conditions was probably a hush fee.

'Hehe, last time, I stopped taking Fang Zheng's, Mo Bei's, and Chi Cheng's stipend to fool others into believing I was ready to be part of the system. However, thanks to my dear Uncle, I don't have such concerns now. He will set that team up once more to interrupt my growth. Instead, I will capitalize on these kids now. I wonder how the exams will turn out.'

Fang Yuan accepts the first offering from a timid girl, letting her pass. 'Gu Yue Lo Jik's combat skills are second only to me. But he was dead before the final exams. I defeated Fang Zheng and won. I wonder how things will change this time.'

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Mo Bei trains as usual. His Grandfather never hit him before, but Mo Chen slapped him once Mo Bei slipped and revealed Lo Jik killed his maid. What did they pay him so much for? However, the physical discipline worked, calming his mind as Mo Bei returned to training.

He stops to wipe his sweat when he catches sight of a familiar figure walking by without sparing him a glance.

Gritting his teeth and working his courage, Mo Bei forces his usual smile and walks up to her. "Elder Sister, I wanted—"

She coolly walks past him, indifferent to his existence as pangs of guilt and pain mess with his heart. He looks at her with desperate need. Mo Bei just wants someone to talk to. He has nightmares about Cao. Lo Jik's crude remarks of what the youth 'may' have done to Cao before killing her further leave Mo Bei's mind with unnecessary images. He feels helpless, and his Sister always makes him smile.

One only realizes another's value after losing them.

Unable to see Mo Yan's expression, Mo Bei fails to notice her sad look.

'Sigh. I'm sorry. I vowed to myself to be better. If you can't think of me as your sister, I cannot look at you either. I must cultivate and advance for him. I've been stranded in Middle-Stage Rank 2 Cultivation while Chi Shan is already at the Upper Stage. Meanwhile, Qing Shu is at the Peak Stage. I let my Grandfather dictate my schedule and didn't pay enough attention to my cultivation. Not anymore.'

She recalls his solemn promise of trying to be the Champion. Like him, she wants to be her best when sharing their first night.

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Rainbow Parrots chatter on a branch, enjoying the warm sun and the entertainment afoot as a wild boar chases after a student. The boy pants and huffs, passing a tree before shouting, "It's here! Quick! Raise the ropes!"

A group of boys and girls raise thick ropes, catching the charging Boar's limbs as it squeals and tumbles on the ground, smashing and injuring itself! The group of students instantly crowds and attacks the Boar with a barrage of Gu Worms!

The Half-Yearly Examination is here!

Since a few students don't have an offensive Gu, it's allowed for them to group together and hunt Boars in teams. Out of the 57 students, perhaps only 5 intend to tackle this challenge solo!

'Hmm?' Lo Jik notes another boar. 'Wow. The Elders must have tweaked the distribution of Boars. There's no way so many boars exist near the Village. And as I move forward, their number rises.' He knocks his bow fearlessly even when the Boar's ears perk up.

Lo Jik quietly controls a thin stream of Black-Green essence and sends it inside his head. Within his brain is a small white disc that consumes 2.5% of his Primeval Essence before releasing a warm, milky glow.

Lo Jik feels his five senses sharpen, and an intuitive mood overtakes him as he lets the Boar charge in his direction without interruptions. His muscles slowly tense, and his gaze locks on the Boar's eyes alone, instantly predicting several spots where it would be the next second before—

*\*Phew\**

A sharp, keen arrow pierces the Boar's eye! The second Boar's charges falter, causing its limbs to destabilize and drag its body in Lo Jik's direction—he tears out of the bush like a predator, dagger in his hand, and the Moonblade glowing around his other palm!

A loud squeals echo in the forest. But Lo Jik's mark isn't alone.

Meanwhile, in a different section of the forest, Mo Bei exhales loudly, staring at the disfigured corpse of a Boar. It took him a lot of time to deal with the beast.

Fang Zheng confidently retreats while shooting out multiple Moonblades at the charging boar.

On the other hand, Chi Cheng evades and kites the boar until it's tired before killing it!

Not far from the hunting grounds is a large tent built atop a small hill to hide the occupants from the sun and provide shade. Academy Elder, Elder Mo, Chi, and a few other Elders can be seen within the tent. They all softly converse until something stirs before them, leading a Gu Master to appear before them and bow.

"Reporting to Elders!"

"How are the students doing? What is the score looking like?"

"Gu Yue Lo Jik hunted 12 Boars. Gu Yue Fang Zheng Hunted 9. Gu Yue Mo Bei and Gu Yue Chi Cheng both have a score of 6. Gu Yue Fang Yuan Hunted 3."

The Academy Elder frowns, feeling something amiss. "Explain their hunting techniques."

"Yes! Gu Yue Lo Jik uses a mortal longbow and arrows to accurately penetrate the Boar's eyes before taking it out using a combination of Moonlight Gu to cut open its hide around its neck and his dagger to stab into it, mortally wounding the beast."

"Amazing!" One of the elders praises. "To think someone would have such an aim in this batch."

"Doesn't he only have a C-grade Aptitude? Sigh. However, this batch is the best that comes to mind regarding martial results. Academy Elder spared nothing to raise them!" Another Elder nods, smiling.

The Academy Elder accepts the praise before urging the scout to continue.

“Gu Yue Fang Zheng uses his superior dark-green essence to injure the Boars using multiple Moonblades.”

“Hmm. Simple and effective. Nothing beats a talent’s convenience,” another Elder chuckles as the scout reveals how Mo Bei takes a Boar on in close combat, using his superior martial arts to eventually exhaust and kill his prey. Meanwhile, Chi Cheng kites the beast using the Dragonpill Cricket Gu, achieving similar results. The scout adopts a weird expression when he talks about Fang Yuan.

“What?” The Academy Elder ground. “Fang Yuan isn’t even entering the forest deep enough and is loitering near the starting point?”

The scout nods.

“Hmph! Bullying the weak and fearing the strong? This Fang Yuan’s character is the opposite of his Twin, who stands up for the weak.”

“Even ordinary students display better nature. Fang Yuan is wasting the Liquor Worm’s Gu full potential.”

The Academy Elder frowns.

‘Heh!’ Fang Yuan takes it easy. ‘Why would I willingly risk such danger? Look at Lo Jik. While he survived in this life, he couldn’t avoid death when meeting the Bear King. Wang Da is an experienced Rank 2 Gu Master no more dangerous than a Bear King. My only end will be death. Going out in the forest without my Autumn Spring Cicada fully healed is deadly. Isn’t my Little Brother out there bearing risks for me? An Academy’s Exam will never make me want to risk death.’

Since things are already different, Fang Yuan feels that Wang Da’s situation might be different, too.

‘I killed a hunter family, not knowing their first son became a Demonic Gu Master. I can’t change that. During the exam, the Demonic Gu Master Wang Da misunderstood me as Fang Zheng, attacking him instead. He killed two Rank 2 Gu Masters and put Fang Zheng in an unconscious state for 7 days. My plans will depend on how this situation turns out. If Wang Da dies, good. If he attacks but fails and retreats successfully, the Clan will grow alert and scour for him. If he doesn’t attack...’

Fang Yuan’s gaze darkens. ‘I will stop my trips to Flower Wine Monk’s Inheritance. He recalls everything he gained from that Inheritance with a hint of anticipation in his heart.

*\*Phew\**

Another shot, another strike!

Lo Jik licks his lips.

That Gu Worm is too good!

Rank 1 Instinct Gu!

What are instincts? Are they not a martial artist's method of scouting an opponent mid-battle? The Rank 1 gu raises his instincts and awareness by a few folds for 5 minutes by consuming 20% Initial Stage Jade-Green Essence, or 2.5% Black-Green one. But that's not the only reason why Lo Jik is happy.

He can afford its food without issues.

Finding clumps of emotion grass and raw '*emotions*' will be hard for others. This Gu worm is rare for a reason. If a Gu Master cannot feed it and continue to use it—the Rank 1 Gu will feed on a Gu Master's emotions instead, leaving them an emotionless puppet after some time!

However, Lo Jik's Aperture discharges an Aura of Rejection filled with negative emotions whenever he absorbs a Primeval Stone!

The same aura can be fed to the Instinct Gu, too!

He wasn't even thrilled about earning 280 stones at the end of the day.

Winning the competition was a small matter since the news about an attempt on Fang Zheng's life spread quickly!

Someone tried assassinating the only A-grade talent of Gu Yue village! The Galls.

Lo Jik is naturally angry!

He didn't fuck around with Fang Zheng for so long to see no results. No! He wants Fang Zheng to live a happy life with his lover and reach an Elder's position!

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tear to Lo Jik's eye to watch him train diligently in all aspects of Gu Master's education. Gu Yue Chi Cheng, Mo Bei, and Fang Yuan achieved Upper Stage Rank 1 cultivation shortly after the half-yearly assessment. Bu Lo Jik only reached it a week later.

To keep pretenses, of course.

Their life continued as days flew by and extortions continued. However, Lo Jik's primary source of accumulated income was no longer his precious Classmates.

No, it was Mo Yan.

While she stayed for longer durations in the Village to focus on her cultivation, she would meet Lo Jik weekly. Since it's Mo Family's rental property, they had even more privacy where Lo Jik brought her to new realms of pleasure. Of course, he didn't earn anything besides making out with her. However, it was a pleasure to witness her gasp and heave with that lurid look on her face and a soaking cunt ready to refine his Gu when the time arrived.

Perhaps he should stop with the 'Gu' puns?

Nah.

Naturally, such continuous communion brought Lo Jik Bronze-ranked Gifts every week!

If one is keeping a count, they met 26 times.

It means possible earnings of 26 informative journals, Rare Gu, Rare Materials, and equivalent Primeval Stones!

It was also complicated to manage it all.

His current house is riddled with hidden treasures waiting to be unloaded and laundered within the coming Caravan this year. However, if one counted, he received two more journals. Now more savvy on the ways of Gu Master, he realizes these journals are what one may call *'Inheritances.'*

A Gu Master leaves his wealth surrounded by additional challenges for the destined one to take it all. However, since he only got information and not relevant Gu Worms, those journals can be called Pseudo-Inheritances. He memorized and burned them in the forest, learning about several Gu Recipes ranging from Rank 1 to 3.

Out of the remaining 24 meetings, 4 earned him varying amounts of Primeval Stones—380, 550, 410, and 360.

The remaining 20 meetings split the rewards into Gu Worms and Gu Materials as 4-16 in the latter's favor.

The materials included several hundred grams of Jade Rocks, clumps of Top Red Soil, more Azure Moonshard, Sour Honeycombs, Kettle Lilies, Spear Bamboo Essence, and so forth. All these materials are rare in Qing Mao Mountain but definitely present.

Last but not the least—Gu Worms.

White Boar Gu, White Boar Gu, Jade Skin Gu, Blood Python Gu.

Yes, there's a lot to unpack.

Two White Boars? Really?

Lo Jik would be disappointed with his Trait if it wasn't broken when coupled with a nice woman. A Jade Skin Gu was a welcomed addition—his earlier supply of jade stones used to feed it. The strangest was the Blood Python Gu.

Blood Python Gu is a finger-long blood-red python coiled around the Hope Gu as it often spits its purple tongue, releasing sharp hisses. It doesn't act like an ordinary Gu by providing an ability to a Gu Master. Instead, the Blood Python Gu feeds on animal blood and acts as a sapient creature under Gu Master's control.

It's... a pet?

The most troublesome thing about all this was the management of it.

Lo Jik can't keep hunting three Boars and feeding three Boar Gu in hiding. He needed a scapegoat—luck.

Like a particular C-grade youth who managed to *'flower'* Liquor Worm and Mudskin Toad Gu in one sitting, Lo Jik got lucky while practicing his archery on a Boar, retrieving a hidden White Boar Gu trying to catch a fast meal from his kill!

What? Good things can only happen to Fang Yuan, but not Lo Jik?

Still, even if the revelation surprised many, things turned to normalcy with Lo Jik now able to explain his strength of a boar despite possessing the forces of TWO boars—White and Black.

As for feeding them? Lo Jik didn't bother more than he needed to. He already used them and would sell the third one to Caravan or the highest bidder in the village. Perhaps he can make a business out of it? Truthfully, that thought crossed his mind—to rent the White Boar Gu. However, he doesn't have enough prestige to pull this off. Besides, the Gu World is perilous. Lo Jik already died twice! How can others



guarantee their lives while using his Gu?

He only let Mo Yan use it secretly to further develop their relationship while making her swear that Mo Bei wouldn't see the light of it. He believed her. Why?

Because he wasn't dead. If Mo Bei saw the Gu, he'd put two and two together. Lo Jik would be dead meat.

Besides, he only shared the White Boar Gu once she recently reached Upper Stage Rank 2. The sight of her becoming a Peak Stage is not far! Her decision to spend more time on her cultivation has a direct increase at her cultivation's pace?

That's groundbreaking news!

So, Lo Jik's fluid cash is 3689.

Meanwhile, his assets range between 4500-5000, excluding the jade reservoir for the Jade Skin Gu.

Nice, right?

It's all thanks to Late Cao. Mo Yan focuses on her cultivation while ignoring her brother. Lo Jik only wanted to achieve the former. The Latter? It was a collateral benefit.

'Aye! Don't get cocky. It's game time.'

Lo Jik slowly drains his Primeval Essence.

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Three stages stand proudly within the Academy Grounds, surrounded by an arena meant to house hundreds of viewers, with a specially raised tent area facing the middle stage. Despite the gentle snowfall, every student stands in a straight line with their chests puffed out and their noses slightly red due to the cold. Thick robes and fur collars adorn them, their faces shining with determination to face the future.

All except one.

'Where is he?'

The Academy Elder frowns. Other students share his confusion. However, unlike the Elder, who worries about his assessment, other students are gleeful!

Gu Yue Lo Jik is missing. How can they not be happy after suffering a year's worth of injustice? Not only

that, the Clan Leader himself is present!

Does Lo Jik want to ruin his future a day before the final exam?

So be it!

They cheer in their hearts.

Academy Elder grits his teeth. A sense of Deja Vu cautions him from sending guards to Lo Jik's new estate. The last thing the Elder wants on this auspicious day is a bloody drama.

"Continue," The Elder commands the Gu Master on a chair. She nods, adjusting her hair before calling out, "Gu Yue Jin Zu!"

A nervous girl steps out, walking timidly and placing her hand atop the Gu Master's extended one. The woman closes her eyes before saying, "Middle Stage Rank 1!"

This is the final assessment.

There are no more rewards-based Cultivation competitions after reaching the Upper Stage. This is the final assessment before they graduate for good.

The woman continues calling names. Most students only have C and D-grade aptitudes. The best ones with C-grade talent, including Lo Jik, only reached the Upper Stage. Meanwhile, the D-grade students remained in the Middle Stages.

"Gu Yue Chi Cheng," the woman calls.

Shorter than most and quick with his steps—Chi Cheng confidently walks out. The woman inspects his aperture before nodding with a smile. "Peak Stage Rank 1"

"Hmm," the observing Elders nod. "He is Chi Lian's Grandson and one of the B-grade seeds. Good!"

A red-haired middle-aged elder, Chi Cheng's Grandfather, nods with delight in his eyes.

"Gu Yue Mo Bei," the woman calls out.

Unlike Chi Cheng, Mo Bei is muscular. His short hair stands like pins, and his longer nose gives his features a unique look. He lets the woman inspect his aperture before she nods. "Peak Stage Rank 1!"

Mo Bei smirks, tossing Chi Cheng a challenging look. The boy is happy due to Lo Jik's absence.

The woman continues calling names until reaching, “Gu Yue Fang Yuan.”

The children turn tense as Fang Yuan steps out, calmly placing his hand over hers. She closes her eyes before snapping them wide open with surprise.

“Peak Stage Rank 1!”

“What?”

“Isn’t he a C-grade?”

“Are you kicked in the head? He has a Liquor Worm and kept squeezing us dry!”

“Tch! That lucky bastard!”

The Elders in the tent nod as one older woman stares at Fang Yuan for a moment longer.

As Fang Yuan returns to his location, Fang Zheng stares intensely at the youth.

‘Today is the day you’ll be forced to accept my brilliance, Elder Brother! I hoped Lo Jik to be present, too.’

Fang Zheng can barely hide his emotions.

He advanced to Rank 2!

His talent defeated the two B-grade students’ Backgrounds and his Elder Brother’s luck!

Before he can say anything, his eyes widen slightly. Not only he, but others intensely stare at one spot. The winter season brings thick morning mist that clouds everything! The Academy holds the ceremony late when the fog thins for others’ comfort. So, every student can see a shadowy figure wobble his way towards them.

He slowly steps into view, sweaty and pale despite the weather. His soft brown hair is cut neat and short, and his well-groomed, chiseled appearance WOULD attract the girls in his class had he not beaten a few till they cried fearfully. He gasps for breath, clutching his chest. Exertion is apparent on his face as everyone stares at him with confusion—including the Elders.

Lo Jik doesn’t speak. Instead, he locates the assessing woman before wobbling over. He doesn’t talk but pants. His eyes look tired, and his body appears weak despite how much muscle he put over the year. When he stands in one spot, barely handing his hand on her, the Elders witness Lo Jik’s head dipping.

Sleep Deprivation!

The seniors instantly understand the cause. However, how long did he stay up to possess such intense symptoms?

It must be known the last ten days were free for the students, and they could do anything they wanted.

A shocking thought appears in the Academy Elder's mind.

'Did he stay up for ten days? Is that boy crazy!' His heart shudders. Long-term closed-door cultivation sessions don't matter to the elders since they have the experience and know how to prepare. However, Lo Jik? How can he have the relevant Gu worm to manage excrement and feeding as they cultivate?

"Peak Stage Rank 1!"

The woman gasps in surprise, making others shocked.

A tired smirk appears on Lo Jik's face as he loses his footing, falling face-first into the woman's soft bosom and taking her down with him.

"Ha... hahaha... hahahaha!"

A weak chuckle fills the atmosphere before falling silent soon as soft snores replace those previous weak chuckles of utmost determination and stubbornness.

The woman under Lo Jik feels shocked, but she doesn't move. There's a look of understanding on her face as she cannot help but gently brush the boy's face, noting how peaceful he looks after achieving his crazy ambitions.

A complex emotion appears on the Elders' faces as they resonate with those weak chuckles.

'When we give our all and achieve our goals, even the weakest voice thunders the loudest!'

'That boy... He left a deep mark on my Grandson,' Mo Chen exclaims in his heart, not knowing what other marks he left on his Granddaughter. 'I can see why.'

"He's Peak Stage?" Mo Bei's expression grows ugly. Even Fang Zheng is in a daze. That struggling form allowed him to learn something new about Lo Jik.

'That's right,' Gu Yue Bo nods. 'Behind that arrogance and sadism against his class is a pure soul willing to give his all. He sacrificed sleep and comfort for growth. Even if his growth stops, he won't and will continue to provide service for the clan to achieve more resources.'

'Damn. I thought the coordinator's breasts just looked soft. But they ARE soft!'

Now, Lo Jik only wants one thing—Oscar Gu.

After all, his acting revealed everything they would want to know. He always had resources in the form of extortion, and now he spent days—risking permanent injuries to achieve his goals.

It's a game-set match!

He hears Gu Yue Bo's command. "Carry him away. Make sure his rest isn't disturbed. Carry on with the assessment."

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*The Next Day.*

Gu Masters and other Gu Yue Clansmen filtered into the arena. Hundreds of them gathered in a spot, watching ahead in anticipation. The Yearly Competition is as critical to the clan as the Awakening ceremony since the latter represents the first stage of seed planted into the soil. Meanwhile, the former represents a magnificent tree bearing fruits!

It has a deep meaning.

To bear fruit.

Why would the Clan invest resources into the Gu Masters, feeding them with knowledge and experience?

There are no free meals in this world.

If one assumes the Clan as an independent identity, all its members, including the Clan Leader, are its employees. The Academy Students are Trainee Interns. Why does a company raise and invest in interns? To make them usable in the Company's operations.

All the Gu Masters merely stand in different positions of workload.

The Graduates are no longer unrestricted after the competition.

"Look, there's Gu Yue Qing Shu! The number one Rank 2 Gu Master of our Clan!"

A green-haired, elegant-looking man attracts everybody's attention as he walks with a tomboyish female companion. The man with flowing green locks nods and smiles, remaining humble despite the array of praises.

“Isn’t she Gu Yue Mo Yan in the front? I heard she already reached Upper Stage Rank 2 cultivation!”

Mo Yan occupies the front seat, revealing a flat expression. Her features look slightly more angular, unlike her peers, including her nose. But none denies her charm and skills. She ignores the whispers and chatters and focuses on two youths standing by the arena. One of them is a slightly shorter dark-haired youth. Her brother, Mo Bei.

And the other one...

‘I can’t believe that crazy bastard stopped me from coming to risk his life like that!’ Mo Yan seethes. However, who doesn’t admire the growth of such stature? Her anger is merely a mask to get him to... shower her with his affection.

The woman hurriedly thinks of other things lest she gets a reason to clench her thighs!

“Her cultivation is just like Gu Yue Chi Shan now. Look, he’s standing there.”

Unlike Qing Shu’s amicable approach and Mo Yan’s crowd, a half-naked, towering, bulky man carved out of pure muscles stands alone. He possesses red hair that sticks back like needles. His skin exudes incredible warmth as he only wears his dark trousers. His skin is seemingly perpetually flushed with rushing blood.

This man is Upper Stage Rank 2 Chi Shan!

The man boldly stands beside the front seat, crossing his arms.

These three individuals represent the peak of Rank 2 cultivation in Gu Yue Village.

The crowd watches as Gu Yue Bo presides over his seat, making a short speech filled with so much propaganda that Lo Jik would be forced to interrupt had they been in the classroom. The excitement reaches higher when Gu Yue Mo Chen and Chi Lian join the viewing stage beside Gu Yue Bo and other elders since they lead different groups of Elders.

The competition begins—57 Students, One Champion!

“Damn you, Lo Jik!” His first opponent hisses indignantly. “I’ll take revenge for everything you did to me! We can use Gu worms at this stage!”

‘I know, bud.’

Lo Jik calmly walks over as the Gu Master hurriedly shoots Moonblade, only for Lo Jik to evade them with

such ease that it terrifies the opponent—*of what's to come!*

“Hiee! I give up!”

The boy quickly throws in the towel once his Primeval Sea runs short.

“What was that?”

“Hey, are they cheating?”

“Wait, another girl gave up!”

Since there are three stages, the audience can view upto three matches.

However, they soon noticed a few fights shorter than usual as the opponent would give up.

“Hmph!” one of the men growls indignantly. “Those two are Gu Yue Fang Yuan and Lo Jik. They bullied the class year-round, extorting the student’s stipend! My boy never returned with his full stipend!”

“Such a thing?!”

“Amazing! I wish I had that idea!”

“You bastard!”

“What? I said I wish I did. It’s not like I did it.”

Some fights excite the crowd as a girl, and Gu Yue Mo Bei commits to a great martial arts throwdown.

“Whoa! Are they already so good at fighting? This batch is good! I must have some in my group.”

“Hmm, this batch is promising.”

Indeed, that’s the truth. After graduating, one MUST choose a team of Gu Masters to grow in, completing missions and fostering an environment of camaraderie.

In other terms, the Company named ‘*Clan*’ presents limited career options for the trainees to select.

“Chi Cheng! Fight me like a man!”

Chi Cheng darts around the stage with an incredible jumping power as he laughs.





It's only a little after an hour that only 5 top contenders remain. These five individuals remain silent as the crowd cheers. Raising his hand, Gu Yue Bo silences everyone and stands up to announce what the final matches would look like.

Everyone knows how the Village conducts the final matches since this is an Annual Event. But that doesn't stop Gu Yue Bo from nodding at the group of students with a proud smile.

"You all did amazing! The final match will be similar to the round-robin system where one volunteer will compete with other four students in a random order!"

'Random?' Lo Jik chuckles internally. 'Yeah, right.'

Even before Mo Bei and Chi Cheng can consider stepping up, Fang Zheng turns around and quietly steps up the stage with a clear intention. The other four students watch him before returning to the seating area as the hosts decide on the '*Random*' order.

'Will it be the same as my second life?' Fang Yuan glances at Fang Zheng and then at Lo Jik. 'Lo Jik died in my second life, becoming a Bear King's snack. However, he's the only one close to me in pure skills and has a White Boar Gu. He was lucky and showed it off. However, I can't reveal my White Boar Gu. Too many '*lucky*' instances will garner suspicion. And I don't remember another inheritance site in Qing Mao Mountain, so Lo Jik's gain must be luck. We have the same physical might. But Lo Jik is sharp enough to notice that and can connect the dots.'

Lo Jik's arrogant stature didn't make a few avoid the truth about his intelligence and strength. If nothing else, yesterday's spectacle was a wake-up call for many!

"Gu Yue Mo Bei!"

Gu Yue Mo Bei steps on the stage, facing Fang Zheng with clenched fists as he vows loudly. "Fang Zheng! Today, I will beat you and become the person who defeated a Rank 2 Gu Master at Rank 1 Cultivation!"

"Fang Zheng is already a Rank 2 Gu Master before graduation?"

"Sigh, that's A-grade Aptitude!"

"Hah! He's Gu Yue Clan's hope and will eventually contend with that Bai Clan's Genius!"

"Bai Ning Bing, huh? I remember how she almost cut me open with a single attack."

“What’s surprising? Our Clan Leader raised Fang Zheng. Excellence is expected!”

It’s no secret that Gu Yue Bo started nurturing Fang Zheng after the attempt on his life.

Unfazed by the discussion in the arena, Fang Zheng looks Mo Bei straight in the eye, roaring, “Then come!”

He steps forward, surprising Mo Bei. The current norm has been for the Gu Masters to shoot their Moonblades before tackling each other with their fists. However, Fang Zheng directly steps forward, tossing a wrench in Mo Bei’s plan. Seeing Fang Zheng close up the distance to almost 6 meters, Mo Bei hurriedly uses his Moonlight Gu.

However, Fang Zheng dodges them despite the closer distance. The crowd would have cheered had they not seen Lo Jik do the same by getting closer to the opponent, revealing his expertise with Moonlight Gu.

Instead, the tensions stemmed from knowing the two Gu Master’s backgrounds.

“Gu Yue Fang Zheng will undoubtedly enter Qing Shu’s group and Clan Leader’s Faction. Meanwhile, Mo Bei is the Mo Faction’s member. It’s the conflict between two major groups!”

“Look! Mo Bei cannot hit Fang Zheng at such close distance, but he isn’t used to it, allowing Fang Zheng’s Moonblades to slowly injure him in different places.”

“Sigh, Fang Zheng is a Rank 2 Gu Master. His primeval essence is ten times greater than a Rank 1 Gu Master! How can Mo Bei contend with that?”

It’s the truth.

Mo Bei eventually runs out of steam, and his Gu worm, capable of increasing endurance, doesn’t last long since he accumulated more injuries from Fang Zheng’s relatively tame Moonblades. Why Fang Zheng doesn’t immediately end the fight by cutting off Mo Bei’s limb will always remain a mystery to Lo Jik.

‘End the match as quickly as possible!’ Lo Jik sighs.

“Gu Yue Fang Zheng wins!”

Mo Bei is hurriedly carried off the stage against his will since he refuses to give up. Meanwhile, Mo Chen looks disappointed at the results.

'I wish you were here, Cui,' Fang Zheng steps down, accepting the Primeval Stones from the hosts to recover his essence. 'I will keep my promise!'

He recalls this morning's events before his Father and Mother sent him off. While this competition is open for all Gu Yue Members, those with businesses cannot take a day off.

He recalls his Cui's gentle voice, her warm hands, and her bright, coy eyes.

—*"Cui knows that Young Master is the best! Graduation means you will become a man. You are the village's champion, too. I- I shall prepare for tonight."*—

Her blush and soft touches increased the stakes for Fang Zheng!

So many people want him to win.

How can he lose?

"Gu Yue Chi Cheng!"

Another Gu Master steps up.

'You can do it, Cheng'er,' Chi Lian watches intently. The elders understand the Leader's intentions. By having Fang Zheng defeat their heirs first, Gu Yue Bo is setting Fang Zheng up to be the next political leader of his generation.

"Hah! You can't catch me, Fang Zheng!"

Chi Cheng uses his Gu to move away, not letting Fang Zheng close the distance. This continues for a few minutes before Fang Zheng stops and returns to the stage's center. He suddenly chuckles. "You're right, Chi Cheng. However, I'm a Rank 2 Gu Master with an A-grade Aptitude. Can your Aperture keep up with mine? Not to mention, you're a Rank 1 Gu Master. How long can you last by consuming your essence?"

Chi Cheng's expression changes.

'Why should that intimidate you one bit? He's a rank 2 with Rank 1 Gu Worms, meaning his intensity isn't different than a Peak Stage Rank 1 Gu Master—only his endurance is.'

Lo Jik sees the situation calmly, already knowing what he will do.

It won't be pretty.

With his motivation dampened, Fang Zheng swiftly defeats Chi Cheng.

'I won't let your hard work go to waste, Clan Leader. I reached Rank 2 as promised, and I will defeat those two, starting a new life after graduation!'

Gu Yue Bo internally smiles as he watches the confident look building on Fang Zheng's face.

'Good. You are ready, Fang Zheng.' Gu Yue Bo feels pleased.

"Gu Yue Lo Jik!"

Fang Zheng and Lo Jik step on the stage.

"START!"

'I once told you that Lo Jik is like you, Fang Zheng. He has an offensive and defensive Gu. His luck is great to find a White Boar Gu. However, you have your trump card, too!' Gu Yue Bo has his intentions of setting the matches this way.

'Defeat Lo Jik. He's the opponent you gained in Academy. Then defeat your Brother, who's left a lasting shadow on your heart!'

Lo Jik and Fang Zheng stand 10 meters from each other. Unlike the confidence against his previous two opponents, Fang Zheng seems to have more emotions this time as he reveals the generous nature of the strong! He flourishes his hand, stating, "We have had our differences, Lo Jik. You may also feel confident after gaining a Boar's strength. However, the human body is weak, and if you use your strength without your Iron Skin Gu, you will injure yourself. So, give up! I won't let you near me and can continue using the Moonlight Gu longer than you!"

Fang Yuan narrows his eyes.

'It is true. Silence is a golden virtue,' he shakes his head internally.

Lo Jik inclines his head before suddenly turning to the Academy Elder, bowing.

'What? That brat Lo Jik is showing me respect? Hahaha!' Academy Elder glimpses. However, his expression changes when Lo Jik opens his mouth.

"Academy Elder! Please give me justice!"

'Not again!' the Academy Elder's beard trembles as Lo Jik continues.

"I never revealed my Iron Skin Gu to anyone. It was my trump card. I never used it while practicing my skills in the wild, where I found the White Boar Gu."

Fang Zheng's expression changes while the Clan Leader's eye twitches as he feels the other Elders glancing at him.

"This..." The Academy Elder mutters, revealing a complex expression. Everyone in the arena frowns in contemplation. Many already know what happened, but they dare not speak about it!

Fang Zheng sweats from his head as Lo Jik continues, "Please assure my heart that Fang Zheng only knew this by getting inside the Gu Room to further his studies and managed to count other Gu Worms."

Since the Gu Worms in the Academy's Gu Room replenishes every year, it's certainly possible for Fang Zheng to count them and predict who possesses what. It's not unheard of for an A-grade Aptitude to get special treatment.

The Academy Elder nods, appeasing the situation, "You are correct, Lo Jik! That's what happened precisely!"

'Now, please! Fight!'

The Academy Elder sighs while other Elders in the viewing stands glance at each other meaningfully.

They can see through Lo Jik's intentions.

He's saying: I looked through your schemes, but I won't name and drag you through the mud!

They are wrong.

Lo Jik sighs, beaming at the sweating Fang Zheng as he walks closer to the youth with an amicable expression.

"Sorry, Fang Zheng. I thought you cheated. I should have known better. I'm in the wrong here."

Fang Zheng dazedly stares at Lo Jik's hand.

'Is he trying to make up for the past? Now that I'm Rank 2 Gu Master, he wants to get closer. Hmph! But I cannot deny a clan member's good intentions in front of so many. No. What if I shake his hand, and he attacks me? I should keep the Jade Sking Gu prepared and focus on his shoulders. I will retreat once he tries to attack me.'

Lo Jik stood a few steps away to prevent spooking Fang Zheng.

The youth steps forward, silently shaking Lo Jik's hand.

When spectators smile at such a heartfelt moment of forgiveness and friendship, almost about to cheer—*Their eyes pop wide open!*

Even the Elder and the Clan Leader gape!

So insidious!

Fang Zheng frowns as he feels his balance tilt. His legs feel warm before a sharp pain makes him shout out loud!

“AAAAGHHHHHHH!”

He lets go of Lo Jik's hand, retreating as he falls for some reason.

Blood splatters on the ground as the boy howls, crying and staring at his left leg!

It's been sliced neatly.

Lo Jik's right boot is torn open for some reason.

“Uh, healer?” Lo Jik glances at the healing Gu Master. “He's bleeding—”

“Gu Yue Lo Jik!” The Academy Elder roars. “You're disqualified!”

“Why?” Lo Jik calmly retorts. “The match never stopped. Isn't that right, Referee?”

The dazed referee pales as the Healing Gu Masters rush on stage while the Academy Elder fumes.

The entire crowd erupts in anger.

“That’s low!”

“Too devious! Too shameless!”

“He lowered Fang Zheng’s guard and... was that a Moonblade from a kick?!”

“Hmph! A cheap trick!”

‘Pathetic losers,’ Mo Yan snorts internally. ‘Not only does the Clan Leader cheat by leaking confidential information about Lo Jik to that cunt Zheng, but they have the cheek to curse him? He’s fighting a Rank 2 Gu Master! Fairness was never part of the deal!’

Lo Jik calmly steps down as the crying Fang Zheng is taken away.

The scene makes Fang Yuan involuntarily recall something.

The start of their year, their first stipend, and his first match with Lo Jik. Lo Jik throws mud and grass at him while using another underhanded tactic to use his dagger’s butt!

‘My third life is too different.’ Fang Yuan sighs, wondering if he will win this match without going all and exposing himself.

‘Using the Moonlight Gu with feet? Hehe, nice idea,’ Fang Yuan’s gaze glimmers.

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Everyone observes the two students on the stage. It’s the first time in the history of the Gu Yue Clan that the high-grade students are knocked out, leaving two C-grade students. The results are undeniable, even if they are a product of an insidious plot. Fang Zheng watches the two students with cold fury in his heart. He cannot accept it!

Fang Zheng wasn’t allowed to display his entire skills!

Yet, that’s the point, isn’t it? Anyone with combat experience understands how to destroy the enemy quickly and keep them from using their trump cards.

Fang Zheng’s left leg throbs painfully. His injuries were already healed since his leg wasn’t destroyed, but the pain still made him frown and ground his jaw.

‘These two are unworthy!’ Fang Zheng roars in his heart. He could defeat these two if it wasn’t for—

“START!”

*\*Whoosh\**

Lo Jik and Fang Yuan dash at each other without speaking a word as the crowd loses their momentary indignance, gasping. One may see Lo Jik is barefoot this time.

Moonlight energy covers their palms as both flick their wrists at one another.

*\*Swish\**

Dodging, the two get closer, using another Moonblade! Their bodies evade the sharp Moonblades, eventually getting almost 2 meters close! The situation grips everyone’s attention as they observe intently.

Are they kids?

Lo Jik and Fang Yuan seem to enter a choreographed dance, aware of each other’s movements and attacks, dodging at once while pressuring each other to evade, too! Cold-blue moonlight reflects on their faces and clothes, glinting their brown and black pupils. One’s wavy hair is cut slightly, while the other’s shorter brown strands trim.

Fang Zheng watches in a daze.

What is this?

Is this a battle?

How can it be so intense?!

Fang Yuan’s pupils shrink as he jumps backward, avoiding a moonlight from Lo Jik’s kick.

“So fast! Lo Jik can control his Moonblade from one body to another so quickly?”

“Monsters! And look how Fang Yuan is dodging! These two are battle geniuses of the decade!”

For once, Lo Jik cannot help but agree.

He shouldn’t be this good with four additional months of battle training in the wilds!



However, his body seems to pick up skills AND trick shots quicker than his original host or previous life's body ever did!

'Fang Yuan is the real genius! Motherfucker is pressuring me! I'm also using my Instincts Gu to keep up, but that man is built differently!'

Lo Jik cannot help but evade another moonblade when his already-increased awareness trembles, forcing him to drop down as a Moonblade from a tricky angle cuts a bit of his hair. Lo Jik sweats as he glances at Fang Yuan's busted bamboo shoe.

"Fang Yuan did that, too!"

The crowd gasps while grave expressions flicker on the Rank 2 veterans.

Lo Jik hurriedly rolls forward, avoiding another moonlight Gu before B-dancing his way up with a one-two Moonblade tactic, causing Fang Yuan's eyes to briefly widen as he falls into the passive instead!

Yet, both of them stop at almost the same time.

The crowd exhales at once, not knowing they were holding their breath for so long!

"They are out of Primeval Essence," one of the viewers whispers.

Yet, don't Lo Jik and Fang Yuan know each other by now?

*'He definitely has some to spare!'*

They think simultaneously.

'Getting hit would be unavoidable,' Fang Yuan sighs. He was already spread thin with such an intense display of Moonlight Gu. 'If I get hit, I will have to hit him back. We grew up from being scrawny brats, and weak punches wouldn't do. Not to mention, Lo Jik won't hold back, so I'll be hit using a boar's strength! I'll have to give up on the prize money since I have to hide my gains. In fact, I can eventually borrow the White Boar Gu from Lo Jik to show my full might.'

Fang Yuan raises his hand, "I give up."

"It was a good fight, Classmate Fang," Lo Jik cups his fist and bows slightly.

Fang Zheng's expression couldn't help but darken at this.

Such skills...

It's also the first time Lo Jik praised anyone.

Forced to accept Lo Jik's skills and noticing the hard work needed to master such techniques, the spectators cannot help but change their view of the young man.

'He won!' Mo Yan flushes slightly.

"Gu Yue Lo Jik is the WINNER!"

Academy Elder steps up, announcing loudly. He glances at the youth with complicated emotions.

'Well,' the man sighs. 'At least Lo Jik and Fang Yuan are not my problems anymore!'

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'Things were going smooth!' Gu Yue Bo stands, delivering another speech after the end of the matches. But the event has yet to end. The Academy Students are the Clan's resources. Now, they must contribute to the clan by joining a team. It's a mandatory process. The brighter a student shines in the matches, the more picks they have to choose from.

'If only Gu Yue Lo Jik didn't use that underhanded tactic,' Gu Yue Bo internally scoffs as he adds after his speech.

"Well done, everyone! As this Batch's champion, Gu Yu Lo Jik will receive 150 Primeval stones and the priority to pick a Gu worm from the academy for free!"

Lo Jik bows slightly.

"Hmm. Which Faction do you think Lo Jik will pick?" Chi Lian strokes his red beard, discreetly glancing at Mo Chen.

They watch Qing Shu walk over to Fang Zheng, inviting the youth to one of the best three teams.

Lo Jik watches Qing Shu, too. Lo Jik wanted to join Qing Shu's team. However, that won't happen. His relationship with Fang Zheng and the stunt he pulled won't allow him to join Qing Shu.

'The next pick was Chi Shan,' Lo Jik glances at the topless giant. 'He's usually silent, and his team has enough autonomy. However, Chi Lian and Mo Chen are known competitors, and I've been staying in one of Mo Family's rentals. The Chi Faction won't accept me and may think I'm a spy for the Mo Family.'

If he joins a team better than Mo Yan's—it's acceptable. But Lo Jik risked his relationship with the woman by joining a weaker team or her rival.

Yes. Lo Jik didn't want to be in Mo Yan's team.

What?

Does the phrase—*Don't defecate where you eat*—have no meaning here?

However, this isn't something Lo Jik can avoid.

'I should plan to push Mo Yan one final time till she reaches Peak Stage Rank 2 Gu Worm.'

Lo Jik contemplates while stepping through the sea of offers from other Gu Masters, trying to recruit him, before standing across Mo Yan. On the viewing stage, Mo Chen appears pleased as Chi Lian snorts. Chi Lian glances at Fang Yuan, hoping the other combat talent would join Chi Shan's team to balance things out. However, Fang Yuan unexpectedly joins a small group led by a Rank 2 Gu Master, Gu Yue Jiao San.

"What do you want?" Mo Bei steps out of the group, glaring at Lo Jik. "This isn't a group you're allowed into!"

Lo Jik merely glances at Mo Bei before stepping behind Mo Yan, intentionally teasing him, "Open your eyes, Batchmate Mo. You're no longer the President."

"You!"

Anger flashes in Mo Bei's eyes! However, he suddenly meets Mo Yan's icy, indifferent stare.

"Enough," she commands quietly. "Gu Yue Lo Jik and Gu Yu Mo Bei are the Mo Faction's new members."

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nobody is foolish enough to go through such means for slight confrontations.

An ordinary faction leads their new teammates through their first mission after a few days to establish their dominance through superior means and experience. However, being the largest faction, Mo Yan's team doesn't leave for any mission immediately.

Her team is further divided into two groups of Seven Gu Masters. These two teams take turns accepting missions, allowing the other team plenty of time to recuperate after their missions. Of course, it also means Mo Faction earns slower than the rest. The two new teammates—Mo Bei and Lo Jik—are divided into these two teams, with Lo Jik entering the team without Mo Yan.

'If I were in an ordinary team, they wouldn't let me have this time to cultivate and enter Rank 2,' Lo Jik controls his Primeval Essence and lets it crash against the brilliant crystal wall. 'However, Mo Bei entered closed-door cultivation, allowing Mo Yan to use it as an excuse and let me try entering Rank 2, too.'

He smirks. Others believe he's a C-grade talent with 48% essence. It's not hard for a C-grader to enter Rank 2 through adequate Primeval Stones. However, things change at a higher level.

Why?

Lo Jik crinkles his brows, observing the thin cracks in the crystal wall recovering steadily!

*Nurture the walls to advance in minor realms; Break the damn wall to step into next!*

A Gu master nurtures his aperture wall from light to water, then stone and crystal. To enter the next stage, a Gu Master must break the heavily nurtured and pure crystal walls, devouring past efforts and birthing a stage to repeat the process.

*\*Crash\**

*\*Crash\**

*\*Crash\**

'A Primeval Stone recovers 100% of Initial Stage Rank 1 Essence. If one calculates the amount of essence I've expended and the time it takes for a Peak Stage Rank 1 Gu Master to consume the stone... they'll realize a C-grade Gu Master can enter Rank 2 within 5 days with minimal rest. However, a fake A-grader like me with hundreds of Primeval Stones as disposable income...'

**\*Crack\***

A soft sound echoes in his second aperture before the thin cracks in the Crystal wall widen, connecting with each other like spiderwebs as all of it comes tumbling down! Large shards of crystal wall wither into motes of soft white light, expanding and reforming the space around his aperture.

Lo Jik is familiar with this thin wall—*Light Wall*.

Meanwhile, within a hint of conspicuous red blooms in his waning Black-Green Essence!

Light-Red Primeval Essence!

Initial Stage Rank 2!

Lo Jik slowly opens his eyes, licking his dry lips.

'It took me 14 hours. Using the Light-Red Primeval Essence should reduce the required time by 3 times!' He calculates in his heart. It's only been a day since the competition. But Lo Jik doesn't feel complacent since advancing to Rank 2 is his most basic goal. He also must possess a Rank 2 Gu Master's *'output'* within four days.

"Wait," he suddenly frowns as he feels something amiss.

Lo Jik hurriedly concentrates upon his second aperture, watching the sun-like Hope Gu suddenly release a sharp glow! His breath hitches when he feels its aura transforming. Its breath changes as the usual Rank 1 Blood Python Gu coiled around it suddenly drops into the Primeval Sea with fear.

His heartbeat paces with the drumming sensation in his mind as his Vital Gu quietly advances a realm!

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Mo Yan frowns in dissatisfaction as she slams the door behind her. A wave of resentment fills her heart as she suppresses her rage against her Grandfather and Brother. Lo Jik's outstanding performance—his perseverance to reach Peak Stage Rank 1 Gu Worm or his match against Fang Yuan—enlightened Mo Yan on how far he was willing to train to prove himself to her.

Yet, she feels her advancement to the Upper Stage feels lacking in comparison. Mo Yan

has always been fiercely competitive. She never felt this way for Lo Jik. However, Mo Yan can't help but curse herself for not trying her hardest to step into Peak Stage. She always had the resources for it, yet...

'I wanted to surprise him,' she purses her lips. 'Why won't I try and reciprocate his gesture? Why shouldn't he take me at my best? Our Family has two Red Steel Relic Gu Worms. One belongs to Grandfather, but he won't hand it over to me, saying he's saving it for Mo Bei once he advances to Upper Stage.'

'Aren't I already in the Upper Stage? Why can't Grandfather procure another one for Mo Bei later? It's not like he will advance to the Upper Stage soon.'

She grits her teeth.

Guilt fills her heart as she feels uneasy.

'... will Lo Jik understand? He entered a closed-door cultivation and will likely advance to Rank 2. He kept his promise. No. He went above and beyond! If I reject his advances... No. He will understand.' She convinces herself. 'I- I'll have to avoid him for now. He may get angry. But trying and convince him to save ourselves till I reach Peak Stage might make him feel inadequate.'

How can Mo Yan not understand a Man's pride? Her Grandfather showers Mo Bei with the best stuff because he feels proud of her Little Brother's accomplishments.

However, Mo Yan's worries are more selfish.

'I'm afraid he would delay our promised time till he reaches Rank 2 Peak Stage cultivation if I admit my shortcomings to him,' Mo Yan slows down, feeling an aching need birth under her navel as her lower lips throb. 'I don't want to wait that long! Yes. It's final. I will avoid him and cultivate swiftly. I will surprise him once I reach Rank 2 Peak Stage!'

Her ears heat up at the thought. She's only felt it with her hands, that thick member of his.

'And he likes fondling my butt so much,' she huffs in exasperation. 'Maybe I should purchase *THOSE* Gu to prepare a few things. But it's bad if I cut contact without any explanations. That's right. I can convey my intentions through my actions.' She doesn't worry Lo Jik won't see through her actions. He's always been smart and sensible to her.

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A Gu Master's cultivation revolves around nurturing, using, and refining Gu.

Gu!

A Gu Master's Primeval Essence is useless without Gu Worms. There's little difference between an Ordinary human and a Gu Master without Gu Worms. How can a Gu Master advance to Rank 2 without upgrading his Gu Worms?

A Gu Master's capabilities are directly linked with their Gu Worms. A Rank 1 Gu Master cannot properly wield a Rank 2 Gu Worm since its consumption is proportionate to a Rank 2 Gu Master. To use a Rank 2 Gu Worm as a Rank 1 Gu Master would be similar to an infant wielding a heavy broadsword. Meanwhile, a Rank 2 Gu Master using a Rank 1 Gu Worm is like an adult waving a toothpick.

A Gu Master and his Gu Worms must always be in balance.

Naturally, Lo Jik cannot continue using Rank 1 Gu Worms.

There are different ways to acquire Rank 2 Gu Worms—trading, discovering it in the wilds, and refining the Gu.

Now that Lo Jik is an official Gu Master, he can exchange Primeval Stones for Gu Worms. He can also refine them.

However, the Academy does not teach the students how to *'refine'* a Gu.

This refinement does not relate to saturating a Gu with one's will and making it one's possession.

The reason is simpler than one might imagine—to incentivize the role of Faction Leaders—and promote discipline among the newbies. Faction leaders utilize the allure of refining a Gu to keep many Gu Masters in order.

To refine a Gu also means to fuse peculiar Gu Worms and create a better Gu Worm! For instance, fusing Rank 1 Moonlight Gu with two Little Light Gu Worms results in Rank 2 Moonglow Gu. Such recipes are taught in the Academy. However, the process of controlling Gu worms and refining them is left for Graduates to find themselves, encouraging the young, official Gu Masters to form connections with their seniors and develop a network of exchange.

Lo Jik—after reading three different journals and long conversations with Mo



Yan—understands the premise of fusion. It's an integral part of Gu Master's cultivation since rare Gu Worms are not often present, and a Gu Master must refine a higher-ranked Gu Worm using weaker ones.

He's well-rested after a day's cultivation and prepared to advance his first Gu Worms.

'However, it won't be my first Rank 2 Gu Worm. Hope Gu is indeed mysterious. Not only does it awaken the aperture, but it somehow consumes the Aura of Resentment and advances with the second aperture.' Lo Jik frowns. Too much of something can be dangerous, and the mysteries surrounding his Second Aperture are starting to make him uncomfortable.

He exhales sharply, regathering his focus before glancing at three Gu worms on his mattress.

One is like a blue quartz shaped into a small crescent—Rank 1 Moonlight Gu.

The other two Gu Worms look like fingernail-sized five-pointed stars releasing a soft milky glow—Rank 1 Little Light Gu.

A grave expression flickers on Lo Jik's features. 'Rank 1 Moonlight Gu alongside two Rank 1 Little Light Gu Worms can combine into Rank 2 Moonglow Gu. It's one of the most popular offensive Rank 2 Gu in Gu Yue Village. However, the difficulty of refining this Gu is higher than others since a Gu master must control three Gu worms at once. I would opt for refining Jade Skin Gu with the White Boar Gu, resulting in a Rank 2 White Jade Gu. But those two Gu worms are rare. I risk destroying them if I fail during the process.'

Of course, Lo Jik can refine the Jade Skin Gu as the vital Gu for his first aperture. As long as Lo Jik loves, his Jade Skin Gu will survive. But he is unwilling to waste this slot on the Jade Skin Gu. Those three journals broadened his horizons, and now Lo Jik has some expectations from his cultivation.

He quietly focuses on the Moonlight Gu, letting his light-red essence leave his body in thin smoke, coiling around and making it float. Instead of letting out a moonblade as it would when spurned by Primeval Essence, the Gu Worm follows Lo Jik's commands, emitting a soft-blue hue that brightens steadily and soon encapsulates the Gu Worm.

An ordinary man will find a blue ball of light floating a few inches away from Lo Jik.

Yet, it's nothing like using a Gu Worm!

Lo Jik frowns, feeling... weird. He cannot describe the sensation of refining a Gu. Well, for one, it's a mysterious feeling. A Gu Master combining different Gu into something else is miraculous! It's similar to a few *'Alchemy'* Traits from his Hometown. However, Lo Jik doesn't let himself get distracted. The price of failing in refinement won't stop at damaged Gu worms but also self-injuries that may force him to recover for days! Instead, he slowly divides his attention, letting another thin, smoky stream of essence into one of the Little Light Gu worms.

Like before, Lo Jik manages to charge the intent of combination, forming a milky-white orb of energy around the Little Light Gu.

Unfortunately, as the third stream of essence reaches for the final Gu, his concentration slips, and the former two Gu Worms fall on the mattress.

This cannot even be called failing in refinement since Lo Jik didn't begin fusing the Gu.

'It's a level below failure,' Lo Jik mocks.

He isn't new to using multiple Gu worms. He used Instinct Gu and Moonlight Gu simultaneously while fighting against Fang Yuan, so he understood the difference in controlling different Gu to refine and use.

He wouldn't undersell himself. He failed because he wasn't used to the weird sensation.

How can he cultivate for hours without moving an inch if his concentration wasn't top-notch?

Undeterred by the failure, Lo Jik restarts the process with an expectant heart.

Refinement of Gu is filled with failures. It's said that a Gu Master may fail despite being perfect in their process.

Since there is an unavoidable element of failure in fusing and creating another Gu, the last thing Lo Jik is afraid of facing is the said setbacks!

A cold, blue glow illuminates his dim room again as Lo Jik steps into a new realm of cultivation!

<<<>>>

**\*Bang\***

A white and blue light explodes. Two Gu worms fly from the point of explosion. One smacks against the nearby tree, falling weakly. The other one lands on Fang Zheng's lap. A wave of nausea hits Fang Zheng as he grits his jaw, enduring the feedback from failing to refine the Gu Worm.

"Take a deep breath," Gu Yue Bo guides. He encourages, "Fusing Gu Worms is never without risks. How can a Gu Master create a Gu worm without failure and risks? That is God's domain! You're performing well, Fang Zheng."

The youth doesn't say anything. Instead, Fang Zheng lowers his head, quietly picking up the Jade Skin Gu and retrieving his Moonlight Gu.

'Sigh,' Gu Yue Bo sighs internally. Losing to Lo Jik severely affected the boy. Gu Yue Bo can understand Fang Zheng's thoughts as he pats the boy's shoulder. "Victory and defeat are part of life, Fang Zheng. Learn from your losses, and they will never harm you again."

"Yes," Fang Zheng replies faintly before thinning his lips. "May I ask you something, Clan Leader?"

"Hmm? What is it?" Gu Yue Bo questions.

Fang Zheng was pale once he failed to fuse the Gu Worms. However, blood rushes to his cheeks as he lowers his head, muttering.

"I... we, ehm. Cui Cui and I were going to do that," he speaks vaguely. "But I couldn't... perform."

Gu Yue Bo's lips twitch constantly.

No wonder Fang Zheng cannot concentrate! Gu Yue Bo almost screams in his heart.

'Do I even have to guide Fang Zheng about that?' He sighs but keeps a confident attitude.

"Body and mind need to be balanced when performing such acts of intimacy, Fang Zheng. Instead of focusing on such things, regather your thoughts and form realizable goals. Once you achieve success and balance your heart, what is a mere servant girl, none may stop you." Gu Yue Bo reassuringly pats Fang Zheng's shoulder, noticing the complicated look on the boy's face once he called Shen Cui a servant.

The lass' schemes were easy to see for anyone with slight awareness. However, Fang

Zheng was too attached to Shen Cui to realize the truth.

Gu Yue Bo wouldn't interfere in such matters. Love was, is, and will always be unreasonable, emerging from the strangest couplings! Gu Yue Bo might risk the boy's disloyalty if he unnecessarily interfered with Fang Zheng's emotional side.

He sees Fang Zheng off after a few more words.

Gu Yue Bo's warm smile slowly fades as the cold moonlight reflects on his impassive, aged face.

'Oh, Fang Zheng. Forgive me. But I wish I had another option.'

Every A-grade talent must be nurtured. However, Fang Zheng seems to get wrapped up in the meaningless things around him when he should focus on his cultivation.

'Now he has to worry about his Erectile Dysfunction?' Bo heaves deeply. 'I'll just have Qing Shu spike Fang Zheng's food with some *'spice.'*'

He lied to Fang Zheng before. The best way to deal with such problems is quickly getting them out of the system. Gu Yue Bo knows Fang Zheng's efficiency will skyrocket once he sleeps with that lass.

<<<>>>

*\*Drip\* \*Drip\* \*Drip\* \*Drip\**

Sweat drips down from the tip of his nose and chin despite the snow outside as heavy body odor saturates his bedroom. Indifferent to it, Lo Jik quietly concentrates and wills three orbs of light to fuse. A spectator will instantly note the difference since Lo Jik lets the two milky-white orbs fuse together, enlarging them to match the blue orb's size and intensity before fusing them!

The mystical light does not explode. Instead, it stabilizes into a watery-blue orb.

Lo Jik's gaze intensifies as he slowly tosses a Primeval Stone into the light. Surprisingly, the stone does not phase past the light and gets consumed by it, leaving a small stream of crumbling dust. He continues tossing Primeval Stones into the light.

2...

5...

11...

The orb's glow sharpens with each stone fed.

27...

58...

146...

A qualitative change ensues as the watery orb begins flashing.

A connection with a new Gu worm replaces Lo Jik's connection with the Moonlight and the two Little Light Gu worms.

The orb condenses and steadily descends on Lo Jik's palm, revealing a crescent-shaped, water-like crystalline Gu. Its size is twice the Moonlight Gu, emitting cold gleams.

Rank 2 Moonglow Gu!

Lo Jik wipes the sweat off his brows, relaxing with a heave.

'Too close!' he groans. 'Moonlight Gu almost died. However, the journals and Mo Yan's advice worked well, letting me avoid several issues. This world should adopt a more practical study environment than promoting propaganda.' He sighs. Who was he kidding? This world is driven individualistically despite the facade of the group environment. Nobody wants to see others grow stronger and stomp them.

He slumps back, letting the Moonglow Gu return to his right palm.

'Moonglow Gu consumes 40 Moon Orchid petals per week. The consumption is almost twice that of Moonlight Gu, but I only need to feed it once. It's a trend of increasing costs. Although I won't have to worry about nurturing the Gu, I must keep many sources open. Moonlight Gu almost cost me 3 stones a week. Moonglow costs me 4 stones. The price difference is negligent ONLY because Moon Petal Orchid is Gu Yue Clan's specialty and is available in loads. If I refine the Gu into Rank 3, it'll need food every few weeks and may cost me between 50-100 stones!'

Lo Jik quietly calculates.



Snow crushes under their feet as they travel concisely, soon reaching the northern entrance. The group walks to the Mission Hall, a well-built pavilion with a healthy traffic of Faction Leaders through their gates.

“Wow, Lo Jik!” One of the slim girls smiles. “You didn’t get caught in any traps, and your speed was amazing, too.”

“Exactly,” a burly man clasps Lo Jik’s shoulder, beaming, “We chose a simple mission to let you slowly adapt to the snowy wilds. Your instincts are quite good.”

“Hmph!” Another girl snorts. “He was lucky. Even if he didn’t slow us down, how many snow roses did he find? 4!”

Others frown at the woman’s words, while Lo Jik calmly accepts everything. His silence makes the girl more annoyed. However, before she can speak any further, their team’s faux leader arrives with a smile.

“Good Job, everyone. As usual, the mission’s reward was increased by three times since it was Lo Jik’s first task. Here, Lo Jik.” The leader hands Lo Jik the pouch worth 6 Stones. “It’s Mo Faction’s tradition to let the newbie retain their first earning.”

Lo Jik accepts it with a word of thanks. The previous girl huffs, complaining about how they can take a real mission after this as the vice-leader disperses everyone. Lo Jik doesn’t linger and moves toward the bazaar.

‘That girl, Gu Yue Fan Hi—’ Lo Jik narrows his eyes, recalling the thin woman with small hair and a petite body. ‘She wants to suck Mo Bei off. The team led by Mo Yan is the cream of the crop. Meanwhile, the team under Gu Yue Jin Shu is the backup.’ He feels the pouch around his waist, smirking. ‘What a tradition. First, they try to stump the newbies in the rough climate. Since hunters cannot convey all the trap’s locations, Qing Mao Mountain is especially dangerous for careless Gu Masters. However, I know all these traps and their tell. Yet, the group didn’t stop there. They wanted to show off and suppress me by completing the task quicker.’

He lacked in this department, but he wasn’t much worse. He could also keep up with the team’s speed due to the two Boar Strength Gu.

Although the Gu Worms strengthened his body, Boars are known for their explosive speeds. Anyone who refines and uses the Boar Strength Gu may notice a slight increase in explosive speed within and outside combat!

Lo Jik feels unpleasant despite his skills. He is no longer an academy student. He can be called for dangerous combat at any moment.

Wolf Tide!

'I refuse to rely on this team system,' He scoffs internally. It would be a different matter if he didn't have his Trait.

Why should Lo Jik squander his talents?

Hundreds and thousands of wolves will soon invade the village after being forced out of their valley. Lo Jik must possess different skills to safeguard his life!

Moonglow Gu only covers his attack alongside the strength of two Boars.

But what about the rest—Defense, Movement, Investigation, Healing, and Support/Storage.

'I can refine the White Jade Gu for my defense. But it's a rare Rank 2 Gu. How will I explain its origin? It's also hard to feed. The current Jade Skin Gu is almost through with my savings of Jade Stones. Healing Gu is also crucial. That bitch Fan Hi is the team's healer. I'll bite off my balls before expecting her to heal me until the leader interjects,' Lo Jik frowns.

He doesn't want to repeat Cao's disaster.

Even though he wants to push some individuals, he now tries to actively learn about them and predict how his actions will affect his target's surroundings.

'The main issue is still feeding the Gu,' Lo Jik frowns. 'The best Gu worms display outstanding results and simple feeding requirements. The Blood Python Gu may fall into this category since it feeds on blood and can be found at different locations.

'Moonglow is only easy to feed since we are in Gu Yue Clan—else the Gu would not be feasible.' The Moon Orchid's petals don't have long shelf value unless stored in peculiar means.

'The rare Rank 3 evolution of the Moonglow Gu is the Crescent Bow. I need to find a Rank 2 Light Arrow Gu for that,' he considers his long-ranged option before mulling over his close-ranged tactics.

'My body is definitely weird,' He gulps. 'First, I die and somehow return to life? My vital



Gu advances with my cultivation. And... while an ordinary Gu Master must refine and enhance their bodies after assimilating two Rank 1 Beast Strength Gu, I can accommodate two more!

He doesn't know whether to feel happy or not. At most, it means that his body is simply built differently.

A Gu Master cannot endlessly absorb a Beast's strength since their flesh has limits. However, there are Gu that strengthen the body and increase these limits.

Meanwhile, Lo Jik's limits are double that of an ordinary Gu Master.

'There's also the matter of Instinct Gu. Consecutive use of the Gu exhausts the mind. However, the Rank 2 Gu Battle Instincts Gu has reduced negative consequences. I can also step back and use Instinct Gu to refine a rare One Breath Intuition Gu.'

He has many options, but the issue is how he will sustain them. Battle Instincts Gu is valuable to him, given the predicted battles. However, feeding One Breath Intuition Gu is simple since it consumes any emotion.

A stifling pressure envelops Lo Jik.

*What to do?*

*What to do?*

He sighs.

'Still, the Jade Skin Gu is useless to the current me. I should refine it to the White Jade Gu since I have the means. As for movement Gu, I can buy the Boar Hoof Gu and fuse it with the Black Boar Strength Gu to form the Rank 2 Boar Charge Gu. I must take risks to feed them—especially the White Jade Gu. Maybe I can ask Mo Yan? But how will I explain it to her?'

He rejects the idea. Despite being unable to solve the issue of feeding the Gu, Lo Jik feels better. He will feel more secure once he covers his other two basics—defense and movement. It will allow him to enter a battle and retreat at his pace.

He sniffs.

He already reached the bazaar. His expression eases as he looks through the produce, finding his day's meal.

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Shen Cui is at a loss. She wasn't the first to have modest aspirations of tying herself to a Gu Master and living a peaceful life. A servant's social circle expands into the hamlets under the Gu Village alongside other servants who chat in public locations like the Bazaar or the washing pit. So, Shen Cui knows several mistresses who like singing their lovers' 'praises.'

Praises like—*Ah! He was so rough last night!*

Or—*Mmgh! Hmph, that's nothing. The way he grasps my neck.*

Shen Cui admits all that scared her. Why would they enjoy such rough treatments?

Yet, she's been accompanying Fang Zheng the last few nights. She understood he wasn't ready for intimacy the day the competition ended due to those disastrous results. However, Fang Zheng became a different beast these few days. He does get ready down there and climbs atop her.

'Hmph,' she thinks. 'Young Master Fang Zheng is also blessed down there.' ***{A/N: It's Canon since Fang Zheng is FY's twin, and the little Beast King possesses a Big Beast.}***

'But,' she hesitates. 'Is it supposed to end so fast?'

Shen Cui idly shifts through the vegetables. Her delicate fingers grasp a melon cucumber's fat end. 'If only Young Master stayed this hard for a few minutes.' She loses in her thoughts, unconsciously stroking the base until a meaningful chuckle snaps her out.

"What's the matter, Little Cui?" The Stall Owner, a Middle-Aged woman, wags her brows. "Do you want a big one or a small one?" Her words leave little to the imagination as Shen Cui gasps, losing her composure and quickly stepping back—

*\*Thud\**

She runs into someone, knocking the youth almost as short as her. The middle-aged woman pales as she hurriedly enters her home without caring for the vegetables, while Shen Cui blinks in surprise.

Why?

She turns to look at the youth in the snow.

Blue outfit and headband, a red belt, and a steel bracket—

Lord Gu Master!

She pales and kneels to the red-haired, pockmarked youth.

“Please forgive me, Lord Gu Master! I—”

“Shut up! You ruined my belt!” He yells shrilly as the entire bazaar descends into silence.  
“You insolent wench!”

Shen Cui’s body trembles.

What should she do?

Her breath hitches while despair grips her fragile heart.

“You’re going to pay for—”

“Batchmate Chi?” A peaceful voice stops the angered Gu Master in his tracks. Shen Cui keeps her head low and only hears the angry Gu Master biting his words and snorting.

“Hmph! Waste of my time!” The Gu Master leaves while the familiar voice snickers.

“Are you alright?”

Powerful hands seize her shoulders, helping her up. A strange warmth and masculine scent tickle her nostrils as she stares at the newcomer’s red belt before looking at his fair features and soft brown hair.

“Would you look at that,” the familiar figure lets go of her, smirking, “You’re wearing my colors today. It looks good on you.”

Shen Cui inadvertently recalls how Lo Jik wanted to buy a hunter’s outfit with the same color scheme as her earthen tones. However, Shen Cui shifts to more bluish hues during winter.

“Here,” He stuffs her basket into her arms, cautioning in a somber tone. “You should look where you’re going. That Chi Cheng is a lustful freak,” lies the shameless womanizer.

“Even if I’m Fang Zheng’s rival, I’d hate for him to suffer pain through you.”

His warm palm lands on her head as he beams at her. “That Fang Zheng’s quite lucky, huh?”

She dumbly nods, only coming to be when Lo Jik leaves the bazaar with a small bag in his hands.

“Phew,” the nearby stall vendors sigh in relief, looking at Shen Cui strangely. Realizing how scandalous things may look, she lowers her head and hurriedly leaves.

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‘I was lucky to get an excuse to approach her,’ Lo Jik’s gaze glints as he moves southward. The Clan Leader’s faction usually enters and leaves in that direction. ‘Now, how should I use it? It will be weird if I go there only for Fang Zheng. Hehe, actually, that might work. Nobody from the younger generation can advance to Rank 3 because of Qing Shu’s suppression, right? Let’s start from there!’

Devious schemes flicker in his mind. However, he cautions internally to remain alert and avoid making the same mistakes.

The key will be to approach the topic subtly.

East, North, South—The Three locations possessed a tavern near the gates. Lo Jik patiently waits in the southern tavern, eating slightly and warming his body with wine until he hears slight commotion.

“Look! Lord Qing Shu is back!”

“Is that a brown bear? It’s so big! I-It’s a Bear King!”

“So what? Lord Qing Shu can effortlessly deal with Beast Kings! Hmph, he is the top Rank 2 Gu Master of my Gu Yue Clan!”

“They also have the A-grade Talent Fang Zheng! His disposition is heroic. He will learn well from Lord Qing Shu and become Gu Yue’s pillar!”

Loud cheers fill the street as Lo Jik walks out of the tavern to witness the Clan Leader’s faction carry a bear’s corpse slightly larger than an Elephant! Lo Jik has a deep impression of Beast Kings, especially Bear Kings. However, the Bear King Qing Shu’s team carried wasn’t the one that killed Lo Jik.

The grinning Fang Zheng's expression drastically changes as he identifies Lo Jik in the crowd, smiling and waving back. It's not hard to miss Lo Jik. He's one of the few Gu Masters on the street, and his attire makes him stand out. Fang Zheng's sudden change attracts his other teammates. Noticing Lo Jik, Qing Shu whispers something into his teammate's ear before breaking off from the group, letting others take the Bear King to the Mission Hall. Meanwhile, Qing Shu and Fang Zheng approach Lo Jik.

"What is it?" Fang Zheng barks without any courtesy, his leg twitching with phantom pain.

"Hehe, I expected a cheery response, Batchmate Fang. We both are Rank 2 Gu Masters, so I won't need to resort to cheap tricks to beat you again."

"You—" Fang Zheng seethes as Qing Shu gently places a hand on the former's shoulder, calming the youth.

"Senior Qing," Lo Jik bows slightly. "I would like to discuss something. Please," he sidesteps, inviting Qing Shu into the tavern as the waiters quickly set the table in a discreet corner.

"Hmph!" Fang Zheng snorts, entering the tavern with long strides as Qing Shu walks beside Lo Jik with a polite smile as Jik's.

Once they sit, Lo Jik orders cheap rice wine, making Fang Zheng frown.

Lo Jik places the cup down for himself and Qing Shu, pouring wine while leaving Fang Zheng's cup empty, making the latter reveal an ugly expression.

"What is the meaning of this?" Fang Zheng snarls in a low voice.

"Meaning?" Lo Jik sneers. "Why would I pour wine for someone who cannot protect his woman?"

The youth's expression darkens, and his eyes widen.

"I'm not afraid to tell you that I ran into your *precious* Cui," Lo Jik smirks mockingly. "Ah, what lovely skin and body."

"I'll kill you—"

"Of course," Lo Jik snorts. "She learned your manners and walked without looking,

running into Chi Cheng.”

Fang Zheng’s anger disappears, his face paling.

“Do you know where she is?” Lo Jik wags his brows. “What kind of man is Chi Cheng? He’s probably done with her, hehehe.”

Life almost fades from Fang Zheng’s gaze as Qing Shu frowns. However, Lo Jik snickers, raising his cup. “You should thank me that I didn’t let the worst occur. You should have seen Batchmate Chi running with his tail tucked in once he saw me. Tsk, tsk, it would be a shame to see a girl like Shen Cui ruin on that little runt...” Lo Jik sips his wine before grinning wickedly. “Or you.”

“Enough!” Enduring a rollercoaster of emotions, Fang Zheng slaps the table with a roar as Lo Jik remains undeterred. “You’re still here? I would be more worried about my lover than a rival, Batchmate Fang. Who cares if you have an A-grade aptitude? I may replace Chi Cheng in your wildest fantasies and give Sweet Cui what she deserves.”

Veins map Fang Zheng’s forehead as he hears such insults, barely controlling himself.

“You should return home and check on Little Cui, Fang Zheng,” Qing Shu gently pats the youth’s back with an encouraging and warm look. Fang Zheng grits his teeth, nodding forcefully before tossing a hateful glare in Lo Jik’s direction.

Other patrons relax again once Fang Zheng leaves the establishment. Yet, they cannot pretend they didn’t hear anything. Crafty and curious glints appear in other patrons’ gazes as they can’t wait to listen to the rest!

“Sigh, why do you antagonize Fang Zheng?” Qing Shu disapprovingly frowns as he sips his wine. The middle-aged green-haired expert is clear Lo Jik wasn’t done, and the main topic will only begin now.

“Why?” Lo Jik’s haughty expression evaporates, allowing a self-mocking look to take place. “It’s envy, Senior Qing. Why did Heaven bless Fang Zheng? Why does he deserve such talent and not me? Such talent is wasted on him!” He snaps before regaining his calm. “I apologize. I spoke out of turn.”

“Envy those better than us is natural,” Qing Shu comforts. “Even I occasionally envy Fang Zheng’s luck. However,” his expression turns somber. “Antagonizing him won’t help either of you. If you’re honest with Fang Zheng...”

He doesn’t finish his words as Lo Jik quietly digests the suggestion.

“Sigh,” Lo Jik exhales loudly. “I don’t know about that, Senior Qing. Let’s just get to business. You’re aware I possess White Boar Gu. I’ve had offers from several Gu Masters, including Mo and Chi Faction.”

“Indeed,” Qing Shu nods peacefully, not expecting Lo Jik’s words.

“I want to sell the White Boar Gu to you.”

“What?” Qing Shu blinks, and other patrons are no different. A grave expression flickers on Qing Shu’s face as he offers, “This isn’t a simple matter, Lo Jik. Consider carefully. You are part of Mo Faction.”

Qing Shu’s intent is clear.

If Lo Jik ignores Mo Faction and sells the White Boar Gu to Qing Shu, it will reveal Lo Jik’s open favor for the Clan Leader’s faction. It will lead to Lo Jik getting heavily ostracized or even removed from the Mo Faction! It will ruin Lo Jik’s budding career! Qing Shu saw how skilled Lo Jik was in combat, and now he advanced to Rank 2, displaying his grit. How can Qing Shu see such a talent ruin his future?

So, Qing Shu speaks more, persuading against his benefits and discouraging Lo Jik. That’s why Lo Jik chose Qing Shu as the breaking point of the current balance. Mo Yan, Chi Shan, and Qing Shu can advance to Rank 3 shortly, with Qing Shu being the closest to the realm. If any of them breaks through, the other Factions will be forced to act and focus on their cultivation. It will give Mo Yan all the incentive from her family’s side to become an Elder. However, Lo Jik found Qing Shu due to his nature!

Qing Shu is a Rank 2 Peak Stage Gu Master willing to sacrifice his future for the clan. After all, he should have advanced to Rank 3 three years ago. However, a short-lived A-grader appeared in that batch, prompting Qing Shu to stop his growth and allow the A-grader to enter the limelight! However, the Gu Master died recently before the Clan unearthed Fang Zheng.

That is the kind of man Qing Shu is.

The green-haired expert continues for a while when Lo Jik raises his cup.

“Fang Zheng isn’t the only one I envy, Senior,” Lo Jik stares at Qing Shu meaningfully as the man grows silent.

“I wish I had your talent. I’m not selfless. I can’t be. However, I know my growth is linked

with the Clan's growth. I wish I were a Rank 3, no, Rank 4 Gu Master! I want to sweep those other two clans away and establish Gu Yue's hegemony! What Bai Ning Bing?! Gu Yue Clan is the rightful Monarch of Qing Mao Mountain. How dare the Bai Clan and their whores think they have a chance against us?"

Others suck in a breath of cold air while Qing Shu quietly drinks.

'Is he badmouthing Bai Ning Bing? That wench?'

'Is Lo Jik not afraid of death? She's a terrifying beast!'

'Too fierce! Too fierce! To actually call Bai Ning Bing a whore!'

Lo Jik ignores others, staring fiercely at Qing Shu. "I envy you! So, you must have it! My little luck can make you grow stronger. I can make Fang Zheng grow stronger! Take it! You need it more than me! Since I envy you, you're the only one I remotely trust!"

Qing Shu's gaze slightly shudders as he reveals a complicated gaze.

'If he had mine of Zheng's talent,' Qing Shu wonders. 'Would he let the Elders dictate his cultivation?' He sighs. 'No. He is not only a combat genius but also wildly ambitious! Alas, Heaven is unfair.'

Truthfully, Qing Shu almost grew a distaste for Lo Jik during his earlier insults against Fang Zheng. However, now everything makes sense.

'He... can't have his dreams. So he is willing to sacrifice it so someone else can step up and accomplish his ambitions,' Qing Shu places his cup down. 'Someone like me.'

Qing Shu's blood is not cold. His heart is not made of stone.

It thumps and beats, raging in his tightening chest as Qing Shu cannot help but chastise himself.

Wasted talent.

That's what he's becoming!

Briefly, Qing Shu could not meet Lo Jik's intense glare. Slowly, Qing Shu fills Lo Jik's cup before offering a complicated smile. "I understand your intentions, Lo Jik. They are well-received."





their faction. Since Lo Jik is a Rank 2 Gu Master, he must register his team. As the evening sunset, Lo Jik closes his door with a calm expression, not taking the news to heart. Just this morning, the Leader welcomed him with open arms and collapsed in less than 24 hours.

Lo Jik feels he deserves an award for that!

He quietly returns to his mattress, glancing at the bamboo paper letter stating—

*Sorry, I can't be with you for a few days. I promise to make it up to you.*

He quietly lets a shallow glow from his Moonglow Gu, letting the water-like energy sphere cover his palm and turn the letter into dust.

Lo Jik wasn't worried about Mo Yan.

'Let's go through everything so I don't miss anything,' he frowns, more than willing to spend hours considering everything he can than willingly let a mistake slip.

'The end goal for Mo Yan is to reach Rank 3. The Higher-Ups won't easily let the newcomers cultivate such strength because it intrudes on their benefits. Even Mo Chen and Chi Lian want their Grandsons to advance to Rank 3 before Mo Yan and Chi Shan. Qing Shu is the only one who willingly accepted such suppression for the Clan's peace. I soiled the seeds of self-doubt and guilt in his heart. He was once a great talent. He may be humble, but he can never forget the pride that he set aside. Even if my outburst had minimal effect, the other competing Elders are now probably alert and cautious against Qing Shu.'

Every organization has hidden internal conflicts. Even if Qing Shu never acted on his desires, Lo Jik's words and dramatic display put him in the limelight. Both sides will remain alert and even move preemptively to gain initiative! He has witnessed such conflicts in many households he eventually broke in his past life.

Gu Yue Village is merely a more sizeable Household with more members.

'Qing Shu is only one aspect,' Lo Jik's gaze glimmers. 'He will never expect my actual target to be Shen Cui. How can someone with a raging inferiority complex like Fang Zheng allow Shen Cui to think about anyone else? He must move fast and quickly. But can he marry a mortal as a Clan Leader Seedling? No. He must work hard. He must persevere! He needs to reach Rank 3 quickly. Hehe, love is unreasonable. Clan Leader will try and placate Fang Zheng, but I will be by Shen Cui's side to fan the flames of jealousy and fear in Fang Zheng.'

Such a method will surely put him at the cross with the Clan Leader!

'However, I sacrificed the White Boar Gu and my supposed career to indirectly support Fang Zheng. Why did I choose a public setting? To spread information. Hah! A begrudging combat talent accepting the real deal by tossing insults—a classic tsundere act! Qing Shu knows that and other elders, too. Whatever I do to ignite Fang Zheng will only be seen as me motivating the talent on whose shoulders my dreams rest!' Lo Jik licks his lips. 'Nobody knows about my trait, so nobody can understand my motive. It's as depraved as sleeping with Mo Yan and Shen Cui. Granted, I can force Shen Cui. However, the day I force someone is also the day I stop being Williams Logic.'

He closes his eyes.

'It's not a perfect plan, and I'll deal with several situations. However, it's a framework. It set a state of unrest within the Higher-Ups, resurging ambition within Qing Shu, a reason to fuck the rules and reach Rank 3 for Mo Yan and Chi Shan, and Fang Zheng's growing possessiveness for Shen Cui. Hehe! That possessiveness and fear will even make him lash out at her.'

Lo Jik briefly frowns.

'The weakest link is Shen Cui. Half of my motives crumble if Fang Zheng kills her out of her anger or love. Crimes of passion can't be predicted. I'll have to handle this matter delicately.'

'Yet, selling White Boar Gu at a slight loss for 580 Stones solidified my attitude! Whether Fang Zheng wants it or not, I'm now his greatest *'hidden'* supporter!

<<<>>>

Words have it that Ren Zu used the Rules Gu and Regulation Gu and obtained Strength Gu but lost Wisdom Gu, leaving behind three Gu worms: Suspicion Gu, Trust Gu, and Attitude Gu.

Ren Zu grabbed the Attitude Gu.

Attitude Gu followed the betting rules, submitting to Ren Zu, telling him, "Human, you caught me. I can only curse my bad luck. From now on, I will be at your command. Wear me, and you will be able to use my ability."

Attitude Gu's appearance was like a mask. Ren Zu put it on his face, but he could not

wear it. It would still fall off even if he used a rope to tie it.

"What's going on?" Ren Zu was troubled.

Attitude Gu laughed, "I know, human, you have no heart. Attitude is the mask of the heart, so without a heart, how can you wear me?"

Ren Zu realized that he had already given his heart to hope.

He was heartless.

Someone heartless cannot wear the attitude mask. In other words, to someone with a heart/an intention—their attitude is a mask.

<<<>>>

Lo Jik ponders on the section of Ren Zu's Legends.

'Indeed, even if someone could understand my intention, my attitude would blind the rest. I must have Shen Cui marry Fang Zheng and then fuck her. So what if it destroys Fang Zheng? I have a chance to gain a Golden Accomplishment! The Silver-tier rewards are already amazing. I can only hope what treasures the Golden-tier ones will uncover!'

Lo Jik does have certain limits. For instance, he isn't willing to distort his sexuality and sleep with men for more rewards. He isn't inclined to rape others. Oh, and did he mention no pedophilia? However, taking someone's wife? Pfft, sign him up!

'I can only fear the thought of such traits landing in the hands of a bisexual serial rapist with a taste for kids.'

He shudders, recovering his focus and cultivating.

'My action saw me becoming a lone team. It's the price for my ambition. I can't rely on others and must focus on refining Rank 2 Gu worms. The current wolf tide will only possess weak and injured wolves. Although dangerous, they will retreat once given a leeway if they are sufficiently harmed. I should refine the Rank 2 White Jade Gu. Refining Rank 2 Boar Charge Gu will allow me to evade. However, animals are less intelligent. They will take it as a sign of weakness and continue fighting me.'

Lo Jik spends several hours in the woods. He's clear about the patterns of a few beasts.

<<<>>>

Shen Cui walks with a lowered head. She can feel countless gazes on her. Her movement is slightly stiff as slight indignance births in her heart.

'That Lo Jik! Hmph!' She snorts internally before feeling meek. She learned everything that transpired in the Southern Tavern, unlike Fang Zheng, who erratically hugged her tightly, muttering—*nobody will touch you, nobody will touch you!*

'Lo Jik wants to use me to motivate Young Master,' she bites her bottom lip. Her instincts say it's wrong. She's a woman, and she rarely felt such stares after she shared a bed with Fang Zheng, earning jade earrings that still hand from her earlobes.

It's a common custom for the man to gift a woman a pair of jade earrings once she loses her virginity. Indeed, she isn't a virgin. Gu Yue Lo Jik MUST know that. Yet, she can feel his smoldering stare—

Fuck!

She almost curses aloud.

She can't just feel it.

She can see Lo Jik glancing at her!

What is he still doing in the bazaar?

Then, it hits Shen Cui.

'Gu Yue Lo Jik... he sacrificed his future for the Young Master...'

She ignores the looks of bystanders as Lo Jik scoffs loud enough for her to hear, and it becomes clear. She knows it in her bones! That look in his eyes was something more.

He lied.

Gu Yue Lo Jik lied!

'He didn't sacrifice everything for Young Master,' a wave of complicated emotion and the flames of fancy romance brims in her aching heart.

She realizes—

'Lo Jik forsook everything for me.'

<<<>>>

*When it rains, it pours.*

If Lo Jik didn't understand the sentiment behind that idiom before, he certainly experiences it now. It's only been two days since his proud declaration when a disaster struck Qing Mao Mountain. The first wave of the beast group bears its fangs.

One must understand that several thousands of species exist in Qing Mao's ecosystem. It's a balanced environment where Boars, Bears, Bees, Tigers, Deer, and others have defined territories and routines. However, this balance is put to the test once almost every three years.

### ***Wolves.***

Wolves are uncommon in Qing Mao Mountain since most dwell in the nearby valley, breeding and living by the seasons. But their numbers eventually expand beyond their territory's control, eliciting a need for food. Thus begins their hunting season. The wolves try to occupy the Qing Mao Mountain to supplant their needs, facing the three Clans and the local wildlife. One may even call this event a recurring Nature's War of Attrition or—

### ***Beast Tides.***

One such tide, albeit on a minor scale, brews near the hamlets under the Gu Yue Clan. It will scare the mountain's wildlife, causing bestial stampedes that might eradicate Gu Yue's slaves and human stocks. As cheap as mortal lives are to a Gu Master, the higher-ups understand the value of their services and their need for the economy. If possible, the Gu Yue Clan wants to preserve their slaves.

Also, they will have to kill wolf tides eventually to keep the village safe.

However, this could not have come at a worse time than now!

Gu Yue's elders mobilized all active Gu Masters to tackle the situation. It's not something Lo Jik can avoid with tacky fines. He must take charge... alone. One day isn't enough for Lo Jik to feel assured in his preparations since his earlier attempt at refining the White Jade Gu failed, leaving the White Boar Gu injured. Still, he arms himself with his dagger and arrows, leaving the residence after double-checking everything.

*'All in or nothing,'* he repeats internally, firming his resolve. Perhaps he can apologize to

his group and resolve the situation, temporarily preserving his life. However, he risks a Golden-tier reward doing that! The threat of death never stopped Lo Jik, or he would have floundered after encountering the first aggravated Husband in his career. No!

*'All or nothing,'* he chants as his bamboo boots crush the snow underneath. His nose turns red under the cold, and his features pale. A cold breeze blows, brushing his soft hair and easing his tense heart. He feels his fingers turn slightly numb against the arc of his longbow. He only observes the village's exit as various teams hurriedly leave.

"Heh! Look!" A sharp voice snaps Lo Jik out of his reverie as he glances sideways, meeting his former team from two days ago.

Gu Yue Fan Hi sneers, pointing at him, "I can't wait to see how you fare outside, Lo Jik!"

Lo Jik politely smiles at the girl before looking ahead and walking forward.

What need is there for trash talk? She isn't worth his time. His body quietly disappears in the thin haze of icy mist surrounding tall, unwavering Spear Bamboos that struggle and prevail against the cold!

And with that...

Lo Jik works hard to find an acceptable hiding spot!

<<<>>>

The wolf's breed invading Qing Mao Mountain is called Lightning Wolf. These wolves have sharp vision but lack smell and hearing. Their bites are electric, shocking their target and often killing large prey through electrocution. Lo Jik studied such creatures since it affected his living conditions in Qing Mao Mountain.

*'As expected,'* he cozies against a tree's bark, sitting on a tree's branch with a thin layer of snow camouflaging him. *'If I want to deal with Lightning Wolves, a whole pack of it, I need a Defensive Gu or avoid getting bitten. Their bites can numb or paralyze me. However, the beast horde near the hamlet won't reveal Lightning Wolf packs. Most of the beast horde consists of other animal groups trying to leave the wolves' vicinity. If some regular Lightning Wolves DO appear, the Jade Skin Gu can temporarily take care of the defense as I use the strength of two Boars to thrash them.'*

His expression turns stern.

*'However, I can't let more than ten of them surround me!'*

Wolf, fox, raccoon—Such creatures are capable of sharp survival instinct and intelligence. If he lets the Wolves regather themselves, they will instantly pounce at him, killing him.

'Staying in hiding like this also has its risks. My body will numb if I don't move my hands and legs slightly.'

'Let's hope nothing happens—'

*\*Awooooooooooooo\**

*\*Auauuuuuuuuuuu\**

Long bestial howls spread in the white scape as Lo Jik's expression changes. His breath catches in his throat while he stays still, unmoving.

'They have sharp visions. However, I'm camouflaged,' Lo Jik narrows his eyes. These beasts cannot sense his—

His expression shifts once more as he notices a conspicuous red in the fields of white, mingling with green, vicious lightning wolves.

'That's a Blood Hound Wolf,' Lo Jik stares at the blood-red-furred wolf with pitch-black eyes. The wolf stares back at him. Lo Jik knows this type of mutated wolf is blind and can sense blood energy from startling distances! However, instead of fearing the worst, Lo Jik stays put. He observes the Blood Hound Wolf.

Such mutated wolves start with the strength of a Rank 2 Gu Master. However, this wolf is shorter than the weakest Lightning Wolf. It's thin, too.

A young pup.

'Does it have any Gu Worm?' Lo Jik frowns.

These wolves identified him with Blood Hound Wolf's assistance. They snarl and charge at once, electricity crackling between their green fur as their paws leave marks of demise in their wake. Gentle snowflakes drizzle, melting around the Lightning Wolves and collecting upon the Blood Hound Wolf.

'There's 20 of them,' Lo Jik curses. He will have to leave this spot.



*\*Thck\**

*\*Thck\**

*\*Thck\**

Spike-riddled bamboo shoots rise in snaps, stabbing into the wolves as they howl painfully.

*\*Phew\**

*\*Phew\**

*\*Phew\**

Lo Jik strikes the next second as arrows rain down on the wolves. Their fur and skin are hard enough to ignore mortal weapons like arrows. However, they are lightning wolves, right?

*\*Fssshhhhhhh\**

Thin crackles of electricity sparkle around the arrows before the arrows catch fire.

The wolves yowl in surprise. However, a few flaming arrows touch the bamboo shoots.

A chain reaction occurs as a rope trips over, causing flaming spike-riddled bamboo shoots to sprout from all directions and slam onto the unsuspecting wolves!

Since they have a weak sense of smell, Lo Jik naturally thought of using kerosene to set a flaming trap!

The scent of burning flesh and pained whines echo in the discreet slope of Qing Mao Mountain. Lo Jik shuffles out of the snow, holding a kerosene-filled earthen vat—a makeshift Molotov. It's the only one he could make with the remaining resources.

'Right,' Lo Jik looks around as the fire dampens under the cold, causing thin mist to rise and mix with smoke. 'Where's that Blood Hound Wolf?'

Lo Jik frowns, unable to find the beast.

'Did it leave?' Lo Jik narrows his eyes. A tiny, finger-sized creature appears in his hand.

Rank 1 Blood Python Gu!

It's a Gu that the Gu Master controls in combat to attack the enemy. However, it also has the properties of a snake. Its effects aren't anything compared to an investigation-type Gu. However, it has its uses.

Nurture, Use, and Refine Gu.

How one uses a Gu depends on one's ingenuity. Lo Jik uses Blood Python's innate sense of locating heat, causing its cute, round head to point to his left before looking down.

Smog continues to fill his surroundings as Lo Jik dares not move.

'It has a concealment-type Gu Worm. Is that the only—'

A bloody stench assaults him, causing Lo Jik's body to waver upon the branch before he suddenly falls atop his longbow. The pain of snapping against his hard longbow, breaking it in half, allows Lo Jik to regain his senses as he quickly runs out of the smog with the python.

Two Gu worms!

Lo Jik doesn't know the name of the second one, but it uses smell to cause dizziness!

That's not a cub!

That's a retired Blood Hound Wolf! Its body weakened from its prime, becoming into this pitiful stage similar to how humans grow smaller in old age!

His heart chills at the notion as Lo Jik determines the position of the Clan Village and gives it his all.

*\*Huff\* \*Snarl\**

He hears the snow shuffle behind him as the remaining Lightning Wolves chase him alongside the invisible foe.

He won't make it.

The Lightning wolves are too fast despite their injuries.

Lo Jik glances at Blood Python Gu, noticing the direction the Gu's head points in before suddenly turning around as a jade-green glow envelops his body! Rank 1 Jade Skin Gu!

He suddenly charges at the nearest Lightning Wolf with burnt fur. Not afraid of the electricity due to ruined fur, Lo Jik snarls and pounces at the shocked wolf, who suddenly growls in fury and attacks Lo Jik.

'Eh? It's not their normal behavior,' Lo Jik frowns, expertly sidestepping and grabbing the wolf's tail before giving a low growl and smashing the poor wolf against one of its companions!

Pitiful yelps echo as Lo Jik quickly glances at the Blood Python, moving away from the spot where it's pointing while waving the bloodied corpse of the wolf against another injured beast trying to surround him!

The sheer might tears the corpse in Lo Jik's hand, gravely intimidating the weak Lightning Wolves. However, their noses briefly twitch, and they snarl viciously!

The remaining 13 pounce at Lo Jik, baring sharp, crackling fangs.

'Fuck!'

He uppercuts one of the wolves when another gets a bite against his Jade Skin Gu.

A tiny percent of his Light-Red Steel Essence disappears. Lo Jik's expression turns vicious as he grabs the wolf by its neck and slams it upon his bent knee, twisting the beast backward!

He glances at the Python as a cold feeling spreads inside his heart.

The Blood Python is acting lethargic, no longer pointing at the Blood Hound Wolf!

All Lo Jik hears is a snarl from behind as the Jade Skin Gu flickers, breaking apart the next second—injured. However, it allows Lo Jik to roll forward and avoid getting his neck snapped!

'Concealment, Dizziness, Rousing the Wolf Group, and now screwing the Blood Python's senses! That's four Gu!'

Lo Jik's expression turns severe. He immediately activates his Instinct Gu. His demeanor shifts as he does not reactivate the Jade Skin Gu yet. His fists and kicks turn into a force of nature as he uses the strength of two boars to destroy the remaining

beasts in two minutes, narrowly avoiding three more sneak attacks from the Blood Hound Wolf!

'The Dizziness Gu has a time limit and cannot be used for some time. It must be the Rank 2 Blood Vomit Gu. However, I don't know about others.'

Lo Jik eases his breath. With the remaining wolves dead, the Blood Hound Wolf must be careful since other wolves will no longer cover its sound. It's already shown fatal intelligence when trying to deal with Lo Jik. The latter would be dead if it wasn't for the Instinct Gu!

*\*Crunch\**

'There!'

Lo Jik flicks his wrist without turning back!

A skull-sized moonblade slashes against the Blood Hound Wolf, causing it to howl as a fountain of blood gushes on the white snow!

'I can't use Moonglow Gu more than 4 times in public before causing others to suspect me.'

After all, the Moonglow Gu consumes 10% of Light-Red Primeval Essence.

'Hmph!' a severe light flashes past Lo Jik's gaze.

He purposely kept his attack low, slicing the wolf's forelimbs.

'Die, you weird asshole!' Lo Jik flicks his wrist again at the visible Blood Hound Wolf staring directly at him.

Blood gushes from the Wolf's split head. Just as Lo Jik considers looting the corpse for its Gu, a wave of nausea and unrelenting pain graces his body!

'Guh!' He bites his bottom lip, swallowing the blood that almost flowed out as his eyes turn bloodshot! His skin pales and turns clammy.

'That's the Rank 3 one-time Final Revenge Gu Worm!' Lo Jik glares at the corpse, slowly enduring all the pain without leaking a word! If he shouts and attracts more attention, he's dead!



# 21

## ***Title: Failure and Success***

A sense of gloominess pervades Gu Yue Village. It's been three days since the small beast tide. A dark-haired youth with plain features yet subtle and lean physique steps out of the Internal Affairs Hall pavilion, glancing at the grey sky. Mud and snow mix under his feet as he exhales lightly.

He is Fang Yuan.

'I took the same measures as last time, using the Boar King to inflict injuries upon my team and kill them all. Now I'm free from Uncle's pawn and can apply for an asset-splitting mission in three days.'

He suddenly stops, glancing at a group of his batch's Gu Masters approach him. Gu Yue Mo Bei, Chi Cheng, and Fang Zheng must have gone through many things during the beast tide, revealing more determined expressions. Fang Yuan's gaze lasts slightly longer on Fang Zheng as Mo Bei speaks.

"Do you know Gu Yue Jin Zhu died during the beast tide? We're going to the group memorial assembly. Do you want to join us?"

Gu Yue Mo Bei and Chi Cheng are fierce rivals, so it's rare to see them set aside their differences for grief.

Gu Yue Jin Zhu...

Fang Yuan has some recollections of her. She was their batch's more skilled martial artist and could go toe to toe against Mo Bei until her stamina ran out. 'So, she died,' he muses. 'Death is not an unfortunate end in our world.' He calmly shakes his head.

"I have something to do."

It's the same as his previous life. However, Fang Yuan quickly notes a change.

Fang Zheng should have urged Fang Yuan to follow them. However, he doesn't speak a thing.

The group passes Fang Yuan with short scoffs and snorts as they speak with each

other.

“Fang Yuan is too cold-hearted.”

“He’s already a Rank 2 Gu Master. But he lacks basic human manners.”

“Hmph,” Chi Cheng snorts. “Don’t you know the rumors around Fang Yuan? He used his female teammate as a shield while hiding inside the Boar King’s body to survive! Fang Yuan is not a man but a chicken!”

Fang Yuan frowns. Such insults against his Elder Twin would usually make him feel embarrassed. However, his mind feels pressured by other news.

“Speaking of shamelessness,” a girl mutters.

“Yeah!” A boy grits his teeth. “That Gu Yue Lo Jik!”

Mo Bei’s and Fang Zheng’s expressions darkens.

Fang Yuan turns from the group, noticing a stunning difference from his previous life—Gu Yue Lo Jik.

‘Gu Yue Lo Jik supposedly hid away from the beast tide. However, he hid in plain sight, setting several traps. The strangest thing is that an extremely weakened Blood Hound Wolf set its *‘sight’* on Lo Jik. Lo Jik surviving that battle is a miracle since Healing Gu Masters found him a few kilometers from the village, struggling to walk straight. He expended his mental faculties to deal with the mutated wolf. He can be said to be incredibly misfortunate. He died to a Bear King before, and now a Blood Hound Wolf targeted him in this one.’

‘However, grand fortune often awaits such tribulations. Lo Jik managed to loot the Blood Path Gu from the wolf. Rank 2 Blood Vomit, Blood Rousing Incense, Fur Concealment, Distorted Bloodpath, alongside a Rank 1 Blood Python Gu! Blood Rousing Incense is the best one in the group since it can excite a Gu Master’s blood and saturate oneself and surroundings with adrenaline, allowing everyone to show peak combat power even if injured.’

Fang Yuan walks his snowy path alone.

‘Aside from Blood Vomit and Fur Concealment, the other Gu are easy to feed, only requiring beasts’ blood. If I can have one of those Gu,’ Fang Yuan’s gaze flashes. ‘I was a Great Demonic Head of Blood Path in my previous lifetime. Even this seemingly

jumbled set of Gu will reveal impressive might under my skills. Distorted Bloodpath is good, too—targeting one creature at a time and deluding their five senses.’

‘Rank 2 Blood Vomit and Rank 2 Blood Distortion can be fused to form Rank 3 Bloody Distorting Spit Gu. It’s a solid long-range method to delude the opponent’s senses without the restrictions of the Rank 2 Blood Vomit, only targeting one creature at a time.’

This might be an unexpected gain.

Fang Yuan considers things carefully.

‘Others don’t openly refine Blood Path Gu. I can’t let such a boon go to waste!’

Since Fang Yuan planned to leave, Blood Path gu that are easy to feed may become his best assurance!

‘There’s also a Rank 1 Blood Python Gu. It can even be refined into Rank 5 Blood River Python Gu. It’s one of the trying aspects of Blood Path. Rank 5 Blood River Python is bloodthirsty and isn’t easily tamed. However, once it stays in a Blood Pond for 100 years, it resonates with Heaven and Earth to form a Rank 1 Blood Python Gu. Hehe, Rank 1 Blood Python Gu is special,’ Fang Yuan narrows his eyes. His desire towards this Rank 1 Blood Python may be the greatest!

‘However, this isn’t all.’

How can others call Lo Jik shameless if he survived such an encounter and achieved such grand loot?

It’s merely a product of envy.

‘Gaining so many Gu at once is no different from obtaining a minor inheritance. Qing Mao Mountain is limited, where Rank 2 Gu Masters represent the crucial force of a Clan. The competition is highest at this stage. These last three days, many Gu Masters tried coaxing and threatening Lo Jik into handing these Gu to others, using the righteous reasons of being more capable in these trying times.’

Fang Yuan’s lips quirk slightly.

‘Those fools. They are unwilling to even fork out a basic sum for these Rare Gu. None mentions to purchase the Gu.’

‘However, I don’t have the money to purchase either,’ Fang Yuan narrows his eyes. He



has other things. But using recipes to trade these low-ranked Gu isn't appropriate, and the rare Gu in his Aperture is too shocking to be revealed.

'Things will be different if an elder quotes a price,' Fang Yuan muses. 'I'll have enough capital to purchase those Gu once I regain my family's inheritance.'

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Lo Jik slowly opens his eyes, exhaling sharply.

The last three days haven't been easy, and it's not because of the pestering Gu Masters wanting to purchase Blood Rousing Incense or Distorted Bloodpath.

It's the injuries to his nervous system!

To keep himself afloat, Lo Jik continuously used the Instinct Gu to reach the village under the assault of the Final Revenge Gu. It almost crumbled his nervous system and turned him into a vegetable. However, his gains are astonishing. He only needed to ask around a few times before realizing the use of these Gu.

'I should revise my plan,' Lo Jik muses. 'Black Boar and Green Silk Gu fuse into Black Mane Gu. Rank 2 Black Mane Gu is not a rare defensive Gu. However, Black Mane Gu and Fur Concealment combine into a rare Rank 3 Concealment Mane Gu! It has high defense, and the hair covering me will turn me invisible to the naked eye!' This Gu is much more attractive to Lo Jik than the Boar Charge Gu.

'But I don't know the recipes for these Blood Gu. They will eventually become useless in my hands.'

He quietly lies on the bed, resting.

'I used this chance to show that my Blood Python comes from that Wolf, too. An elder checked the mutant wolf's corpse since Gu Yue Village grew fearful that a group of Mutant Blood Hound Wolves were nearby. This beast tide already caused startling casualties at its start. I wonder how rough the main event will be next year.'

Lo Jik grits his teeth.

He wishes he could refine his Gu. However, he has to take it slow. In fact, he hasn't fully refined the Gu worms he got from the loot since his mind is tired.

His expression soon settles as he recalls the recent changes in the village.

The disastrous beast tide was a callous reminder for others that they could die anytime. Strength matters the most if they wish to survive and grow!

So?

Gu Yue Qing Xu entered closed-door cultivation!

'Hehe,' Lo Jik snickers. 'The Mo and Chi faction cannot wait any longer.'

<<<>>>

"Don't force yourself," Qing Shu snickers, appearing carefree. It's been ten days since his announcement of closed-door cultivation. However, his resurfacing is not yet announced. Despite glowing, one can observe notes of exhaustion in his gaze as a genuine Rank 3 aura emerges from his being.

Sitting across him is a curious Lo Jik, who is about to stand and bow to Qing Shu. Hearing Qing Shu's words, Lo Jik doesn't stand for ceremonies and sits back, offering tea and letting Qing Shu look around his temporary residence.

"Congratulations, Elder Qing," Lo Jik smiles, passing a cup of tea to the man.

"Haha," Qing Shu chuckles gently. "It's because of you, Lo Jik. When I heard you fought off such a dangerous Blood Hound Wolf, incurring injuries from the Final Revenge Gu and barely surviving, I felt embarrassed. Had I been a Rank 3 Gu Master during the small tide, I could have changed things. However, advancing to Rank 3 raised my status to an Elder. I cannot lead my faction anymore. Sigh, there are downsides to every decision."

He sips the tea before exhaling softly. "I owe you a debt of gratitude, Lo Jik. However, I cannot momentarily repay it."

"It's fine, Elder," Lo Jik shrugs. "I didn't think I was helping you in any manner. In my eyes, I just sold a Rank 1 White Boar Gu and survived a life-and-death battle. You owe me nothing."

Qing Shu gazes at Lo Jik deeply, explaining, "We both know what I owe. However, I won't repeat it. I shall get a chance to repay that favor sooner or later. Today, I'm here to meet you for a different matter. I would like to purchase the Blood Gu worms."

Lo Jik nods, calmly replying, "I'm not selling Blood Python Gu or Blood Rousing Incense."

Lo Jik has a deep impression of the Rank 1 Blood Python Gu and wishes to find a recipe to evolve it. Meanwhile, Blood Rousing Incense Gu is a good support Gu worm with minimal restrictions on feeding it.

However, Blood Vomit Gu and Distortion Bloodpath Gu are different stories. The former is a hassle to feed. The latter needs peculiar conditions to truly shine. Lo Jik also has the Moonglow Gu as his long-range method instead of the Blood Vomit Gu.

Qing Shu isn't surprised, inquiring, "What about the Fur Concealment Gu?"

"I need that Gu Worm." Lo Jik nods.

Their conversation remains concise and on point, as Lo Jik offers the price. Rank 2 Gu Worms are usually sold between 1000-2500 Primeval Stones. However, the Distorted Bloodpath Gu is easy to feed, effortlessly settling for the upper ends of the limit. Meanwhile, Blood Vomit Gu's price stabilizes at 1600 Stones.

The duo further converse for a while, where Qing Shu '*accidentally*' slips hints about some refining recipes. Lo Jik understands that it's Qing Shu's way of repaying the debt he feels owed.

'So, Blood Qi Gu and Blood Python Gu combine into Rank 2 Blood Basin Python Gu. Similarly, Rank 2 Blood Basin Python Gu and Rank 2 Blood Qi Gu are refined into Rank 3 Steed-type Blood Trench Python Gu. No wonder a few Gu Masters were more persuasive about Blood Python Gu. It's a precious Gu worm with a trend of refinement! Blood Python needs the corresponding Blood Qi Gu to advance to the next realm!'

Blood Python instantly shot up to one of his more precious Gu with this revelation.

<<<>>>

3 Days Later.

"Congratulations, Batchmate Fang," Lo Jik smiles. He heard about Fang Yuan earning a massive inheritance.

Fang Yuan nods calmly. The two know each other enough to dispense small talk as the former raises his wish to purchase the Blood Gu.

Unfortunately...

The Gu Worms in Lo Jik's possessions were not for sale.

<<<>>>

*\*Puff\**

Lo Jik's expression changes as the light ball explodes! Blood surges from his mouth, and his eyes turn bloodshot due to the backlash as a pitch-black ladybug disperses into ashes alongside a fat green silkworm.

'Fuck!'

Lo Jik grits his teeth.

Nothing is assured in the fusion of Gu Worms. The perfectly healthy Black Boar Gu suddenly destroyed, dismantling Lo Jik's expectations to refine the Rank 3 Concealment Mane Gu.

He cleans his mouth and stares into the empty space, recalling his experiences after recovering from his injuries.

First, he paid a large sum to a healing Gu Master to speed up his recovery. Then, he sold two Gu to Qing Shu, earning 3900 stones. However, he spent 140 Stones to purchase the Green Silk Gu. There was also his cost of living. Since he's a Rank 2 Gu Master, the cost of recovering his essence rises, too, increasing his consumption of Primeval Stones for cultivation.

He currently amassed 6844 Primeval Stones.

'Sigh, I still have the White Boar and Jade Skin Gu. Let's try refining the White Jade Gu. As for these injuries, I should save for the caravan. Hopefully, they will have good Healing Gu worms.'

Still, one thing confuses him.

'What's going on with Mo Yan? She should be a Rank 2 Peak Stage by now. Chi Shan left his cultivation two days ago, shocking the villagers with his Peak Stage aura. Of course, they aren't Qing Shu's match yet since he was at that stage for years, solidifying his foundations. However, Mo Yan shouldn't be taking too long.'

He frowns.

'Did I overdo it?'

Such worries are useless now.

It's not like he leaves his house all that much, accruing more infamy of being a coward.

'Hehe, why would I care about completing Clan Missions? They barely pay anything worthwhile. It's better to stay back, let others risk their lives, and gather strength. Although I failed to refine the Black Mane Gu, didn't I only get the chance to do so by staying back? If I let the clan dictate my life, I'll barely get any breather. Hmm. Also, there's Shen Cui. The earlier rumors have settled. Although we cross paths in the bazaar, we barely look at each other. But she's caught onto my hint... and she's interested.'

'Fang Zheng's responsibilities increased after Qing Shu left. It's forced him to mature and focus on his cultivation. That's good. Hurry, Fang Zheng. Advance to Rank 3!'

Lo Jik closes his eyes, meditating and silently dispelling accumulated mental exhaustion.

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Lo Jik continues his daily lifestyle for days. He doesn't hurry to meet Shen Cui. He needs the right timing, and it can't be forced. Instead, Lo Jik focuses on his cultivation. He must refine adequate Rank 2 Gu and raise his second Aperture's cultivation.

However, he is delaying the last objective for Mo Yan. He's sure that she's still cultivating.

Earlier, when Chi Shan emerged from his closed-door cultivation, others expected Mo Yan to do the same since the duo possessed similar cultivation. However, Mo Yan is nowhere to be found. She's either dead...

Or still cultivating!

Lo Jik will happily take the risk for Silver-tier rewards corresponding to Rank 2 Cultivation and focus on successfully refining Gu.

Days fly by in the blink of an eye as Lo Jik procures a slightly rare Rank 1 Half-Wit Gu.

Half-Wit Gu is shaped like a dark grey ball. It's a strange Gu that muddles one's mind for

three breaths.

Lo Jik did not purchase the Gu for fun.

Three orbs of light float at an arm's length from Lo Jik. One reveals an oily-black glimmer and the other two gleam with greyish light. The three orbs of lights bump into each other.

To fuse Gu worms means to combine the Gu Master's will left within the Gu! The mental burden on Lo Jik multiplies as he endures the stress, allowing the three orbs to mingle and settle. He grits his teeth as the orb of light expands from the size of a fist to a baby's skull. Lo Jik calms his mind and starts to toss the Primeval Stones inside the orb. The light intensifies after consuming Primeval Stones as the process continues, making Lo Jik's head almost explode from the burden.

However, he refuses to budge.

It's only after his 243rd Stone that the orb of light fluctuates. Already experienced and prepared, Lo Jik does not let the sudden fluctuation disrupt his concentration. He keeps a firm reign on the process as the harsh white light mellows and morphs into a dim, oily-black glow.

Soon, a fist-sized iron disc rests atop Lo Jik's palm.

There are several carvings of human-shaped figures fighting each other on the disk.

Rank 2 Battle Instinct Gu!

Although tired, he grins!

With this, he used the Iron Skin and Half-Wit Gu alongside the Instinct Gu to refine this Rank 2 Gu!

The only Rank 1 Gu in his aperture is now the Blood Python Gu.

'Not only did the effect of Battle Instinct Gu increase to 15 minutes, but the negative side-effects are low, too. Although it consumes almost 300 grams of Iron every 15 days. It does not need the Aura of Rejection that my aperture forms after using a Primeval Stone.'

Lo Jik sighs.

He lets the Gu into his mind.

Next, Lo Jik focuses on his Second Aperture.

Light-Red Essence ebbs and flows as the light wall around it feels extremely solid, only needing one push to conduct the qualitative change and morph into a water wall. In the center hovers a sun-like Hope Gu, with the tiny Blood Python Gu wrapped around it. Floating on the water's surface is a half-burnt, blood-red incense stick the size of an adult's index finger—Rank 2 Blood Rousing Incense. Not far from it is a cream-colored silkworm, fat and round. It's the Fur Concealment Gu, which can turn the hair on one's body invisible.

Finally, in the depths of the essence, lying motionless on the seabed is an oval white stone with a jade-like luster.

Rank 2 White Jade Gu!

However, the White Jade's breath is weak.

'Sigh, I can only purchase limited Jade Stones for the Gu to consume without attracting too much attention to myself. I will purchase a bulk of jade reserves from the coming caravan.'

'Moonglow Gu for long-range. Martial Arts and White Jade Gu for close-range/defense. Blood Rousing Incense and Battle Instincts Gu for support. Only Fur Concealment is useless to the current me. However, it's a rare Gu with several advancement options. If I can't refine the Concealment Mane Gu, I can refine the Storage Gu Hidden Fur Compartment. The cost of feeding the Gu rose from meager 8-15 Stones to 360 Stones! Other Gu Masters cannot support such consumption without proper backing. However, I'm using my trade with Qing Shu to cover these shortcomings.'

He exhales loudly and slumps back.

'At least I managed to refine successfully.' He smirks.

'I can now focus on Shen Cui and practice using these Gu.'

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**Alternate Title:** Losses; Difference From Previous Life; Free; Split Asset; The Blood Gu; Growth; Getting Attention; The Special Blood Python Gu; Demonic Figurehead; Need; Severe Beast Tide; Shameless and Heartless; A Product of Envy; New Elder; Qing Shu's Gratitude and Repayment; A Partial Success; Mo Yan's Still Not Out; Chi Shan Is





Since Mo Yan doesn't leave her house, Mo Bei temporarily controls the Mo Faction. Mo Yan's teammates think the situation will return to normal once Mo Yan returns. However, how could outsiders know the truth? Mo Yan only leaves her room to relieve herself or eat food. Her sudden desperation for cultivation did not blind her to diet, as she still looked fit despite a grim look.

The third reason she leaves her room is to rarely sell her Gu. As Mo Faction's leader, Mo Yan saved a few trump cards ranging from expendable Gu to rare defense Gu. Unwilling to waste her time, she chose to sell those Gu.

"Earn resources?" Mo Yan coldly snickers. "For who? You? Grandfather won't even part with one Red Steel Relic Gu for me and wants me to waste days on missions?"

"What about your evaluations, Sister? Spring is upon us. The Internal Affairs Hall will conduct their usual examination in a few days." Mo Bei urges.

"Who cares?" Mo Yan sneers. Didn't she firsthand understand the importance of strength? Would she care about evaluations if she's an Elder? Would Mo Chen dare slap her for her wanton threats of selling those precious Gu to outsiders if she doesn't receive fair compensation from the family?

While Mo Yan is angry at her family and undeniably frustrated, she also has a better outlook on life.

Mo Yan recalls the day when she begged her Grandfather to give her the Red Steel Relic Gu, promising that even if she becomes an Elder, she won't stand in Mo Bei's way. However, it wasn't enough for Mo Chen. Mo Yan realized that her future was doomed for Mo Bei. She got upset and threatened that she didn't need the Gu if she sold her trump cards to outsiders like the Clan Leader's faction for a high price. The top three factions are wealthy, and the Clan Leader's faction will undoubtedly want Mo Yan's rare Gu to suppress the other two groups.

Mo Chen flew in a rage, slapping Mo Yan. However, she barely felt any pain. Even when her cheek swole up, she coldly gave Mo Chen a few days to consider.

Rank 1 Gu Masters need a supply of a few hundred to cap their cultivation. Meanwhile, a Rank 2 Gu Master must use a few thousand Primeval Stones. Mo Yan sold her first two rare Gu, cultivating non-stop, barely sleeping, and eventually advancing to Rank 2. However, she needed another supply of cash as she sold her second last trump card. She will soon reach Rank 3.

She can feel it.

Mo Yan decided to meet with 'Him' after advancing to the Peak Stage. However, her pride won't let her meet him until she rises further. Wasn't Lo Jik always worried that Elders have the last say on her marital decisions? Hehe! She will be rid of such chains once she reaches Rank 3.

An obsessive glint flies past her gaze as she glances at the stunned Mo Bei.

"What are you still doing here? Hmph, and don't call me so affectionately. Do you think I don't know Grandfather is giving you all my Rare Gu?"

Mo Bei's expression changes as he retorts, "It's because you're making him angry! I'm trying to be a good grandson! You would know the feeling if you had a shred of emotion!"

"A good grandson?" Mo Yan cackles. "What a good grandson! What about being a brother? Did Grandfather give you all your gifts? Did he look after you when you were sick, driving those servants away and feeding you myself? Hmm? Did he try to help you when you got beaten in the academy?"

She touches his sore weaknesses as Mo Bei grits his teeth, snarling, "I was going to return those Gu to you. Hmph! You're too arrogant, Elder Sister. Too pushy! I'll have you beg for those rare Gu!"

"Beg? To you?" Mo Yan scoffs. "Do you want to know a secret, Little Brother? Remember your maid Cao? When she begged you in *'those'* times? All those were lies! She didn't feel a thing! Hahaha! You're not only a stupid brother but a weak man!"

Mo Yan has always been vicious. It's just that she's never been hateful to Mo Bei.

The boy's expression pales as Mo Yan dismisses him. "Go away. I sold another Gu to Grandfather. Go! Run to him and show how pathetic I was to waste my time on you after our parent's death."

She turns around, leaving a speechless and furious Mo Bei.

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Shen Cui slows down as she passes a familiar figure eating lush pears. She glances at the stall beside her, quietly rummaging through the vegetables as the figure beside her continues chatting with the stall owner, the latter offering a flattering smile to the former. Why wouldn't he?

The person eating the pear is a dignified Gu Master! The red belt around his uniform lets

others understand he is the Clan's crucial combat force.

"Hehe, I miss these pears," he snickers. "They only come during the spring. Next should be summer strawberry season, right?"

"Yes, Lord Lo Jik," the vendor smiles. "I'll surely save the best ones for you. It's always an honor to be your stall of choice."

Lo Jik smirks. The heat on him and Shen Cui has fallen quite a bit. It's due to three factors:- the influx of Lightning Wolves in Qing Mao Mountain, forcing others to chase strength for survival, the news of the caravan arriving early, and lastly, Fang Yuan. Everyone knows how Fang Yuan became a wealthy Gu Master. He earned a sizeable inheritance, with no one to share since Fang Zheng took his uncle and aunt as his adoptive parents. Aside from three rental properties and the tavern to the east, Fang Yuan now possesses Rank 2 Nine Leaf Vitality Grass. This grass Gu produces Rank 1 Vitality Leaf!

Who doesn't understand the importance of Vitality Leaf?

Gu Yue's Gu Masters operate in teams, with each team often having a healing Gu Master. However, the area of effect Healing Gu is too rare for others. Instead, they carry expendable Rank 1 Vitality Leaf that heals and stabilizes their immediate wounds.

These Vitality Leaves are sold the second they appear in the market. Since Lo Jik could explain his modest wealth, he couldn't buy the Gu due to a formless suppression of his seniors dissatisfied with Lo Jik's earlier stubbornness of parting with Rank 1 Blood Python.

Had Lo Jik known about Python Gu's origins, he would have never revealed it to anyone! Even the ones produced by Fang Yuan are sold like hotcakes, with Lo Jik only managing to buy 2. So, Nine Leaf Vitality Grass is no different than possessing a whole business! Such wealth attracted unwanted attention as Fang Yuan recently defeated a well-known Gu Master—Gu Yue Man Shi. It led to another wave of discussion around Fang Yuan.

The combination of all these things reduced the spotlight from Lo Jik.

He smirks.

"I don't visit your stall for the fruits alone," Lo Jik looks sideways, resting his gaze on the quiet Shen Cui, who pretends to not hear a thing as the two stall owners hold their tongues. Lo Jik watches Shen Cui sift through the products, frowning and tucking a few loose strands behind her ear before continuing.

“Oh,” Lo Jik muses aloud, noting the shift in her clothes—from bluish tones to earthen ones. “It’s spring already,” he chuckles as Shen Cui thins her lips. Her ears turn slightly red as he continues. “Spring is always fragrant.”

Her heart thumps.

Did he notice?

Even Fang Zheng didn’t notice how she started wearing fragrant oils and—

“However, I liked the flowers,” Lo Jik leans against the stall, turning to openly check Shen Cui out. “Flowers on your hair,” he tears the pretense as Shen Cui’s cheeks turn hot. She remembers how she used to wear yellow clips with flower designs. Now, she wears jade ornaments to match her jade earrings.

Before she decides to leave, having enough thrill for the day, Lo Jik approaches her. He doesn’t stop beside her but tosses something in her basket. She feels him stand behind him, his warm presence enveloping her in the slightly chilly spring evening.

“Wear that tomorrow,” he whispers. “It’s jade, too. But it’s mine.”

She remains still as Lo Jik quietly moves his gaze from Shen Cui to the stall owners, smirking at them and gesturing to keep their lips shut or else.

Sweat covers their forehead as Lo Jik leaves. Shen Cui doesn’t stay and moves quickly, too! However, she glances at her *‘filled’* basket.

Red Jade hair clips carved with flower designs.

Her face flushes as she reaches for the clips to toss them away.

What if Fang Zheng finds out?

Yet, she mutters bitterly.

Would he find out?

‘He barely noticed all the changes I made. Instead, he always accepts invitations from other female Gu Masters who are eyeing him. I know Fang Zheng isn’t like that. But he will find someone better eventually. Hmph! He barely gives me any time. Will he even take me as his concubine?’

She clenches the clips before slowly sliding them inside her robes near her perky bosom.

'Lo Jik is also a Gu Master. He also notices things,' she thins her lips. Her heart continues erratically beating as she leaves. 'Maybe I can show this to Young Master and make him angry? He will pay more attention to me.'

How can Shen Cui not have such thoughts?

Also—after Cao's disaster—how can Lo Jik not consider such a situation?

Heck!

He WANTS Fang Zheng to know his relationship with Shen Cui is in danger.

'Man!' Lo Jik returns home, preparing to practice using Gu within his grove. 'I might be Fang Zheng's best wingman.'

He enters his cottage to change his clothes before practice when he finds it unlocked and open. Alarmed, Lo Jik carefully opens his door and feels his nose twitching due to a strange stench. He retrieves his Blood Python, using it as a makeshift detection Gu as it points in his bedroom's direction.

'That's where most of my stash is,' Lo Jik frowns as the stench deepens. He carefully peaks into his bedroom, his mouth gaping in shock before he regains his composure and smiles. There she sat, angry and disheveled, eyes bloodshot and hair dry as twigs. She must have not bathed in weeks. Yet, Lo Jik beams and crosses the distance between the duo, surprising Mo Yan.

Can't he see the angry look on her face?

So what?

Does he care?

No!

His daily rewards are back!

He pulls a tired Mo Yan into a deep, compassionate hug as she yelps. Her anger fizzles and her eyes unconsciously water when she feels the depths of his passion and love

through his firm and squeezing embrace.

“Okay, okay!” She chokes her sobs, chiding in with a fond smirk. “I didn’t even bathe and rushed here! Let me—”

He seals her lips, causing her eyes to widen. She tries to fight back, wanting to freshen up. Honestly, she rushed here to give him an earful for forgetting her and having some rumors about a mortal girl a few weeks ago. How could she have expected such a warm and exciting welcome? Her body relaxes completely, and her eyes slowly close. She wanted this so much. Just a few congratulatory words from her family or Lo Jik would suffice. She was internally so desperate for the affection she lost that the simplest gesture would make her forget the past. That’s how most are. It’s not like she bears a life-and-death grudge against her family!

However, she didn’t receive the basic courtesy of her Grandfather congratulating her advancement. He’s angry.

Well.

Fuck him!

She’s angry, too!

Or was...

She’s not angry anymore.

“Puaaah~!” She gasps as Lo Jik slowly lets go of her. He snickers. “A Bath, right?” He clutches her hand as she blinks.

“You’re not thinking about it, right?” she stammers as Lo Jik cuts her off firmly.

She’s a Rank 3 Elder now. However, Lo Jik knows who’s wearing the pants in Mo Chen’s rental—Him!

“I’m thinking a lot of things,” Lo Jik smirks. “But my priority is to pamper my Yan for all the weeks we missed.”

She blushes profusely.

‘I should have cleaned up first. This is a mistake... wait, it isn’t!’

She gleefully accepts the offer, her exhaustion leaving her body at once!

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The bathing didn't involve a lot of illicit acts since the cottage's bathroom was small, and the wooden tub couldn't hold two people. However, Mo Yan enjoys it more since Lo Jik's services are top-notch. She never expected the head wash to be the highlight as her eyes almost rolled into her skull due to sheer comfort!

Now, warm, still flushed, and her dark hair damp, Mo Yan settles in his bed with him. It's still evening, but Lo Jik covers the windows and stops letting the room descend into darkness. Instead of suggesting anything physical, Lo Jik covers her with a blanket and plants a soft peck on her forehead, whispering, "You should rest. Congratulations, dear Elder."

She blinks, realizing that it's only now Lo Jik's congratulating her. She didn't have a Gu worm to hide her aura, so it was clear to Lo Jik the second he looked at her—hence, his excitement.

"It's Yan for you," she snorts, *'angrily'* correcting him. "I... I don't want to sleep yet. I'm not that tired."

"Oh?" Lo Jik blinks, climbing into the bed beside her. "Let's converse. I would love to know your experience in advancing to Rank 3. It's known that the crystal walls of Rank 2 Peak Stage aperture are several times stronger and heal more quickly, becoming the watershed for Gu Masters to overcome."

Not having any of it, Mo Yan reaches for his hand, interlocking fingers. She adopts a more whiny, spoiled tone unbecoming of an Elder. "Jik," she pouts, her cheeks blazing. "Can we?"

"I don't know," Lo Jik sighs. "I was pretty sad you didn't even meet me after my encounter with the Blood Hound Wolf." He teases. "I'm used to the solitude. Sigh."

"I'm sorry," she whispers, slowly pulling him. Her heart thumps when she doesn't feel any resistance. "I was too committed to advancing at once. I... I wanted to surprise you."

Others would gape if they heard Mo Yan appease someone with such a tone.

Nay! They would gape hearing an ELDER use such a soft tone against a Junior.

"That's right," Lo Jik hums, tightening his hand against Yan, muttering, "I also have to

cultivate. Sigh, I don't want to muddy your name now that you're an Elder."

"You won't," Mo Yan pleads, her body slowly leaning onto his as they feel each other's breath atop their skin. "You're the Champion." Her other hand gently rests atop his chiseled chest. "Mine." Mo Yan slips her hand inside his robe, softly pecking him. Her kiss turns passionate once she feels Lo Jik leaning in. Her heart soars when his other hand caresses her cheek.

"This junior doesn't dare refuse," he whispers once their lips part. Instead of getting angry again, Mo Yan giggles. "Good. Now have your way with me." She reaches down to stroke his hardening member through his clothes. "You must punish this foolish Elder for not showing enough concern for her loyal junior. You fought off a weird wolf with five Gu on it! Did the Clan reward you?"

"No," Lo Jik whispers, his hands undressing the thin robes protecting her from him.

"My first act as an Elder is to right that wrong," she musters in a hushed, needy voice as he gently lets her down on the bed. He unravels her robes, freeing her pale and round breasts, ripe for suckling. His gliding hand slides past her torso, gracing her moist lips with a caring stroke.

"No wonder the Gu Yue Clan prospers," Lo Jik chuckles throatily. "This reward is most acceptable, Elder Yan. I shall do my best to look after it."

"As you should," Mo Yan giggles, feeling his tender strokes as her body rapidly heats up. She hears the rustling of his clothes in the dim room. Her eyes adapt to the darkness, observing Lo Jik lowering his trousers. She doesn't see *it* clearly, but her nethers grow fiery nonetheless.

Anticipation and nervousness bloom in her heart. She internally vows to not be like her other female companions, who like making fun of the men they are with behind their backs. Why should she? Didn't they prove their affection for each other? So what if there's a mortal cunt making moves on her man? She's a mortal! And Yan... she is an Elder!

His sizeable tip measures Yan's worth, her lips parting in a soft gasp as he slowly slides in, meeting his first barrier. He doesn't linger or feel any hesitation as he pierces past, leaving a thin trail of blood seeping from her entrance as her back slightly arches. It hurts, but Mo Yan suffered worse in her life. Instead, the slight ache feels like a pleasing itch Lo Jik is helping her scratch. She knows her fingers aren't remotely comparable to his. She tried to relieve herself in other ways during her closed-door cultivation—no method came close.



It left her frustrated.

Now?

“Hmgh!” She thins her lips, moaning softly as her junior stretches her. Her moist, hot walls clamp down on him as a jolt of pleasure tingles her mind. Her head leans up to his pleasing kisses and playful bites. One hand coils around her shoulder to support her better, and the other one tenderly massages her breast. Meanwhile, Mo Yan doesn’t know what to do.

Unaccustomed to all this, Mo Yan cannot help but coil her arms around his neck.

“Does it hurt a lot?” Lo Jik whispers in concern as Mo Yan giggles. “Oh, that? It’s already passed, dear. I’m a big girl. I barely felt it.”

“Oh?” Lo Jik blinks, reaffirming that this world is different. “So, I can go harder, right?”

Mo Yan inclines her head sideways.

Harder?

Wasn’t he already doing that?

Most of her knowledge about the act comes from Cao, and the latter had Mo Yan believing that their intimacy will only last a few minutes at best. Of course, Mo Yan isn’t naive enough to assume that all experiences are like that. However, she already feels lucky enough to have a man of Lo Jik’s emotional capacity. Why else would she demand more—

Her thoughts jumble, and her breath hitch when he drags himself out and firmly slams into her with one motion. His hands leave her breast and capture her waist, locking her in one position. Yan feels her lover lean up as she unconsciously clenches the sheets.

Harder?

She blinks, realizing the intent behind those words.

Then her eyes widen as wet noise follows his swift, consistent movements. He mapped her insides, noticing all her weak points when using his tongue and fingers. It’s time to use all his knowledge and skills as Mo Yan no longer keeps her breathing in check. Her lips part, moaning and gasping, sometimes screaming in surprise.

All feels good.

It's nothing like that head wash.

It's hard and firm, yet it feels contained. Lo Jik doesn't try to hurt Mo Yan. Instead, his fat cock ramming in and out of her pliant walls makes her squeal in an ugly manner. Her breasts bounce unchecked as she can feel his lurid gaze resting atop them. She feels his heavy grunts, nothing like the sweet man she fell for.

However, she falls harder for the man she witnesses today.

An errant deep-amber ray of sunlight slips through the bamboo blinds, illuminating his slightly glazed body. Mo Yan's gaze shimmers as his contracting abs attract her, not knowing her lean body has a similar effect on her partner. Her gaze almost drools over his chiseled pecs and round shoulders, delighting at the thin growth of hair between his pecs. His once neat brown hair is now disheveled, making him smoldering.

She pants, moaning, "I'm—"

A wave of weightlessness hits her as her eyes threaten to roll into her skull, and she almost loses her unconsciousness due to the prior strain. However, leading a team of Gu Master into the dangerous valleys and encountering different dangers has benefits as Mo Yan controls herself.

Her body arches when she hears him grunt.

"I'm almost there, too. Let me pull—"

"Inside!" She screams snappily, using all her abdominal strength to sit up and hug him. Her legs unconsciously coil around his waist as she moans desperately, riding him and wildly bouncing her round ass atop him. "All of it! I love you! Please! All!" She breathes between her breaths, assuring, "I can drink the Autumn Tea later. Please, Jik. I need you!"

"Hmm," He grunts, hugging her tight. His cock kisses the entrance of her womb, pulsating with power and need as he forcefully stops her from bouncing while releasing jets of thick, hot seed. Her vision swims when she feels it all.

It already took Mo Yan's mental faculties to stop Lo Jik from pulling out, unaware he never intended to do so. Unable to think anything, she smiles beautifully, feeling his seed fill her.

All her indignance and frustration from the month melt away, leaving her satisfied.

Her hard work, aside from her advancement, feels worthwhile.

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“Are these for me?” Mo Yan whispers. She’s dressed up in her uniform. Her hair is back in its place, and no sign of exhaustion can be seen in her expression. Mo Yan stares at the jade-green studs in Lo Jik’s calloused hand. Her shoulder shudders as she sips on her tea to calm her nerves.

It tastes bitter.

Autumn Tea is a widely used beverage to deal with possible pregnancies at its inception.

However, Mo Yan doesn’t care about its taste as she glances between the earrings and Lo Jik.

“It’s a bit plain,” Lo Jik smiles wryly. “But I was never born into luxuries. So, I felt these were appropriate.”

“Thank you,” Mo Yan places the tea aside, somberly accepting the gift. “But I can’t wear these yet.” She looks at Lo Jik, explaining, “I don’t trust my Grandfather to think he won’t act against you if he finds out. I might be a Rank 3 Gu Master, but I don’t have any Rank 3 Gu, and I can’t exert my right as an Elder without forming a base. I’m—”

She would have never said such words before. But now?

“I understand,” Lo Jik wraps his hand around Mo Yan’s, closing her fingers around the earrings. He grins, “You will work hard. I will do the same!”

He pulls her close, pecking her lips.

“Besides,” he whispers. “You’re already rewarded to me.”

He snickers as she playfully swats his chest, snorting, “Well! Now, you must work harder and quickly become Rank 3. Never hesitate to ask for my help.”

A conflicted look appears on Lo Jik’s face as Mo Yan’s expression softens. She caresses his cheek, smiling. “Silly. We’re already one. What is mine shall be yours. Whatever is yours shall be mine.” Her gaze hardens as she adds. “Even that slut you’re chasing.”



Lo Jik nods.

***[The First Target (Silver): Had Vaginal Sex With Mo Yan For The First Time. Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

Taking someone's virginity and having sex for the first time net into two rewards. There aren't any 'virgin' rewards for anal or oral. However, Lo Jik does receive the reward for doing different sexual acts with his partner for the first time, like—Oral, Boobjob, Anal, Buttjob, and even Footjob!

***[Want Cream? (Silver): Creampied Mo Yan. Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

Creampies follow different rules. Lo Jik only gets one reward for it, like his partner's orgasms. Cumming inside Mo Yan's mouth or ass won't provide him any achievements.

He continues to gaze through the list. Two other achievements remain.

***[A Taboo Makeout (Bronze/Repeatable): Made out with Mo Yan. Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

***[Scouting Booty Call (Bronze/Repeatable): Had Penetrative Sex With Mo Yan, Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

Three silver and two bronze-tier rewards!

The wait was worthwhile.

'I only felt 80% sure about getting a silver-tier reward from Mo Yan. However, she went above and reached Rank 3! However, her rise in status and cultivation still couldn't close the gaps for a Golden-tier reward. No matter. I must try and have a threesome with Mo Yan and Shen Cui before I try advancing into Rank 3.'

He clears his head and starts summoning his rewards.

'Time to test my theory. Do I get rare Rank 1 Gu or Rank 2?'

He wills the first Bronze reward under his blanket.

A soft glow blooms inches from his forehead, covering a vague, almost elusive shadow within. Lo Jik watches the light fade, allowing a palm-sized fish with green scales to fall on his lap. The fish looks like a carp, flopping around. A small pair of feathered green

wings shudder as the fish flops helplessly.

A Rank 2 Gu! His theory was correct!

Lo Jik observes the Gu, identifying it after spending a few minutes.

'A Rank 2 Winged Carp. This Gu produces two palm-sized wings on the user's back. It is useless for human use. It supports an infant's weight at best. However, using it with Hollowbone Gu allows it to carry adults. A better use for it is to combine it with Rank 2 Windstep Grass Gu and Rank 1 Bamboo Boots Gu, creating Rank 3 Feathered Boots Gu. Winged Carp is the rarest material in this recipe. After all, it's only present in aquatic regions at least 8000 meters under the ground level! Gu Yue Clan has several Bamboo Boots. Finding a Windstep Grass Gu shouldn't be hard. It's a standard movement Gu and occasionally appears in the Clan's shop.'

However, Lo Jik sighs deeply.

'This Gu consumes wavy weeds. There are a few missions to collect aquatic materials from the nearby stream, including the weeds. But their relatively low quantity makes them rare. It's not even about the cost. I can't brazenly feed the Gu without arousing suspicion. It's already nerve-wracking to nurture the White Jade Gu. I'll have to keep the Winged Carp in a state of modest hunger until I get other refining materials. Feathered Boots Gu is a top-notch Rank 3 Movement Gu.'

'There's a chance I might lose my investment due to natural risks in fusing the Gu. But what of it? I get to at least try attaining these Rare Gu, right?' He snickers and lets the Winged Carp inside his Aperture.

The Gu quickly swims within his Primeval Sea before calming.

Lo Jik continues after heaving deeply.

A familiar light flashes before his eyes, allowing a brown earthworm to fall on his lap. The Rank 2 Gu squirms slightly before attentively raising its head.

'Rank 2 Smell-Lock Gu,' Lo Jik nods. 'It's also rare and handy in the wilds. The only recipe with the Smell-Lock Gu—in my knowledge—is the Rank 3 Sneaking Poison Gu. But that poison Gu needs two other Rank 2 Gu. This Gu is quite in demand during scouting missions. Its effects of containing the body's odor for 30 minutes can also be applied to other Gu Masters. However, it doesn't restrict the smell of Gu Master's clothes and other artifacts. So, it's best to use this Gu while lathering oneself with nearby soil or mud.'

Satisfied, Lo Jik refines and lets the earthworm inside his aperture as it floats on the surface.

'Time for Silver rewards. Please! Don't let it all be Red Steel Relic Gu!'

While suddenly reaching Rank 2 Peak Stage is titillating, Lo Jik feels his trait should have more options now. After all, several Rank 2 Gu are just as rare, if not more expensive than the Red Steel Relic Gu!

Light flashes. Seconds feel like minutes as Lo Jik observes the shadow behind the light is nowhere similar to a Relic Gu. His heart thumps as the orb of light fades and allows a...

He observes the azure root-like plant. It has hair-like thin roots growing from its primary body. A subtle scent of earth and grass fills the space under his blanket.

'A 100-year-old Lunar Ginseng,' Lo Jik muses. 'It's VERY wanted by others. While the Academy Elder didn't say anything during our classes, he hinted that this plant is used as a material for refining many of Gu Yue's Rank 3 Gu into Rank 4. It will effortlessly sell for 7000-8000 Primeval Stones.'

He never expects to receive material from Silver Rewards, but Lo Jik isn't disappointed. Despite his current wealth, 7000 Primeval Stones isn't something to scoff at.

Lo Jik promptly covers the Ginseng in several wraps of sheets before storing it safely. Exposure like that would eventually spread its scent and might attract trouble.

He returns to his blanket and promptly summons the second Silver Reward.

He thins his lips as the silhouette of the reward is too familiar!

A red-colored Red Steel Relic Gu sits on his lap.

'Well,' he sighs. 'Ok.'

Putting the Gu into his aperture, Lo Jik summons the last reward.

He frowns as he also knows the silhouette of this Gu. It's not a Relic Gu.

Its cocoon-like body seems encased in enamel despite possessing three sections for its head, body, and stomach.

The Rank 2 Bookworm Gu stays motionless as Lo Jik cannot help but doubt things.

'A Bookworm's rarity is comparable to White Boar or Liquor Worm. It should be a Bronze-tier Reward. It's a storage Gu that stores knowledge. It feeds *'literature.'* So, feeding it bamboo paper will not suffice. The bamboo paper must have something written or drawn on it. I can look up the relative knowledge anytime once the Gu consumes it. Wait... knowledge.'

Lo Jik narrows his eyes, using the Gu and letting it rest within his brain beside the Battle Instinct Gu.

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"Congratulations, Elder Mo."

"Hahaha! My Gu Yue Clan has another elder! What a joyous occasion!"

"Mo Yan is beautiful and talented. Say, Elder Mo, you're so young. You must have someone you like, right?"

"Hmph, you're shameless, Bi Ki! Find someone else for your wastrel Grandson!"

"What did you just say?!"

All sorts of voices fill the main hall within the Clan Leader's pavilion after Mo Yan is officially promoted to Rank 3 with all its merits. Gu Yue Mo Chen is all smiles, stroking his beard with a proud expression. However, he feels conflicted. Others are no better. While everyone is smiling, several elders are scheming. Many elders under Mo Chen's faction are also dissatisfied since Mo Yan's advancement means they will have to cut another person into their stream of benefits!

Competition exists at every level!

There are also many elders probing her intentions through flattery. Old Mo Yan would be swept by all this. However, she learned a few painful lessons under her Grandfather's teaching in the last month and modestly answered several questions.

Meanwhile, Mo Chen's fierce rival, Gu Yue Chi Lian, looks frustrated.

He never expected Mo Yan to advance into Rank 3. How can he not know Mo Chen? They are true rivals, so they know each other better than their wives ever did! Mo Chen



won't let Mo Yan advance before Mo Bei!

'The chances of Mo Yan disobeying Mo Chen is high. Sigh,' Chi Lian groans inwardly. 'I'll have to allow Chi Shan to pull back and close the gap. Hmph, it all started with that Qing Shu!'

Chi Lian coldly stares at the back of the green-haired Elder leading Mo Yan away.

"Congratulations, Elder Mo," Qing Shu smiles as he leads the girl under the Clan Pavilion for her free Rank 3 Gu from the Clan's reserves.

"You're quite talented," Qing Shu continues. "Maybe our Gu Yue Clan will have our version of divine scouts, the *'Ruined'* Brothers."

Mo Yan snorts.

"Ease it with those compliments, Qing Shu. We're peers, so I don't have to act courteously. Ruined Brothers? Do you think I'm such a heavy gambler?"

Qing Shu glances at Mo Yan, shrugging.

"I was truly trying to compliment you."

"Why?" Mo Yan narrows her eyes. "I'm not going to marry you for political gains."

"I wouldn't wish myself on my worst enemy," Qing Shu chuckles. "It's as you said, we're peers. A generation's gap divides us from other Elders. I dislike such political agendas. However, I understand their use in my growth. Since I can assist the Clan more by being more powerful, I must use similar methods as other competitors. Even if we belong to Clan Leader and Mo Factions, we won't be treated equally."

They chat and walk, traveling the underground hall beside the stream where the Clan conducts the awakening ceremony.

"I'm suggesting we compete but should present a unified front in matters that don't directly involve our respective factions."

They appear before the Gu room as the guards respectfully stand aside.

"I'll consider it," Mo Yan answers curtly before entering the small room.

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'The Ruined Brothers?'

Lo Jik's eyes almost pop open!

It's one of the more intriguing legends in the Southern Border. Anyone knee-deep in Rock Gambling considers these two myths of the profession!

Legends state the Ruined Brothers were orphans. The Elder, Kang Tian-Yan, ruthlessly attacked anyone who dared hurt his younger brother, Kang Diqu-Yan. These two mortal brothers awakened their aptitudes, and both possessed B-grade aptitudes. The siblings grew together and protected each other. The Elder was rough, using harsh methods to resolve his issues. The younger sibling used delicate means to de-escalate situations. The siblings soon started teaming together, sweeping through opposition and rising the ranks. Despite their contrasting disposition, the siblings were talented in refining the Gu. Both spent days together, spending precious resources to research several recipes and improve the existing ones.

Talented and ambitious, the brothers eventually stumbled upon their first innovation, using it to create another Gu. Those two Gu are still a mystery. The news about their creation only spread due to the Elder Brother's negligence as he drank in the tavern. Allegedly, these two Gu worms make them masters in scouting! The two brothers completed several missions, allowing their clan to locate many precious resources, becoming the Clan Leader's most loyal subordinates. The Clan Leader didn't have children, so he eventually began treating these two as his blood.

It's not uncommon. For instance, Qing Shu is Gu Yue Bo's adoptive son.

Soon, the Clan Leader fell ill, helping the Eldest Brother reach Rank 4 before dying. Taking control of the clan, the brothers revealed the Clan Leader's last wish to expand into the Rock Gambling business. The Brothers had to start slowly under other Elder's unified resistance against the idea. However, the profits were immense! The Clan even held several Gambling ceremonies, inviting other clans and building political relationships. Other Clan Elders eventually accepted the idea. The Kang Clan became a mid-sized Rock Gambling point, attracting several caravans in months!

However, good times don't last. The Brothers fell in love with the same woman and competed for her affection. Eventually, the woman chose the younger brother. Outraged, the Elder Brother killed his younger brother and escaped the clan. The Rock Gambling business didn't last for long.

However, the short duration of their business earned them profits several times more than a large-sized gambling point, leaving their names as legends in the profession.

These Brothers grew together and were Ruined as one, too. After all, nobody found the Elder Brother.

Lo Jik sighs.

There is truth to every rumor. The Bookworm Gu is left by a Rank 4 Peak Stage Gu Master—Kang Tian-Yan.

The two Brother's story is drastically different from the rumors.

While rough, Tian-Yan always loved his younger brother. However, unlike the legends, only Tian-Yan was the genius in Gu's refinement. The Elder Brother cared about two things—Diqu-Yan and refining Gu. The former represented Tian-Yan's dedication and love for his brother. Meanwhile, the latter expressed his fascination toward the Gu's mysteries!

Still, Diqu-Yan wasn't useless. The younger brother schemed well. The youth planned so well that they displayed an honest duo of hardness and softness, rising through the ranks and conspiring against the Clan Leader. Letting Tian-Yan take the Clan Leader's seat was his younger brother's idea to expand their influence while he schemes from the dark. Their unique Gu allowed them to achieve great success! They wildly profited from the Rock Gambling business using their innovation.

However, things changed.

A woman.

Tian-Yan fell for her the second they met, eagerly accepting Diqu's scheme of fighting over her to create tension in the Kang Clan and rooting out the malicious elders in the dark. It worked too well.

Unlike the legends, the woman fell for Tian-Yan.

The events unfolding made Lo Jik sigh.

While possessing a cunning heart, Diqu-Yan underestimated love and overestimated himself. He was used to planning with a partner-in-crime. This time was no different. The only difference was that Tian-Yan wasn't his partner but his target! The woman was his partner.

How could a woman in love betray? Love was, is, and always will be unreasonable!

The woman told Tian-Yan the truth. Outraged, Tian-Yan confronted his brother.

Diqiu-Yan was no longer his gentle little brother as he revealed his vicious, jealous nature. Diqiu-Yan exposed how he always envied Tian-Yan's strength and talent. That's why he let the Clan Leader assist Tian-Yan in cultivation to reach Rank 4! It came with a price. Tian-Yan couldn't cultivate! But why would Diqiu-Yan suddenly turn on his elder brother?

Because Tian-Yan revealed—he had another recipe for Gu using their two inventions.

Credits where credit is due—Diqiu-Yan DID assist in innovating their second recipe.

Unable to handle such difference in talent and hateful for years, Diqiu-Yan concocted a scheme to assassinate his Elder Brother. However, Tian-Yan could not kill his brother. He said he would leave the Clan and enter a self-imposed exile. Like Love, hatred is often unreasonable, too. Unable to bear his Elder Brother's talents and generosity, Diqiu-Yan attacked his Elder Brother and his lover!

Bam!

Tian-Yan reveals a cultivation of Rank 4 Peak Stage!

Didn't Tian-Yan lose his ability to cultivate?

The Elder Brother reveals he chanced upon a fortuitous Gu in the wild and wanted to surprise Diqiu-Yan when they root out malicious Elders.

Hateful, Hateful, Hateful!

The young brother changed his tactic and killed the defenseless Lover!

Blinded by rage, Tian-Yan killed his young brother!

Yet, the act scarred the generational talent. Tian-Yan left the Kang Clan and entered a self-imposed exile. The grief never compelled the man to commit suicide. Instead, he chose to live with guilt as his punishment, his only source of joy being refining and researching Gu.

At the end of his story, Tian-Yan states—

*'Congratulations, Inheritors. I'm a righteous man. However, my inheritance is crueler*

*than the demonic Gu Masters' imagination! This world is inhuman and tests brotherly bonds with every breath! You two must have unimaginable refining talent and awareness. Hahaha! I hope you two live better than me. I leave behind my Gu worms and this Book Gu that contains everything I researched, including my discoveries not yet known to the public. Use it well. Be selfish to others but kind to each other. I lost my brother and lover in one day. I sincerely wish the same fate never befalls you.'*

Lo Jik exhales deeply.

What a story.

He still chooses to trust Tian-Yan's side with a grain of salt. For all he knows, Tian-Yan might be a deceiving narrator who wants to leave a good name after his death.

Whatever the case, Lo Jik skims through the recipes.

His blood boils with excitement!

It isn't like the ill-maintained journals with missing or half-crumbled pages. It's a genuine Clan Leader's informative Legacy!

The first few recipes already make him gape in surprise.

'Adding a Boar's tusk to White Jade Gu's creation increases the refinement chances by 20%?'

***{A/N: According to canon, this information should surface 150 years later as a 'discovery.' However, I'm using that lore to give the Ruined Brothers some substance.}***

It's wild!

He continues through Rank 2, 3, and 4 Gu recipes.

The start of the only Rank 5 recipe contains Tian-Yan's words.

*—'Us brothers invented a pair of Eye Gu worms. I used the Heaven Piercing Eye, and my Yan'er used the Earth Piercing Eye. Both had complementary disadvantages. The Heaven Piercing Eye can see through anything except objects with Earth Qi. I could never look past the ground and Earth Path Gu. Meanwhile, Yan'er's Earth Piercing Eye could ONLY see through the ground and earthen commodities. We used this Gu to establish our Rock Gambling business. Fearing retaliation from every Clan in Southern*

*Border, we never revealed the truth. Yan'er even sent me to spread misinformation through my drunken facade. However, I had an idea to combine the two Rank 4 Gu into a TRUE legendary Rank 5 Gu. Despite being confident in my recipe, I completed it too late. I'm dying. I leave this promise to my inheritors. It's the Rank 5 Gu Heaven and Earth Before My Eyes!'*—

Lo Jik gulps.

He cannot reveal the information about these two Gu!

One makes him a master in scouting, and two make him a piece of delicious pie that others will love hunting!

He'll get railed from all sides!

Lo Jik calms his rapidly beating heart as he slumps down.

Scouting...

Yeah, it's a dangerous profession—more life-threatening than he expected.

'This Rank 2 Bookworm Gu only represents half the inheritance. I wonder what the other half looks like.'

Still, he stops resting after a few minutes before delving into the hundreds of recipes.

Time waits for no man.

These recipes also have different points where Tian-Yan points out his private experiences and thoughts. It's genuine guidance from an expert in the field! When Lo Jik feels mentally drained, he shifts to nurturing his aperture. He planned to use the relic Gu at Upper Stage unless he gets another one.

'Mo Yan will have plenty of attention on herself for a while. I shouldn't expect her anytime soon. My primary objective is to advance to the Middle Stage before the caravan's arrival. The stronger I am, the less suspicion I will incur once I sell the rare materials that survived in my hands. But why is the Caravan arriving early this time? Did something happen?'

Lo Jik muses and cultivates, opting to stay inside and accrue more public infamy by not giving a rat's ass about the Clan's missions.



Leading the group is the Rank 4 Gu Master Jia Fu, atop his Treasure Brass Toad. The caravan approaches the Gu Yue Village before settling in its outskirts, unraveling and setting up several camps. Meanwhile, Jia Fu's Toad travels into the heart of the Gu Yue Clan, stopping beside the Clan Leader's Pavilion and jumping down to meet Gu Yue Bo.

"Welcome, Brother Fu!" Gu Yue Bo warmly welcomes the Rank 4 Leader of the caravan. Jia Fu smiles pleasantly. However, the scar stretching diagonally from his brows to his cheeks surprises Gu Yue Bo internally.

How can Gu Yue Bo not know why the caravan arrived early? Jia Jin Sheng's death caused Jia Fu to accuse his Second Brother of demonic scheming. Their conflict over family assets grew, and they battled. Jia Fu left with his Caravan quickly to earn more.

However, Gu Yue Bo plays the fool, questioning, "How come you're so early, Brother Fu?"

"Early bird gets the worm, Brother Bo," Jia Fu smiles. "I brought many rare goods this time. I'm sure the noble Gu Yue Clan will like our caravan's collection."

Gu Yue Bo's gaze gleams. Jia Fu's personal assurance carries its weight as the Gu Yue Clan Leader chuckles. "Good! I'm sure my Clan will benefit a lot. You're our honored guest, Brother Fu. Our clan is holding the awakening ceremony 2 days later. Please join us on this auspicious occasion."

Jia Fu doesn't stand for formalities and promptly agrees before hesitating and opening up.

"I have a request, Brother Bo."

"Please speak," Gu Yue Bo smiles. "I will try to assist to the best of my capabilities."

"My younger brother's death roused many issues. I would like to investigate a few things again. I loved my younger brother, and his loss haunts me even to this day."

It's all a pretense, and the wise men can see that. Jia Fu is troubled with his family's inheritance due to his younger brother's mysterious death. How can he not do everything to straighten the situation?

As the Caravan unloads and the leaders converse, a dark-haired youth watches everything about the Caravan's arrival from a distant hill. Spring wind waves his dark locks as his abyss-like gaze seems lost and dazed.



'This Caravan will be one of the points to tackle future issues. I killed Jia Jin Sheng, and Jia Fu invited the Divine Investigator to tackle the situation. The Rank 5 expert arrived in time to save the Gu Yue and Bai Clan's leader from the Lycan. Next, his daughter investigated the matter while I used Chi Lian and Mo Chen to collect resources and feed that Gu in the depths of the Inheritance Site.' Killing intent brews in his eyes. 'I killed Jia Jin Sheng due to surprising situations, leaving some hints. That Divine Investigator also planted a Share Sense Gu on me, capturing me before I could heal that Gu. However, the Gu Clan Leader mistook me for an Extreme Physique. Hehe, how close he was to the truth! Still, the most surprising thing was Fang Zheng stabbing me through the heart. Nobody expected that, and the Rank 5 expert's hidden injuries erupted at that moment. I was forced to self-detonate and returned a few months before graduation.'

'Ordinarily, I shouldn't have moved so far back. But I think I know why it happened.'

His gaze regains its serenity.

'I quickly progressed in the inheritance site due to my second life's experiences. Only dealing with the Monkey King and taking its Gu remains before continuing. However, I'm too weak. I tried to walk the same path as before without causing any changes. Still, Qing Shu advanced to Rank 3. He died in wolf tide during my first life and was killed by the overuse of his special Gu against Bai Ning Bing in my second life. His advancement forced the Mo and Chi faction to raise another Rank 3 Gu Master. I heard Chi Shan advancing a few days ago. Chi Shan should have died in the Beast Tide, too.'

Fang Yuan shakes his head.

'I also tried purchasing the Blood Python from Lo Jik. But he seems stubborn not to sell it. He probably knows the ease of fusing it into Rank 5 Gu. The knowledge of the Rank 1 Gu worm's unique connection with its Rank 5 variant was only discovered during the Five Regions War. I was only intrigued because I was a Blood Path Immortal. The easiest way to take Gu from him is by assassinating him in the forest. However, he is a sharp warrior and stopped going out recently.'

'Still, my first act is to get that Liquor Worm and Red Steel Relic Gu. I should display my talent and get that invitation token from Jia Fu to leave a way out for myself. Next, I will carefully destroy every thread that Tie Ruo Nan investigated to pin me as the culprit for Jia Jin Sheng's murder. Finally, I need to raise 50000 Primeval Stones before the Father-Daughter pair's arrival and get out of here!'

He has some plans for the latter.

'There's also Gu Yue Zie Qi,' Fang Yuan's lips curve into a wicked smirk. Anything

exciting an old devil like Fang Yuan is bound to be exciting!

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Gu Yue Lo Jik walks between the tents. Unlike usual, he observes a tall tree almost 18 meters high and 10 meters wide from the base. Round windows carved on its surface allow natural sunlight to travel inside its hollow interiors. This is no ordinary tree but a Gu House called Three Star Cave. Its original form is that of a seed that grows to such an extent under a Gu Master's Primeval Essence.

'That's the auction house?'

Lo Jik narrows his eyes.

The caravan is better this time. A Gu House isn't something usual in a mid-sized caravan.

He enters the first Gu House of his life, brimming with curiosity. The interiors of the hollow tree are plain but refined. Rows of wooden counters display several Rank 1 Gu. Besides the Gu are paper and pen. He walks in and admires the collection. However, Lo Jik doesn't think of stealing these Gu. A Gu Master controls the Gu House, surveilling everyone. He blinks as he finds Fang Yuan in the central crowd. Intrigued, Lo Jik slips past and glimpses at the Liquor Worm with the price tag of 500 Primeval Stones.

He is more surprised to see the Medicine Hall Elder with her Granddaughter.

'500 stones is cheap. However, this Gu House operates more in silent auctions. There are several reasons for that. Jia Fu is a Rank 4 Gu Master. If he holds open auctions and the other two Clans find trouble, he won't be able to suppress the situation alone. Not only that, but those auctions promote bitter rivalry. How can the Gu Yue Leader allow his Clansmen to tear pretenses away and bite each other's throats for resources? Finally, influential Elders can curb others from making moves on precious Gu. However, these silent auctions allow others to aim at precious resources without being oppressed by their Elders!'

He muses before moving forward. None of these Gu interested him. The first floor only displayed Rank 1 Gu Worms. The second and third floors showcased Rank 2 and 3 Gu.

'Others would be stuck in my situation,' He roams the smaller second floor, reading through information about Rare Rank 2 Gu on the counters. 'I have ten Rank 2 Gu! However, only White Jade Gu and Winged Carp Gu are difficult to feed.' He sighs grimly. The most attractive Gu on the second floor is an attack-type Gu.

Lo Jik's most immediate needs are a Storage-Type and Scouting Gu.

He already has an idea for Scouting Gu, preparing for it for a while now. However, Storage Gu is an issue. The recipes in his mind only provide Storage Gu of subpar quality. He wants something to sustain the materials he receives from his Trait. After all, some materials have already spoiled, forcing Lo Jik to tear and crush those items with Moonglow Gu.

So, he aims to sell his accumulated goods in these eight days and purchase adequate materials to refine a Storage Gu, Healing Gu, and Scouting Gu.

Preferably, he would like to purchase the first two and do away with refining them.

Not finding anything interesting, Lo Jik climbs upstairs, browsing Rank 3 Gu Worms. He chances upon Mo Yan on this floor. A white belt with a silver bracket replaces her red one. She barely spares him a glance, pretending not to know him well as she stares at the Gu in the center—White Silver Relic Gu!

Lo Jik eventually approaches the Gu Master on the doorstep, revealing his intention to sell.

He decided to sell his most expensive item available for sale.

Not the Ginseng, of course. It's also used in refining precious Rank 3 Gu. Lo Jik wants to refine a Storage Gu to keep some items safe. Instead, he sells perishable goods of no immediate or foreseeable use.

Unfortunately, he fails to find Shen Cui and Fang Zheng in the crowd.

His relationship with Fang Zheng failed to worsen. Shen Cui didn't show Lo Jik's gift to Fang Zheng. Instead, she wears it to the Bazaar, dolling herself for her admirer by her side.

Lo Jik cannot have that.

He MUST find Fang Zheng and give that boy another doze of motivation!

Fortunately, he also finds a batch of Wavy Weeds at a lower price than the ones in the Clan's stock.

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*3 Days Later.*

The entire clan is more active than usual. It was the Awakening Ceremony yesterday. The influx of new Gu Masters roused everyone's spirits. However, some feel complicated.

"Everything will be fine, Young Master!" She Cui hugs Fang Zheng's arms. She speaks with determination as they browse different stalls. Fang Zheng doesn't talk and continues his silence.

'Another A-grade Aptitude!' Fang Zheng feels an invisible pressure because he knows more than the rest. 'The Academy Elder lied about Gu Yue Zie Qi's aptitude, saying 90%. However, that boy has 99% aptitude! Elder lied to prevent Jia Fu from forming any ideas, who was invited to view the ceremony.'

Fang Zheng feels complicated. He should feel happy for the clan. However, Fang Zheng cannot help but fear the loss of his status and reputation. He doesn't want the Clan Leader and Brother Qing Shu to stop teaching him.

He snaps out of his thoughts when Shen Cui pauses midway.

The youth looks ahead, finding Lo Jik staring straight at them. Fang Zheng notices how Lo Jik seems... disappointed?

Should he not be gloating?

Fang Zheng frowns.

A disappointed Lo Jik feels worst than the Asshole variant!

Meanwhile, Shen Cui shudders and glances away. She feels naked under Lo Jik's gaze. The seeping disappointment makes her hand clammy. After all, she isn't wearing Lo Jik's gift but Fang Zheng's jade earrings. The couple interprets Lo Jik's appearance in their own way.

"Why are you still with him?" Lo Jik opens his mouth.

"What?" Shen Cui squawks as Lo Jik crosses his arms. "Didn't you hear the news? Batchmate Fang is no longer unique. There's someone better. Look at him. He's already given up. How can Fang Zheng ever satisfy anyone? He couldn't keep his twin. He would probably lose Clan Leader's and Elder Qing's guidance, and he would probably

lose you, too.”

The brown-haired youth smirks.

Fang Zheng clenches his fists while Shen Cui trembles.

“Is that all?” Fang Zheng coldly demands, surprising Lo Jik. Raising his brows, Lo Jik shrugs. “It seems you don’t need my encouragement, Batchmate Fang. Oh, Dear Cui.”

Fang Zheng's eyes snap with anger once Lo Jik regards his lover with such intimacy.

“You know where to find me when Fang Zheng leaves you alone while focusing on cultivation. Hehehe,” Lo Jik turns around, waving his hands. “Just knock on my doors.”

“Don’t listen to him, Cui,” Fang Zheng speaks softly, consoling the trembling and afraid Shen Cui. He is unaware of her thoughts.

‘He just demanded me out in the public while I stood beside Young Master... and nothing happened!’ Shen Cui slowly understands Gu Masters’ dynamics. ‘What would have happened if I had worn Lo Jik’s present?’

The thought stirs something eager yet ugly within her pale chest.

However, her watery eyes dim at the recollection of Lo Jik’s disappointment.

‘Will he still be at the Bazaar?’

Forgetting the duo, Lo Jik enters the Gu House. The appearance of another A-grader surprised the entire village! But it wasn’t worth noting. Lo Jik wholeheartedly cheers for Fang Zheng since he’s already invested a lot. Clearing his head, Lo Jik browses the Gu collection.

The caravan replaces Rank 1 Gu after half a day, Rank 2 Gu after a day, and Rank 3 Gu after 2 days.

The first floor showcases a Black Boar Gu. Lo Jik writes down a price for it. After all, he still possesses the Concealment Fur Gu. Buying a Black Boar and Green Silkworm to fuse a Black Mane Gu is still an option.

As luck would have it, the second floor displays a Black Mane Gu. Lo Jik writes down a price for that Gu, too. However, he’s incredibly attracted to an inconspicuous Wind Step Grass Gu!

Buy, Buy, Buy!

He wants that Gu Worm!

Concealment Mane Gu, alongside Feathered Boots Gu, can be a life-saving treasure during the Wolf Tides. So what if they are Rank 3 Gu? Using them for short periods during intense life-death situations is more than acceptable!

The central Gu today is a White Jade Gu.

As the day ends, Lo Jik fails to obtain the Black Boar Gu. However, he gets the Black Mane and Windstep Gu.

He quietly returns home while calculating his savings.

He lost a few hundred stones worth of materials to time and paid around 3100 for both Gu Worms. His cost of nurturing Gu isn't anything to scoff at.

By now, he still has the 100-year-old Lunar Ginseng and a dispensable income of 6125 Primeval Stones.

Things change on the sixth day of the caravan!

Many Gu Masters surround the central spot, including a few elders. Lo Jik is among them, staring at a pair of displayed Gu. Both have the same shape and size, differing in color alone. The Gu on the right is a skull-sized spider with fuzzy golden fur and pitch-black eyes. The Gu on the left is a similar spider with raven-shaded fur and attractive golden eyes.

'Solar and Lunar Spiders!' Lo Jik and others can't help but feel their desires stir.

These two Rank 2 are Healing-type Gu with effects no less than a Rank 3 Gu! The Solar Spider is useless at night, feeds on sunlight, and is incredibly potent during the day. The Lunar Spider is the opposite! Its ability is weaker than a Rank 1 Gu in the daytime, possessing incredible healing effects at Night! Both Gu are easy to feed and nurture.

They won't stir much attention alone.

But together?

Even Medicinal Hall's Elder came rushing in.

“Please advise, Elder Yao Ji,” one of the Gu Masters speaks as the wrinkled woman nods with a kind smile. “These two Gu match a Rank 3 Gu’s effect in their respective times. These two are some of the top Gu for a Healing Gu Master since they are easy to raise, too! Their best use is in the hands of a Rank 3 Gu Master since their fusion creates a Rank 3 Dawn To Dusk Spider Gu. Hehe, don’t let this prize fool you, juniors. This is an old tactic. Even if I’m moved, I will save my wealth for tomorrow’s core Gu since it’s bound to be the best!”

She dissuades plenty with a few words, raising their hopes for tomorrow. However, Lo Jik is indifferent to her words.

‘Rank 3 Dawn To Dusk Spider Gu is complicated to feed, and its fusion recipe requires additional materials. But these two Gu have another fusion recipe! That Gu is the top Rank 3 Gu due to its use, effortless nurturing, and no additional materials for fusion. Heh. It only needs correct external factors! But this competition will be tense. I saved the Ginseng for later, but I can’t miss this opportunity.’

The only thing that can be better than these two Gu should be a Red Steel Relic Gu. Lo Jik already has one.

‘I will have to sell the ginseng and use excess Primeval Stones to bulk purchase more of my Gu Worm’s food. My priority now is the Storage Gu and the Scouting Gu. Everything else must wait, including Mo Yan and Shen Cui.’

Truthfully, Lo Jik looked forward to spending more time with Mo Yan. However, he can’t let his dick dictate his needs.

Even if he earns rewards from Mo Yan, he might lose out on other opportunities if he doesn’t fuse a good storage Gu.

*Later.*

“What?” Yao Ji scowls. “Someone else purchased the two Spider Gu?”

The guiding Gu Master expresses her regret as Yao Ji feels indignant rage burning in her heart.

‘First the Liquor Worm, and now those two Gu! I also cannot use my reputation to forcefully buy the Spider Gu since the caravan may not have spares like the Liquor Worm! Hateful! Don’t let me find out who purchased it!’





***Title: Surging Battle Strength***

The Caravan was a massive success this time. Many wealthy veterans appeared, purchasing several items. Meanwhile, it was quickly realized that Fang Yuan won the Red Steel Relic Gu. If it were before, the competition between Mo Yan and Chi Shan would have been fierce. But those two had to rush their cultivation. Chi Shan received his Family's support. Meanwhile, Mo Yan sacrificed her precious trump cards to finance her cultivation.

So, is it any surprise that Mo Yan spent her days regaining some of her methods? Being an Elder allows freedom in certain aspects and binds the Gu Master in other chains. As an Elder, Mo Yan was provided with more luxurious duties. Aside from her weekly stipend of 100 Primeval Stones, Mo Yan was allowed to be an External Affairs Hall management member, like Qing Shu and Chi Shan. The trio faced similar suppression. They became an Elder but had no footing. Qing Shu acted on his own, slightly displeasing the Clan Leader. Meanwhile, Mo Chen and Chi Lian had their considerations, too.

Do you want to be an Elder by defying seniority? It does not mean the Old Ginger will roll over!

In light of recent losses to Beast Tide, the Gu Yue Clan Leader '*understood*' they needed more initiative. So, the Clan Leader introduced a new group under the External Affairs Hall—Battle Elders.

It was not surprising.

Internal Affairs Hall has its Punishment Hall. Now, the External Affairs Hall charged with tasking outside missions to other Clan Members has its Battle Elders. However, the higher-ups could see how this action tied the three Elders to their earlier duties.

Elder Qing Shu welcomed this change with open arms. It was partly his idea. All he longed to do was use his strength to assist the Clan! How are such changes bad? Meanwhile, understanding politics, Qing Shu spread his influence and reputation by manning the Hall and advising several Gu Masters on efficiently dealing with their missions. Qing Shu's actions increased his adoptive father's influence since he was widely recognized as the Clan Leader's member.

Mo Yan and Chi Shan weren't active. They only performed duties assigned to them,

furiously refining or seeking Rank 3 Gu to promote their battle strength to their corresponding cultivation!

Days fly by as such.

There's also another rumor in the air—

Mo Yan has a lover.

Being one of the youngest Elders and a beauty, Mo Yan received several marriage proposals. Rumors state that she fought with her Grandfather, not budging from his words and retreating to her privacy to refine Gu. Others understood how marrying Mo Yan could be an incredible political chip for Mo Chen. However, he never expected such fierce resistance! Things wouldn't have been so tense if Mo Yan hadn't emerged from her room a few days later with Jade studs pierced in her ears, shocking the Mo Family!

All this happened in the first 20 days after the caravan's exit.

'Finally,' Lo Jik stares at a Gu in his hands. It's a size 6 bamboo boot's sole carved with wing patterns on its heel. It's slightly thicker than usual as a Rank 3 Gu Worm's aura emerges from its being.

'Rank 3 Feathered Boots Gu!' Lo Jik exhales, feeling exhausted.

This Spring is harsh on plenty!

'I managed to refine the Earth Hole Gu but failed to get the Concealment Mane Gu again. Fur Concealment Gu died during the failure.' It also injured Lo Jik to rest until a few days ago. However, he wasn't dissatisfied. He still has options. Instead of Rank 3 Concealment Mane, he can fuse Black Mane alongside the Smell Lock Gu to create a Rank 3 Complete Smell Lock Gu. The two Gu are also to feed. Smell Lock Gu feeds on Beasts' Feces, and the Black Mane Gu consumes vats of oil.

He observes his Second Aperture.

The Hope Gu fills his aperture with the Light of Hope. The Blood Python coils around it like a spoiled child. Scarlet-Red Sea ebbs and flows unceasingly. This is the Middle Stage Rank 2 Primeval Essence! However, Lo Jik didn't use it to nurture and advance his first Aperture. Fang Yuan and Fang Zheng are the only ones of his batch to possess Rank 2 Middle Stage. The former used a Relic Gu, and the latter cultivated like a madman possessed! How can Lo Jik explain his startling speed if even Mo Bei and Chi Cheng aren't in the Middle Stage?

Still, he wouldn't mess with those two to motivate them.

Lo Jik already has a lot on his plate.

Two vitality leaves float.

The blood-red, half-burnt Blood Rousing Incense floats alongside the brown earthworm Smell Lock Gu. Strangely, two different mazes of silky web float and 'stick' midair. One spiral whorl is formed from pitch-black webs. Meanwhile, the other one is built from resplendent golden silk. The Solar and Lunar Spiders hide in their webs, isolated until called upon.

There's also a bamboo sole flying midair like a strange spaceship. It's the Rank 3 Feathered Boots Gu! This Gu is rare not only due to its simple use but also its feeding patterns.

It feeds on wind, water, and bamboo!

No, it's not 'either-or.' It feeds on three things with their total quantity combined into a regular Rank 3 Gu Worm's feed.

Four Gu linger in the depths of his aperture.

First is an oval stone with a jade's luster. It stays still, revealing a stabilized aura. It's the White Jade Gu, Lo Jik's first defense. Beside it, crawling around is a heavy silkworm barely visible through the drenched black silk wrapped around its body—Rank 2 Black Mane!

The Red Steel Relic Gu is nearby, resting without any movements.

The fourth Gu is strange.

It's an earthen ring with a diameter of 10 centimeters.

The Rank 2 Earth Hole Gu.

It's Lo Jik's storage Gu. This Gu has strict limitations. However, its use is mystical and worth its restrictions. First, a Gu Master must keep the Gu in one's palm to use it. It leaves a brown circular mark in the palm's center—easy to identify. It's why Lo Jik is keeping it inside his aperture until needed. The Gu Master then must place their palm on the ground and activate the Gu. It will form a strange hole a few centimeters away from

them with a radius of one meter. It creates a spherical hole in the ground with a volume of 8 cubic meters. One can store and take their items from this hole. Once finished, the Gu will revert these changes, leaving the ground untouched.

It can only be used on earthen surfaces with 8 cubic meters of volume. It won't work and might get injured if a Gu Master uses it on spots where there isn't adequate volume of dirt underneath. It is also Lo Jik's most essence-consuming Gu—needing 30% of Initial Stage Essence for a minute!

However, it's a worthwhile expenditure once one realizes its benefits.

First, the Earth Hole Gu consumes Earth Qi during its use, combining its use and nurturing. Also, Earth Hole Gu uses Earth Qi to keep the items in storage in their original condition! Lo Jik can store perishable goods without fear!

'Rank 2 Earth Hole, Rank 3 Earth Well, Rank 4 Earth Cave, and Rank 5 Earth Valley—all these Gu have similar functions with widening spaces! However, its later stages are not worthwhile. Even Rank 3 Earth Well is unneeded because the spatial requirements will become too large. Earth Hole is enough for my current needs. It's better to save and spend on those Rare Gu that can store living things if I want a Rank 3 Storage Gu.'

In his right palm is the Moonglow Gu in the form of a blue crescent tattoo. Inside his brain are the Battle Instinct and Book Worm Gu.

His immediate concerns of possessing Storage, Healing, and Movement Gu are relieved! That's why Lo Jik isn't disappointed even if he couldn't refine a Rank 3 Concealment Mane Gu.

It might look like the pressure for feeding Gu is more on Lo Jik. However, he carefully considered his options and wisely used his gifts and wealth to procure a set of Gu that are easy to feed! Aside from the White Jade Gu's food he bulk purchased during the Caravan, other Gu are easy to nurture.

Calculating his weekly costs, Lo Jik notes the reduction from the original hundreds to meager 219 Stones. However, his actual costs are lower since he acquired White Jade's food. His cost for the next four months should be 94 stones plus whatever he uses for Cultivation, with the Battle Instinct Gu being the most expensive to feed.

Content with such growth, Lo Jik decides to rest for... 20 minutes.

What?

His Aperture won't nurture itself!

Lo Jik wants to raise his second aperture to the Upper Stage quickly and step into the Peak Stage at once! Why would he slow down his cultivation for public appearances when he can cultivate secretly?

'I haven't been able to get together with Mo Yan for a while,' Lo Jik narrows his eyes as he rests. 'She sent a secret letter stating how Mo Chen wanted Mo Yan to get close to the new A-grader, Zie Qi. Since Fang Zheng is already in the Clan Leader's faction, Gu Yue Bo cannot openly disparage the former talent for the recent one. After all, Fang Zheng is already at Rank 2 Middle Stage. Meanwhile, Zie Qi is a Middle Stage Rank 1 Gu Master. So, other elders want to bring Zie Qi under their hold and balance their political gains against Gu Yue Bo, whose influence continues to rise under Qing Shu's efforts. Already frustrated with her family, Mo Yan snapped. While her open declaration of having a lover deterred others, it also brought a spotlight on her. She cannot meet me now.'

Strength.

That's what he needs. However, he also needs a good cover. He cannot blindly show his cultivation speed and expect others to not suspect anything! Others won't openly find issues with him. But what about in secret? The Gu World is mysterious. Lo Jik, despite his growing knowledge, barely scratched its surface! Talents Kang Tian-Yan claimed they don't understand 1% of Gu Cultivation. How can Lo Jik, despite his shamelessness, have the cheek to admit he's any better?

Only by reminding himself of his flaws and weaknesses can Lo Jik strive to improve!

'Speaking of weakness,' Lo Jik smirks. 'I didn't visit the Bazaar these days. I wonder how this act affected Shen Cui.'

Everyone knows Fang Zheng, Mo Bei, and Chi Cheng are improving by leaps and bounds after their seniors became Elders. These three are collectively called the rising generation. With his talent and grit, Fang Zheng performed 6 dangerous missions in these 20 days! Mo Bei's battle strength surged after he refined Mo Yan's rare Gu. With his superior's support, Chi Cheng is not far behind!

On the contrary, their batch also produced the worst Gu Masters.

The wastrel son Fang Yuan spends his time hunting easy game like rabbits. He sold his tavern and other properties to his uncle to purchase the Red Steel Relic Gu. However, others still envy Fang Yuan because he possesses the Nine Leaf Vitality Gu! He can be

as lazy as he likes and still earn resources for cultivation.

On the other hand, Lo Jik holes himself in his home, barely seeing the light of the day and not performing any missions. He hasn't left the village for any mission in the past 20 days, using his small fortune from selling Blood Gu to Qing Shu to live an extravagant life. Others call him a fool! They are right!

How can Lo Jik continue such a lifestyle without a source of income?

That's why Lo Jik needs that scouting Gu to return to the wilds.

Lo Jik will risk incurring his superior's suspicions but won't enter the wilds without appropriate methods. He suspects another wolf king is waiting to pounce on him the second he leaves the village—just his luck!

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Shen Cui's listless expression freezes as she finds a familiar figure munching fruits while chatting with the nearby vendors. Other vendors gave flattering smiles, even offering their chairs as the youth grandly shook his head, choosing to stand and eat while conversing about their daily lives.

Despite being cautious of mortals after Cao's insidious scheme, Lo Jik takes time to socialize with these vendors. It doesn't take a lot out of him, and they often have intriguing tidbits about the Village.

Did you know that the hamlets are accumulating more losses due to wolves?

A Rank 1 Gu Master was caught cheating on his Rank 2 wife? That's an action worth 4 hours of pegging, indeed!

Hmm? There are some rumors about Elder Yao Ji's Granddaughter and the new A-grader Zie Qi? It's young love in the spring!

The fruits produced are predicted to be worse? No shit!

Lo Jik effortlessly controls the conversation, stopping briefly to glance at the petite figure slowly walking into the bazaar before continuing indifferently. He doesn't move from his spot or speak with her. He has no comments on how she isn't wearing his gift. Well. Shen Cui wore those red clips the few days after the caravan. However, Lo Jik never appeared to purchase fruits.

Some rumors say Lo Jik was depressed about Fang Zheng getting a new A-grade rival!

These are just meaningless assumptions. However, Shen Cui's young heart cannot help but wonder if Lo Jik holed himself due to her? Every young girl fantasizes about things. Fang Zheng barely had time for her, focusing on cultivation and missions. What little time he saved was spent on learning from those female seniors. It's obvious what those women want. However, Fang Zheng cannot look past their schemes.

Isn't she the same?

Didn't she seduce Fang Zheng to escape a life of servitude?

Could she seduce Lo Jik? He is better looking, and he once defeated Fang Zheng. The difference in their talent shows when Fang Zheng is progressing toward the Upper Stage while Lo Jik is stranded in the middle stage. However, Shen Cui feels she's been on the receiving end of things.

Lo Jik spoke to her when it was convenient for him.

He gifted her jewelry when he felt like it.

He suddenly stopped any contact when he saw fit!

Did Shen Cui have any say?

Yes.

She had a choice to throw those red clips or tell Fang Zheng about it. She didn't. Could Lo Jik not see that? So, why must he torture Shen Cui with his presence without bothering to even smile and pass meaningful glances in her direction?

Surprising Shen Cui, Lo Jik leaves a few minutes later. Despite the approaching summer, Shen Cui feels cold and lonely, scared about her future. On the one hand, Shen Cui knows Fang Zheng will marry a Gu Master and take her as a concubine. If she's lucky, Fang Zheng's wife will be indifferent to her. On the other hand, his wife may just have her secretly killed!

Shen Cui was never blind to Gu Master's nature. Even if Fang Zheng dotes on her, so what? How long will he care about a corpse?

She cannot help but slightly desire Lo Jik, too.

'I still have those clips,' she purses her lips. 'I should wear them.'

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*The Next Day.*

Shen Cui looks at Lo Jik with expectations in her heart. He indifferently glances at her, too. However, he purposely pauses after noticing the red clips decorating her brown hair. The lass' heart thumps as she hurriedly glances away, discreetly looking at Lo Jik again, only to find him leaving the Bazaar.

Two days later, Shen Cui meets Lo Jik's gaze for a few breaths.

Three days later, Shen Cui uses slight makeup, looking chirpier than usual. Her gaze guiltily shifts from Lo Jik as she leaves the area. Even a blind man could see someone scored last night. Sublime for Fang Zheng. At least someone hit, right? Men like Lo Jik could only find pleasure in cultivation and seeing their strength rise.

Five days later, news of Lo Jik stepping into Middle Stage spreads, leaving others with envy as they realize Lo Jik must have used a sizeable chunk of his savings to advance! Shen Cui looked prettier today.

Fang Zheng getting injured during his mission spreads on the eighth day. Lo Jik, who has been keeping tabs on Shen Cui and secretly observing her, knows it's the right time to motivate Fang Zheng again!

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Gu Yue Chi Hua is a Rank 2 Middle Stage Gu Master two years older than Fang Zheng, possessing a C-grade Aptitude. Still, her low aptitude does not take anything from her eye-catching appearance. She is one of the sought-after maidens of the Gu Yue Clan. She is a voluptuous woman and is often seen together with Fang Zheng.

Being part of the Chi Family, she had to bust her ass to invite Fang Zheng for drinks in the tavern. She does not care about the political rivalry between the three groups. If given a chance, she will gladly give up her spot in the family to become Fang Zheng's wife. She doesn't have a chance of becoming an Elder like Mo Yan and possessing her freedom to choose her husband.

But if it's Fang Zheng...

There is only one problem.



Shen Cui.

Chi Hua didn't dare kill Shen Cui or scheme against the girl. Fang Zheng loves that girl and may use every means to investigate such an event, even if she is a mortal! One must know that Elder Qing favors Fang Zheng despite Zie Qi's appearance. Who is Qing Shu?

He was the number one Rank 2 Peak Stage Gu master of the Gu Yue Clan. His promotion left that spot empty, arousing fierce competition. Fang Zheng, Mo Bei, and Chi Cheng are ferocious contenders for the title with their rising cultivation and combat expertise!

Still, Chi Hua secretly followed the servant whenever she was free.

Chi Hua noticed how Shen Cui would remove her jade earrings and wear red jade clips before entering the bazaar. It was a bizarre habit. Shen Cui stopped doing that after a few times, and Chi Hua found nothing.

But that didn't stop her.

How can Chi Hua play with her future prospects like that?

She continued observing the maid until noticing a change.

Gu Yue Lo Jik.

Chi Hua recalls how Lo Jik loves visiting the Bazaar to eat fruits. The Rank 2 Lady failed to notice how Shen Cui acted at Lo Jik's arrival. However, how could Chi Hua miss Shen Cui wearing those red clips again?

She realizes the truth in the next two days!

There's something between Lo Jik and Shen Cui! But Chi Hua doesn't expose them yet. There's no evidence, and Fang Zheng is rarely in the village. For all Chi Hua knows, the red clip is useless, and maybe Fang Zheng's present to Shen Cui. After all, Chi Hua has firsthand experience with Fang Zheng's emotional density.

Fang Zheng returned after a few days, and Shen Cui looked slightly glowing. Chi Hua envies the girl for sleeping with Fang Zheng! However, Hua did not ignore how prettier Shen Cui looked when the news of Lo Jik's advancement spread!

Chi Hua's eyes widen when she sees Lo Jik moving past Shen Cui, discreetly brushing his hand against the girl's butt.

And Shen Cui accepts it with an almost sultry smile!

If only Fang Zheng was here to see this!

Chi Hua forms a plan. She needs Fang Zheng to stay within the clan for a few days while Lo Jik's and Shen Cui's interactions grow from meaningful stares to polite conversations.

Heaven blesses her with an opportunity!

Fang Zheng is injured and visiting a tavern with Qing Shu to relax. Meanwhile, Lo Jik has Shen Cui cornered!

That's what she is waiting for!

Chi Hua moves like a wind, hurriedly rushing into the northern tavern. She slams the door open, attracting a lot of attention. Her heaving breasts make many men press their thighs together as she locates Fang Zheng with Qing Shu.

"Senior Hua?" Fang Zheng blinks, bandages peeking from his robe's collar. Chi Hua acts as an anxious woman, hurriedly bowing to Qing Shu before snapping, "Hurry, Junior Brother Zheng! I- I saw that Gu Yue Lo Jik with your woman!"

"What?!" Fang Zheng's nostrils flare. Meanwhile, Qing Shu frowns.

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'She must have taken the bait, right?' Lo Jik smirks.

Knowing that his actions would also affect the people surrounding his target, Lo Jik observed Shen Cui. He found Chi Hua spying on the girl, too. He quickly put two and two together. How can Lo Jik let go of such a godsent opportunity?

The news of Fang Zheng's injury was lady luck shining on him.

He would have been a misfortune prick if he hadn't prepared and didn't know about Chi Hua. However, he couldn't feel safe without giving his all to strengthen his scheme.

"Oh? Summer Strawberries?" Lo Jik smiles as he glances at Shen Cui's basket. They

now casually exchange a few words. Shen Cui's gaze brightens when Lo Jik walks over to her, prompting her to reply with a coy smirk. "Indeed, Lord Lo Jik. Young Master loves these."

She would be afraid to mention Fang Zheng ordinarily. However, she soon realized that Lo Jik is more receptive to teasing remarks, often having witty replies in store. As expected, Lo Jik picks the thumb-sized green strawberry before eating it.

"No wonder," he hums, teasing, "Fang Zheng and I have too similar tastes." He doesn't forget to glance at the girl, making her slightly flush. He gazes at her hair with a fond expression while whispering, "Follow me. We need to talk."

Shen Cui hesitates briefly. However, Lo Jik doesn't go far and waits by a small cottage's wall. The spot is discreet enough for private conversation and public enough to not give others any ideas.

As she isolates herself with Lo Jik, she hears him snicker and plant a firm hand on the wall by her side. Her heart almost leaps out of her throat when he leans down. "I heard Fang Zheng got injured."

"Y-Yes," she replies meekly, no longer teasing the unabashed youth.

"Hmm." Lo Jik whispers, "Good."

Her eyes widen as Lo Jik raises his brow, crookedly smirking, "Did you think I gave up my White Boar Gu for Fang Zheng? No. I want him to go outside. I want him to get injured. I want him to cultivate and ignore you." Lo Jik times his words, feeling others approach as he lets his other hand wander down.

"Let go of her!"

Shen Cui doesn't hear those thundering words when Lo Jik stares into her soul, whispering, "I want you, Cui."

He smirks at the dazed girl while leaning back, turning to face the scowling Fang Zheng.

It crowds around them as Lo Jik bites the summer strawberry he snuck from Shen Cui's basket. "Ah," he smirks. "Batchmate Fang? How are your injuries?"

Shen Cui snaps out of her daze, lowering her head. She feels lucky that Lo Jik's broad back covers her, allowing her to school her expression.

“Bastard! Let go of my Cui’er!” Fang Zheng snarls as Lo Jik shrugs, stepping aside. Shen Cui looks pale and glances at Fang Zheng pleadingly. Her expressive eyes portray a young girl’s desperate heart.

Tears build in her eyes as she acts her ass off!

“Young Master,” her voice quakes with sorrow.

Fang Zheng’s body shudders as Lo Jik shrugs. “Why are you crying? I only took a few Strawberries.”

“I...” Fang Zheng seethes with a pale face. His eyes burning with hate as he cannot imagine what Lo Jik would commit if he was a few moments late!

“I will kill you!” Fang Zheng snarls. His body only moves a step when Qing Shu calmly puts a hand on Fang Zheng’s shoulder.

“Everyone,” Qing Shu glances at the crowd, demonstrating an Elder’s might. “Leave us,” he commands. “You, too.”

He looks at Chi Hua.

The woman chews her lips in frustration.

“See? Elder Qing is the reasonable one,” Lo Jik snickers as he tosses one of the strawberries to Qing Shu. “Please taste it, Elder Qing. These strawberries are sour. But they leave men like me wanting more.”

Shen Cui’s lips tremble. Even if she can school her expression, she cannot help but notice the difference between the bold Lo Jik and ‘*chained*’ Fang Zheng.

Qing Shu catches the strawberry, biting it and nodding.

“Indeed, this is delicious. I won’t beat around the bush, Lo Jik. Although I admire your tenacity to endure public pressure and cultivate, I cannot let you commit such acts.”

“What acts?” Lo Jik cocks his head sideways.

“Bastard! Elder Brother, he is still acting the fool!” Fang Zheng grits his teeth.

“Ah!” Lo Jik blinks. “You mean Shen Cui?” He glances at the girl. “Is it wrong for a Gu Master to like others? Don’t worry, Batchmate Fang. I can wait.”

“What?” Fang Zheng frowns while Qing Shu narrows his eyes.

“Well,” Lo Jik leaves Shen Cui’s side while rubbing the back of his head. “You can only marry one person. Only Elders are allowed to maintain two concubines. Once you marry someone, I’ll gladly take Shen Cui’s off your hands. See? Aren’t I reasonable?”

Lo Jik pats Fang Zheng’s shoulder in a friendly manner.

*\*Bang\**

A fierce right hook smashes into Lo Jik’s face as Shen Cui covers her eyes, screaming.

Fang Zheng stares at his bloodied fist. His skin will naturally tear apart when hitting with all his might since he assimilated a Boar’s strength!

Lo Jik slowly sits up, touching his bleeding, tilted nose with a frown as sharp pain floods his senses. He allows himself to grin as blood flows into his mouth, staining his teeth.

“Did I hit a nerve?” Lo Jik snickers. “Do you think I care, Fang Zheng?”

Qing Shu stops Fang Zheng from attacking Lo Jik as Shen Cui’s heart aches at Lo Jik’s injury.

“You think you’re righteous, but I’m the one being honest! Hehe! Want to hit me? Go on! I’m right! I’m already a middle-stage Gu Master. I may not compare to you in talent, but I WILL have your arm the next time you raise your fist. Or did you forget our match?”

Fang Zheng clenches his bloodied fist!

“Let’s go, Cui,” Fang Zheng slowly reaches for Shen Cui, who trembles at the sight of his bleeding fist. Fang Zheng’s heart aches at the sight.

“I’ll be waiting, Shen Cui,” Lo Jik stands as he presses a cloth against his nose.

“She’s never coming here again!” Fang Zheng snaps, leaving with his lover. Qing Shu observes how Lo Jik’s expression turns calm the second Fang Zheng exits.

“Sigh,” he heaves loudly. “This is getting ridiculous, Lo Jik.”

“Heh,” Lo Jik snickers. “Do you think injuries give him the right to respite, Elder Qing? No. Fang Zheng alone cannot use these excuses to rest! There’s already another

A-grade talent in the village. I didn't sacrifice my White Boar Gu to see him get overtaken by a newbie punk!"

"You cannot target Fang Zheng's lover," Qing Shu states decisively. "I admire your passion. You are helping Junior Brother in ways I and the Clan Leader cannot. However, it's overstepping the boundary!"

Lo Jik contemplates before nodding.

"I understand. I will find other ways."

"Or you can focus on your cultivation. Your cultivation and grit are worthy of praise! Channel it and become productive," Qing Shu advises as Lo Jik nods, quietly leaving the area.

'My work is already done. This should be the final nail in the coffin. That Chi Hua wanted to replace Shen Cui. However, I used that big-titted bimbo to solidify Shen Cui's position in Fang Zheng's heart. I hope he's still as emotional when he advances to Rank 3 and marries Shen Cui. It will take months for the situation to ease so I can temporarily forget about Shen Cui.'

He's done everything he can. His words express how he will try to take Shen Cui's hand as long as she is unmarried, leaving Fang Zheng with two choices—Killing Lo Jik or Marrying Shen Cui!

Fang Zheng's cultivation speed is startling. He will have to focus on that to become an elder. Conversely, that will leave Shen Cui lonely.

Words spread in the village.

Fierce rivalry for love!

Lo Jik and Fang Zheng fight for a mortal woman?

Such news shocked several Gu Masters!

Shen Cui dared not leave her house, hiding her red clips for good. Yet, she could never throw them away. His crazed words resound in her mind.

'He did all that for me. He's a crazy, lying, and deceitful man! But he will even face famous Elders like Qing Shu... for me.'



“Haah!”

It’s been a few days since Lo Jik’s encounter with Fang Zheng, and his nose is already healed.

“Welcome, Yan,” Lo Jik beams. “I missed you.”

She slowly presses her lips before smiling, “Then why didn’t you visit me in the External Affairs Hall?”

“Heh,” Lo Jik strokes her bangs. “You’re setting a bad example, Elder Yan. You want your junior to distract himself from his cultivation?”

“Oh?” Mo Yan regains her frosty demanour. “Distractions like Shen Cui?”

Lo Jik’s smile instead brightens.

“Would others even imagine we’re together if I have rumors about another woman?”

She softly knocks his chest, scoffing, “Ah! My hero!” she swoons sarcastically. “I should thank you for publicly seducing another woman. Of course!”

Lo Jik sighs before taking her hands. He meets her eyes and fondly states, “I missed you, Mo Yan.” He kisses her hands, making the chiding woman blush as she snorts and glances away, grumbling, “You naughty sweet talker.”

“Those earrings look good, too,” Lo Jik whispers as Mo Yan’s blush deepens. She purposely looked sideways to show them off.

“Hmph,” pouting, Mo Yan looks at him indignantly. She quickly pulls him in a tight embrace as her slender body relaxes. “I missed you, too. Stupid. Why do you like saying these embarrassing things?”

“Because I also love doing even more dirty things,” Lo Jik snickers, stroking her head. However, what kind of man tries having sex the second an exhausted lady walks in? He leads her into his room, offering her tea, and asks about her past days.

“Sigh,” Mo Yan shakes her head. “I was unlucky this time, and it took me four tries to refine the Rank 2 Swift Shadow Gu. It was my primary movement-type Gu Worm, but Mo Bei has it now. I remember how it took me two tries to refine it before. Swift Shadow with the Rank 3 Shadow Concealment allowed me to avoid anyone following me.”



Rank 3 Shadow Concealment Gu is what Mo Yan chose as her free Rank 3 Gu. It allows concealment in dark regions, a notch less precious than the Concealment Mane Gu.

Ever since she exposed her secret lover, she's been under constant surveillance. Her Grandfather might have kicked her out had she been a Rank 2 Gu Master. However, he doesn't dare poke her the wrong way, fearing worse internal conflicts within the family that might allow the Chi Faction to earn benefits from the sidelines.

"The cheek of Mo Chen to ask me to seduce that Zie Qi," Mo Yan scowls, glowering her Grandfather's name. "If he likes that boy so much, he should go fuck him— ah!" She blinks before blushing. Glancing at an amused Lo Jik, she lowers her head further.

"You don't want to hear my problems," She shakes her head as Lo Jik snickers. "I do. You're bearing the brunt for both of us. I will cultivate more and try to reach the Peak Stage quickly. Until then, I understand I'm helpless. Yet, it only makes me appreciate you more, Yan."

Mo Yan's eyes flicker. His acknowledgment makes her tearful as she nods quietly, wiping errand tears away.

"Come here," Lo Jik pulls her inside the blanket. When she believes Lo Jik wants to do it right away, almost disappointed by his impatience, she's wrapped in his arms and curled beside him. She can feel his eager member against her butt cheeks. However, he doesn't make a move. He whispers, "Sorry about that down there. But try and relax. Forget about everything else."

She calms down, closing her eyes. A sweet sensation overflows from her heart as Mo Yan smiles fondly.

"I can't help but feel guilty, Jik," she musters. "I'm not often here. Don't you want some pretty female servants?"

While it's true Gu Masters under Rank 3 cannot have mistresses, they can undeniably house beautiful maids.

"Servants? Hmph," Lo Jik sneers. "I don't need them."

"Oh?" Mo Yan presses her pliant ass against his throbbing member. "Someone must nurse that unreasonable thing when I'm not here. Hmm. I can purchase your favorite Maid from Fang Zheng's family and gift her to you."

Lo Jik grows alert. That's the last thing he wants!

He rolls up, making Mo Yan yelp as he climbs atop her with a playful smirk.

"Shen Cui? Again? I will probably take you on your offer, Yan. I'd love to see you two," he leans down, pecking her lips, "—naked and panting. Do you like that?"

She snorts.

"Me? Nope!"

"Good. Let's forget that Shen Cui. How about this? If I want her, I'll come to you instead of her."

Leave it to the Gu World to twist such relationships as Mo Yan nods with warmth in her eyes.

"Good," she states firmly. She might not express control over Lo Jik, but he knows Mo Yan innately desires control, too. So, he will offer her such control once Shen Cui is ripe for the taking.

"So," Mo Yan clears her throat as she peeks at the tent pitched between his trousers. Lo Jik chuckles, blowing the nearby candles away.

"I was thinking of trying something new, Yan," Lo Jik whispers.

"Oh?" Mo Yan blinks before grinning. "I heard about those things from my former teammates."

She feels his hands massage her breasts.

"I doubt it," Lo Jik whispers. "How about I demonstrate it? Just tell me when it's uncomfortable."

"Nothing you do can make me uncomfortable," she unwaveringly replies.

<<<>>>

'Damn. Footjob is a tough one in this world, too,' Lo Jik sighs.

Lo Jik was observant last night and had regular sex after a thigh job. He wanted to clear out the slightly more unorthodox ones quicker, using his desire to experiment as an

excuse. Foot job and thigh jobs can be troublesome. Meanwhile, boob job and butt job depends on his partner's physical build. Mo Yan is capable of performing both!

Blowjobs and handjobs are the easiest.

Lo Jik knows from experience there is even weirder stuff like humping against navels, ears, nose! However, those experiences prevent Lo Jik from being anywhere near the women interested in those acts!

***[Between Fleshy Towers (Silver): Experienced an entire sexual act between Mo Yan's thighs till orgasm. Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

***[A Taboo Makeout (Bronze/Repeatable): Made out with Mo Yan. Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

***[Scouting Booty Call (Bronze/Repeatable): Had Penetrative Sex With Mo Yan, Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

Lo Jik quietly counts his lucky stars. It's good he managed to postpone the majority of achievements till Rank 2, or else he would be playing with several Green Relic Gu.

'But it also means my growth will stall once I advance to Rank 3,' Lo Jik sighs. Their Clan Leader doesn't have any daughter or wife—a pity. However, he has few traveling records. Lo Jik can leave Gu Yue Clan after solidifying his combat strength and seeking stronger women in terms of status. Since it's dangerous, he may even try influencing Mo Yan to leave with him.

Although it's a distant worry, Lo Jik can only start preparing early.

'Heh, it also means there will be a day where I won't get rewards from anyone?'

He never considered this because his previous world's social system was more complicated.

However, only Gu Cultivation matters here!

The day he is close to the peak is when his Trait's assistance falls.

Clearing his head, Lo Jik summons his rewards under his blanket.

Luck isn't on his side since the first reward turns out to be another precious material

rarely found in the Bamboo Groves near the peak—the Tungsten Bamboo Section. It's an arm-long dark-green bamboo-section with a Tungsten's toughness. It can be sold for 1900-2200 Stones depending on market conditions.

He continues and lets the light flash. A slightly familiar Gu sits atop his lap. It's a grey, fossilized carp with realistic scales.

'Rank 2 Stealth Scales Gu,' Lo Jik is tongue-tied. The Rank 3 Concealment Mane Gu can wrap the Gu Master's body with concealing fur, hiding them from naked eyes AND boosting their defenses. He tried refining the Gu twice, failing both times. He lost the Concealing Fur Gu, too.

Who doesn't want to be invisible when dealing with Lightning Wolves?

It tackles their best sensory organ! Of course, things will be different if the wolf kings possess Lightning Pupils Gu.

The Rank 2 Stealth Scales achieve one portion of Concealment Gu's effect—Stealth. This Gu can conceal the user and their clothes. Using this Gu while in direct contact with someone else can spread its use. However, it drastically raises the Primeval Essence consumption.

It's rare because its Rank 1 component, Stealth Rock Gu, is troublesome to identify and obtain!

'I should be ready to enter the wilds again,' Lo Jik heaves. It's been months since he left the village.

He calms down and summons the final reward.

The familiar shape of it makes Lo Jik smirk.

Such a reward is acceptable to the current him!

<<<>>>

"Senior Brother, this—" Fang Zheng stares at the black ladybug in Qing Shu's hand as the Green-haired man smiles warmly. "Using these Beast Strength Gu is disruptive to my combat. However, you are different. You already possess a White Boar's strength. You should continue and attain the Black Boar's strength, too."

Fang Zheng slowly accepts the Gu from Qing Shu.

“Don’t hesitate, Junior Brother,” Qing Shu encourages. “Clan Leader would never let me lend it to you if you weren’t focused on cultivation and completing missions. Your record is almost caught up to a few famous veteran Gu Masters. Others in the team also accept your role as their leader because of your sensible nature. You deserve this.”

“This is the Gu Elder Brother purchased from the caravan, right?” Fang Zheng questions softly as Qing Shu sighs. He hoped to avoid the topic altogether.

“Fang Yuan sold it to me for a wolf enslavement Gu and a Fish Scale Gu.”

A mocking smile appears on Fang Zheng’s face.

“So, I boast a White Boar’s strength due to a man who dared touch my Cui. Now I get a Black Boar’s strength due to a man who made Cui cry and publicly slapped me.”

“Fang Zheng,” Qing Shu firmly pats his shoulder. “A man is defined by how he deals with his problem. I look after you because I’ve come to consider you my Brother. I advise you to not focus on those things. However,” the green-haired man’s expression turns stern. “Every man makes a choice on how to lead their lives. You are an adult. I can’t guide you forever. Just know this—I will stand by your decisions.”

Fang Zheng grits his teeth as his eyes redden. He’s been feeling stressed for several days. Completing missions and cultivating without rest is bound to string him up. He snapped at Shen Cui many times, blaming her for the mess. Why couldn’t she just sit at home? Why did she have to attract Lo Jik? Why doesn’t she brighten like she used to when seeing him?

Doubt and frustration clouded his mind, forcing him to focus on straightforward cultivation. Qing Shu’s words and trust are like a ray of sunlight piercing these clouds, letting Fang Zheng see through the mist of confusion.

“Thank you, Senior Brother,” he nods with a heavy heart.

“Good!” Qing Shu smiles. “Clan Leader is kind to us. However, we must walk our paths. Wasn’t I like you? Despite becoming an Elder, I strive to protect the Village. That’s my desire. Even if you have duties to the Clan, you must also pursue your desires.”

<<<>>>

Fang Yuan stares at the grey, fossilized carp on his lap.

'I successfully refined this Gu in my current life, too,' he smiles. 'My preparations for Zie Qi are almost complete. I also sold the Black Boar Gu for an additional Wolf Enslavement Gu instead of a Bear Enslavement Gu like last time. I don't want to attract that crazy bitch again. The most important thing is to gather 50000 Primeval Stones. All of it depends on me reaching Rank 3 again. My next objective is to get that Bitter Shell to refine Rank 2 Four Flavors Liquor Worm. That Rank 5 Gu will take months to arrive. I can't depend on chances.'

'I must fish it myself.'

'Fang Zheng is not the same. He's probably sleep-deprived with how fast his cultivation is. It seems like Lo Jik surviving in the current timeline and preying on Shen Cui affected Fang Zheng the most.'

He realizes how his speed of cultivation lags.

<<<>>>

Time waits for no man. Spring breeze makes way for comforting summer as days fly by. Qing Mao Mountain is experiencing a slight shift as the Gu Yue Clan faced another small beast tide in these few months.

Lo Jik didn't suffer too much this time. He did encounter a medium wolf pack with 80 beasts chasing him. However, he used kiting tactics through the Stealth Scales Gu to deal with the pack. As time passes, his worries start increasing. The food for White Jade Gu will soon run out. Using the caravan to relieve that pressure was only a temporary measure.

Not only that, Lo Jik also had a few more meetings with Mo Yan. As she got comfortable around him, not all sessions led to more than one achievement since Battle Elders were the busiest during the Beast Tide.

He earned six bronze-tier achievements and—

***[Take a Hint (Silver): Experienced an Orgasm Through Mo Yan's Hands. Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

Dark Red Primeval Essence from his second aperture nourishes the first one. He received another Red Steel Relic Gu after a thigh job, allowing him to advance to peak stage Rank 2 cultivation. Lo Jik stops nurturing the water wall, feeling incredibly close to another breakthrough.

He's started exploring the wilds again. Needless to say, he's prudent with his acts in the forest, always alert! It reduced others' attention on him. After all, there is another man as bright as the summer sun in the clan—Fang Zheng!

'Strength of two boars and an outstanding record. He also possesses a Rank 2 Moon Raiment, capable of defending a wide area, and a Rank 2 Moon Scar Gu for long-range methods. He also must have one trump card given Qing Shu's and Gu Yue Bo's support.'

Since exchanging Fang Zheng with Zie Qi might be more damaging, Gu Yue Bo went all in to nurture Fang Zheng. The youth did not disappoint such trust as he grew by leaps and bounds, earning massive contributions in the recent Beast Tide. He is already one step away from reaching the Peak Stage. Such speed is frightening! Only a rare few individuals can reach Rank 3 in three years. Even Bai's clan talent took three years to achieve Rank 3.

However, nurturing the Crystal Wall to its limits and further breaking it is complicated. Mo Yan barely slept a few hours in days to cultivate like a woman possessed! She also had deep foundations. Meanwhile, Fang Zheng is doing all that while completing missions.

If someone sees Fang Zheng now, they will see a hardened man and his piercing black eyes. His body is not as thin as before, and some rumors state that Fang Zheng beat a Wolf King to death! He also contributed the looted Gu Worm to the Clan since they weren't useable, revealing his righteous character! Others cannot help but compare Fang Zheng with his twin brother and the scoundrel who tried stealing Fang Zheng's lover!

Fang Yuan's and Lo Jik's meager achievements became a stepping stone for Fang Zheng.

Other Gu Masters will point at Lo Jik and speak behind his back. However, Lo Jik's skin is thicker than their fathers' pencil cocks as he moves around shamelessly, consuming the fruits he likes and completing missions if he feels like it. Others can notice how Lo Jik will often accept high-paying, dangerous missions.

Elders like Qing Shu and Chi Shan noticed his success rate, quietly informing their superiors. It allowed other Elders to possess a more detailed understanding of Lo Jik's strengths.

How can they forget his combat prowess? He and Fang Yuan's battle during the graduation competition is still entrenched in their minds. Lo Jik's undermined success rate was merely another reminder of his depths.

If possible, Lo Jik didn't want to complete some missions. However, he needed to feed his Gu.

He didn't get any new Gu from his trait. The Gu he needs to feed is something of his creation.

He's on a streak for earning materials. Lo Jik sold a few of these with the cover of Adventuring in the Wilds. This alleviated some financial tension for him in the public's eye. His net disposable income has fallen sharply to 1098 Primeval Stones—

"You truly went all-out for this material, huh?" The Shopkeeper in the Internal Affairs Hall glances at Lo Jik's ragged appearance. "I will purchase this Azure Moon Crystal for 1400."

Lo Jik snorts and quietly takes the glimmering piece of azure crystal away.

"Wait! Wait! Hmph! Fine! 1480!"

Lo Jik sighs and smiles, "Are you offering your wife or daughter for the other 570 Primeval Stones?"

The aged Initial Stage Rank 2 Gu Master gapes. Fury flashes in his eyes when Lo Jik returns the favor by narrowing his eyes and leaning forward. "Do you want me to visit them now? You can fight me with a written challenge. It'll be easier than escaping with this crystal from a damn Boar King!"

The shopkeeper's anger fizzles away as he doesn't dare meet Lo Jik's gaze.

"Fine," he mutters meekly.

"Also, add another uniform for me," Lo Jik scoffs.

—3148 Primeval Stones.

He quietly returns to his grove under others' mocking stares. Lo Jik's pathetic appearance contrasts with Fang Zheng's heroic appearance whenever he returns from the missions. So, Lo Jik can't help but feel happy!

'Hahaha! My skills in faking my appearance are getting better~!'

Lo Jik quietly closes his door before straightening his back and entering his bedroom. He glances at a potted plant with five tender shoots sprouting from the dark-black soil. Four



nail-sized leaves grow from these shoots.

'It's the final step already. It's already been months since I started refining this Gu.'

Lo Jik undoes his bloodied pouch, carefully retrieving an eyeball. Only Heaven knows how many times he threw up during the early stages when he wasn't accustomed to the process. He sighs and gently pinches the eyeball between his thumb and index, slathering the disgusting goo on the moist black soil. He continues retrieving more and more eyeballs from his leather pouch.

These eyeballs are the reason he leaves the village for missions. He cannot keep purchasing Eyeballs of Beast Kings since it's unsustainable. And Lo Jik shouldn't have the assets to make such purchases consistently. Instead, he farms these eyeballs, digging them out of the eyes of his targets before utterly ruining the corpses to hide his intentions.

He stops after his tenth eyeball.

'Fertilize with ten eyeballs every week and await the results,' Lo Jik sighs.

He plops down on his bed after a bath and sleeps quietly. He wants to be at his best for tomorrow. He started refining the Gu in March, and it's already the start of July! However, the Gu Worm is worth every second of patience.

Lo Jik wakes early in the morning. He returns to the potted plant only after salting his teeth and meditating for half an hour to calm his nerves.

The Gu he is refining is artificial. The most relatable example of such a Gu is Rank 1 Moonlight Gu. Moonlight Gu is Gu Yue Clan's foundation since several core recipes involve this Gu. Since it's not born in nature, Gu Yue Clan's experts combine various materials to *'create'* the Gu. It's similar to burying a seed, fertilizing the soil, and letting the plant grow before harvesting it.

Although this Gu starts from Rank 1, Lo Jik skipped it and decided to refine the Rank 2 variant from the recipe book.

He licks his dry lips and slowly digs out one of the tender shoots. Once pulled out, Lo Jik can see this shoot sprouting from a bulbous white *'fruit.'* Breathing deeply, Lo Jik gently tugs the plant out. It separates with a *'tuc'* sound before drying rapidly and turning into ashes under Lo Jik's gaze.

Not letting the ashes touch other sprouts, Lo Jik carefully transfers them into a glass jar.

With that done, he starts peeling the fruit's skin. It's thin and milky-white with a silk-like texture. After peeling seven layers, Lo Jik stops.

*\*Squelch\**

The white fruit suddenly compresses and turns into a jelly-like goo.

Sighing deeply, Lo Jik uses the Moonglow Gu to destroy the filth into shreds!

He pulls out one of the remaining four sprouts before performing the same thing.

1...

2...

4...

5...

*\*Squelch\**

The fruit compresses before the sixth layer.

Lo Jik thins his lips. He only had materials worth five tries—five plants.

He digs out the third plant.

1...

2...

3...

6...

8...

*\*Squelch\**

'Motherfucker!' Lo Jik chews his lips in frustration.

Lo Jik stares at the remaining two plants, sighing.

He randomly picks one, knowing the success rate of this Gu's creation is too small. However, he knows that once he has this Gu, advancing it will be a piece of cake.

Still, it's hard to maintain his indifference. He wants this refinement to succeed.

Shaking his head and clearing his thoughts, Lo Jik starts peeling the fourth fruit.

1...

3...

4...

6...

He holds his breath.

7...

8...

He forcibly keeps his hands from shaking.

It didn't burst apart.

'Remove the nine layers, peel the nine heavens; One Eye sees them all.'

He carefully peels the last sticky layer. He gazes upon an eyeball possessing multi-colored irides staring at him.

Rank 2 Heaven Piercing Eye!

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**Alternate Title:** Eager Mo Yan; Lo Jik Passing Dem Towers; Foot Job is an Obstacle He Must Fuck!; Silver Achievements; A Timeskip!; Mo Yan Regaining Her Means; Sneaking Out; Offering Control; Shen Cui Doesn't Know It, But She's Fucked; Stealth Scales Gu; Materials; Pretense; Fang Zheng Supported By His Pragmatic Psychopathic Twin and a



Gu Yue Bo shakes his head.

“Did you forget? A Rank 5 Blood River Python attacked the village when the First Gen Gu Yue Leader set our roots. He killed one of the fiercest Rank 5 Gu Worms. This Toad is almost cute compared to that Python. No, we won’t request assistance yet. It’s too soon for that.”

The Clan Leader placates several elders by continuing, “Actually, the previous Clan Leader spoke of this Gu. Rank 5 River Swallowing Toad is gentle and peaceful. It consumes the river and spits out the aquatic creatures, unwilling to harm a single soul. This Gu will move on as long as we push and wake it up.”

“So it’s like this.”

“Let’s do as the Clan Leader suggests!”

“We have several Strength-Raising Gu. Let’s use them.”

“No,” Gu Yue Bo notes sharply. “A Gu’s aura might agitate River Swallowing Toad. We must use brute force to awaken it! Besides, I have never seen a River Swallowing Toad before, and I only know these things from the previous Leader. The consequences of things going awry will be disastrous.”

“Let me test things, Lord Clan Leader,” Gu Yue Chi Shan offers solemnly. He is a man of few words, allowing others to realize that Chi Shan is not speaking to kiss anyone’s ass but sincerely volunteering. The red-haired, perpetually half-naked Gu Master continues.

“I was born with divine might. I’m willing to undertake this task.”

Chi Lian frowns. He would also vote for Chi Shan had he been a Rank 2 Gu Master. However, a Rank 3 Gu Master’s life is too valuable to test the waters. Knowing this, Gu Yue Bo shakes his head again.

Gu Yue Yao Ji conveniently allows an alternative. She glances at Qing Shu, smiling gently, “Didn’t you purchase the two Boar Strength Gu, Elder Qing? There are already Rank 2 Gu Masters with similar strengths willing to volunteer for the clan.”

Qing Shu nods slightly.

“Oh? I heard about this matter. But I don’t know the details.”

“Hmph, it’s those two rascals,” one of the Mission Hall Elders snorts. “Gu Yue Fang

Yuan and Gu Yue Lo Jik. Both rarely do any work and spend their time fooling around. Gu Yue Fang Yuan's team died in the first Beast Tide, and he refused to take any more teammates. Meanwhile, Lo Jik was uncooperative and was removed from his team. He's refused to enter other teams since then."

'Didn't they remove him because he offered the Boar Gu to the Clan Leader? How did the Clan reward him?' Mo Yan snorts internally. 'These slandering cunts!'

Slightly vicious, Mo Yan pretends to smile sincerely. "Then don't we already have a better option?"

Mo Chen frowns at his Granddaughter's words.

"Those two scoundrels you speak of may do something wrong and doom us all," Mo Yan snorts. "Besides, they possessed a White Boar Strength Gu and Black Boar Strength Gu. However, there is a Gu Master in our clan who has the strength of both these Gu! Not only that, this Gu Master's record is top-notch."

Gu Yue Bo thins his lips with displeasure as Mo Chen silently fumes!

'You unfilial Granddaughter! Would your teeth rot if you shut up? Stop talking now!' Yet he dared not publicly rebuke Mo Yan, fearing a fiercer retaliation since he understands her dissatisfaction.

Even Gu Yue Yao Ji feels pressured. It was her initial idea to use Fang Yuan. She wanted to purchase his Liquor Worm, and he rejected her. He also has the Nine Leaf Vitality Grass Gu, something her faction desires greatly.

Qing Shu sighs. Didn't he know Fang Zheng had the strength of two Boars? Why did he keep quiet? Because naming one of the trio will inadvertently put focus on Fang Zheng due to his brilliant records.

"Good suggestion, Elder Yao," The Clan Leader nods, making the aged woman crease her forehead. "Gu Yue Fang Zheng is a determined Gu Master of our noble clan. Call upon him. He must set off immediately!"

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'I was still searching for Bitter Wine at this time,' Fang Yuan sighs, drinking in a tavern. 'However, I already have a Four Flavors Liquor Worm once I fished out those Bitter Clams. It's just like before. Fear spreads like an infection. Everyone in the village fears the Rank 5 Gu. But the River Swallowing Toad is not only gentle. It's cowardly, too. It

flees whenever facing a predator, only attacking if cornered.'

'Chi Shan tested things before. In this life, Chi Shan is already an Elder. Gu Yue Bo won't risk his life. So, he will have three options—me, Fang Zheng, or Lo Jik. However, Gu Yue Bo won't be able to publicly acknowledge that Fang Zheng's life matters more than mine's and Lo Jik's. He must pick Fang Zheng for efficiency's sake. The truth is, I have two Boar's strengths, too. I still wasn't able to budge the Rank 5 Gu.'

Fang Yuan sips his wine.

He inadvertently thinks of the other talent.

'Time still isn't ripe. Two Rank 2 Gu Masters follow Zie Qi without his knowledge. If I strike now, I will have to face them. It will leave clues. I would ordinarily opt to kill those guards, but the Divine Investigator is not someone I should underestimate. I must not make the same mistakes as before.'

Fang Yuan's expression cannot help but darken at the recollection of Divine Investigator.

'Righteousness and Demonic—Truly, only strength matters the most!'

<<<>>>

Lo Jik spreads a tarp atop his mattress before sitting on it.

'I'm really going to do it,' he gulps. Lo Jik doesn't believe a man *'changes.'* He presumes different situations extract different aspects of a man already present within. For instance, he never blamed Cao when he killed her. No. He understood he always had it inside of him. Another good example is his fertilizing the Eye Gu. He vomited the first few days, but now he barely blinks.

Is it adaption or extraction of one's worth?

Both can be right. Lo Jik only assumes the latter because it helps him navigate his morality.

If he did something—if he feels something—*it's part of him.* It's what he is! Such is a mentality born from Lo Jik's inherent dislike for internal confusion.

He struggled with the consequences of breaking families. He saw those tears. He betrayed plenty of women for thrill and sport. Eventually, he stopped feeling a thing for such a struggle.

He did it. He broke their hearts. And he cannot regret it.

'People call such cases of individualism and mental issues as Demonic Path,' Lo Jik sneers. He doesn't consider himself a '*demon*.' He is a lewd threat to society at best. He doesn't like needless bloodshed or massacring others for enjoyment.

Demon...

The word resounds within Lo Jik.

'If I do it, I'll be a step closer to that path. Because I will consequently bring about something new within myself.' Lo Jik gazes at the eyeball in his hand. This Gu's refinement isn't its strictest test.

He considers his options before realizing he WILL use this Gu. He would be foolish not to. Such a heaven-defying Gu can save his life countless times.

Not dallying further, Lo Jik positions the eyeball with the kaleidoscopic irides looking away from him. Lo Jik infuses his essence into the Gu. Dark Red mist streams out, making the strange eyeball squirm between his thumb and index.

The Eyeball suddenly reveals a '*mouth*' from the portion on the other side of the irides.

Sharp, jagged teeth surround the mouth as soft-pink tentacles slowly roll out from its space, flailing around midair. Lo Jik grits his jaw, bringing the devilish eyeball upon his left eye.

*\*Chhkk\**

The eyeball suddenly chews and tears Lo Jik's left eyelid off with astonishing force, pouncing onto his exposed eyeball! His other eye widens in pain as he lets go of the eyeball, letting it bite into his left eye and consume the gooey treat. He unconsciously tears up. Blood mixes with his tears, sliding down his left cheek.

He bites on his hand until it bleeds, not letting out a single squeak. His body shudders as he feels the '*munching*' sound inside his head, drumming into his ears.

This is the price of using Heaven Piercing Eye Gu—Eye for an Eye.

One must replace an Eye with the Gu. This is also a weakness. Lo Jik cannot casually remove the Gu from his face and must protect the left eye! However, the worst has yet to



come.

Once the Eyeball fits snugly, the thin, flailing tentacles drill into his skin! His body trembles and his vision swims with sheer pain as thick *noodle-like* tendrils squirm and bulge against the skin of his temples, connecting with his brain and optic nerves as Lo Jik resists with everything he has!

He can endure this!

He has it in him to do so!

How will he ever use better Gu worms with more painful consequences if he cannot endure this?

Lo Jik slowly lets go of his hand and forcefully closes his mouth.

He closes his right eye and schools his expression the second pain starts receding. He is injured. Lo Jik's left eyelid is torn away!

Gathering his focus, Lo Jik barely summons the Solar Spider.

A golden light shoots out of his body before settling on his face and turning into a six-legged fuzzy spider. Indifferent to the creepy sensation of a spider on his face, Lo Jik wills it to heal his eyelid.

The Spider suddenly turns around before unceremoniously spraying its shimmering Golden Web atop his left eye. Lo Jik senses a loss of 2% Peak Stage essence. The Spider moves down his body and layers its web on his hand.

A warm current of energy courses through the two spots as the silky spider slowly hardens. Once fully solid, losing its healing properties, Lo Jik easily tears the dry golden patch from his hand and crushes it into fine dust. He then turns to pull it away from his left eye, revealing a perfect eyelid with brown lashes covering his Eye Gu.

'It would have taken me a long time to explain to other Healing Gu Masters if I wanted to use their methods. However, the Solar and Lunar Spiders are worth their price. If others knew the recipe in my hand, their price would effortlessly multiply!'

Lo Jik slowly moves from his mattress, cleaning things up. His head continues to bang inside. After all, he must sleep and let his body adjust to the Eye Gu. However, he wants to try it.

He didn't go through all that for shit and giggles.

Sucking in a breath of cold air, Lo Jik infuses the Gu with his essence.

After connecting with his body, the Eye Gu's irides turned brown. Now, under his intent, they only reveal a Kaleidoscopic glint. Lo Jik's vision changes as he can see through his house. However, it's a weird sensation.

First, the range of this Gu is the same as his eyesight. He can enhance it using Spy Glass Gu or something similar. Second, this Gu changes the way his brain perceives visual information. Right now, Lo Jik's brain maps an overlaid area of a see-through world in a greyscale under the colorful world blocked by different things captured by his right eye.

'It's like I'm in those FPS shooter games where I can map the arena's blueprints. However, this Gu cannot look through the earth.'

He shakes his head, stopping the Gu. He's on the brink of unconsciousness.

As usual, he lets out the Blood Python Gu to guard and wake him up should someone try anything funny. While Lo Jik's will is inside the Gu, it's capable of slight autonomy. The Rank 1 Gu remains one of the more casual/handy Gu.

'Mid/Long-Range with Moonglow, Close-Quarters with a mix of my physique and Black Mane/White Jade Gu, Spider Gu for Healing, Heaven Piercing Eye for Investigation, Earth Hole Gu for Storage, Smell Lock/Stealth Scales for supporting investigation, Blood Rousing Incense/Battle Instinct for combat support, and the Feathered Boots Gu for as a trump card. I cover almost all aspects except Movement Gu. However, Stealth Scales convenience can substitute it for a while. I may also get it from MoYan's rewards. The crucial thing is that I must learn to use these Gu fluidly. Many of these Gu will stay with me even when I reach Rank 3.'

He contently smiles before plopping back, losing consciousness the second his head touches the pillow.

<<<>>>

*\*Jiaaannnggg\**

Lo Jik's eyes snap open as his vision turns dizzy.

What?

What is that croak?

He was too tired, forcefully staying up to clean everything and try the Gu. He can barely recall what happened hours ago.

The Blood Python Gu lies paralyzed on the wooden floor before shifting its weight. Its head suddenly presses into the floor as if wanting to dig past and pierce within the mountain. Lo Jik doesn't notice this strange behavior as he calls the Gu back, nursing his head with a groan.

The pain is slightly better.

Memories resurface as Lo Jik breathes deeply.

'Was that the River Swallowing Toad that washed up three days ago? Is it already awake?'

Lo Jik forces himself to leave his house and make inquiries.

'Oh,' Lo Jik sighs, drinking wine in a tavern. 'They sent Fang Zheng to push it. However, he failed, and mortals in the nearby hamlet fled to Gu Yue's outskirts to plead for mercy and allow them to enter the Gu Yue Village. Intended to continue, the Clan Leader sent Fang Yuan to give it a shot. It was a sensible choice. Fang Zheng hates my guts and may use a Gu in my presence, alerting the Rank 5 Toad. That croak before means the Rank 5 Gu is awake. The fact our village isn't drowned is that the twins succeeded.'

He shakes his head.

'I'm still sleepy.' Lo Jik pays for the wine and returns to his house, employing the Rank 1 Gu again.

Blood Python does not act strange this time and hides itself, instinctively protecting its host from enemies.

<<<<>>>

*\*Awoooo\**

*\*Whine\**

*\*Grrrrr\**

Lo Jik's body moves fluidly without using Battle Instinct Gu as he slams his worn dagger into a wolf's head, *'breaking'* it. His dagger has grown dull and is like a slab of metal that he stabs into the enemies with the strength of two bears.

He temporarily lets go of the handle, flicking his wrist and cutting four wolf heads with an accurate moonblade. Warm blood spatters on his face as he quietly stares at the remaining wolves.

These wolves were injured before they met him. The early Beast Tides involve crippled wolves driven out from their lairs by the healthier kind. However, these surviving wolves are cunning and cannot be underestimated!

As expected, the last seven wolves give up, quickly escaping with pitiful yelps.

Lo Jik snorts quietly, retrieving his dagger and sheathing it against his waist. His eyes quietly reveal a kaleidoscopic glint as he sweeps the area with his gaze before crouching and using a new dagger to gently scoop out the wolf's eye. He brings the slimy eyeball to his left eye.

His *'eyeball'* suddenly opens a round mouth filled with jagged teeth around its rims. Thin tentacles fly out, clutching the eye and dragging it *'into'* Lo Jik's eyeball, consuming it without leaking any goo.

He sighs, not feeding the Gu anymore and instead collecting items worth selling.

'It's only been a few days, but I can understand how to be more efficient.'

Lo Jik can maximize his left eye's benefit by using a Smoke Ball Gu to restrict the enemy's sight. Rank 2 Smoke Ball Gu creates consumable Rank 1 Smoke Bomb Gu. It's used to hide immediate tracks but isn't used against the wolves due to how the smoke clouds the beasts from long-range Gu Masters, and it also places closed-range Gu Masters at immediate risk. Besides, the wolves can run out of the small range.

Ordinary Gu Masters won't spend several smoke bombs restricting a mid-sized pack.

However, it's a good match for Lo Jik.

Can he take it?

Fuck no!

He has too many Gu and refuses to sacrifice what he has for Smoke Ball Gu. The Gu he

will consider nurturing are the ones earned from his Trait.

Currently, Lo Jik is testing his efficiency.

'I can hand wolf packs with 20 crippled wolves. I had to use traps last time,' he shakes his head. 'I should be able to handle 50-60 crippled wolves if I play it smart. However, Moonglow Gu is insufficient against a Wolf King with a Gu. A Gu Master must ascertain the Gu on a Wolf King before deciding if the battle is worth undertaking. Moonglow's attack power is acceptable, but its range isn't.'

He continues assessing the situation as he hurriedly extracts the items and leaves before more wolves arrive.

'This result is without the Battle Instinct's use. If I add Blood Rousing Incense, the controlled adrenaline rush under the Battle Instinct should raise my combat potential by twice. If I ignore the essence consumption and use White Jade Gu or Stealth Scales Gu in the mix...'

He suspects he should be able to deal with a Beast King.

A Beast King usually requires 4-5 Rank 2 Gu Masters, each controlling one aspect. However, Lo Jik is training to refine his control and produce similar results.

He returns to the clan, barely attracting any attention. People are talking about Fang Yuan these days. He did what Fang Zheng, with the strength of two boars, could not! He saved the village from the Rank 5 River Swallowing Toad.

Naturally, Fang Zheng acted as if someone fucked him with a 19-inch monster cock.

Lo Jik?

He is peaceful.

He experiences a rare respite where the forest doesn't throw its meanest creatures at him. The roof of his cottage doesn't tumble at every fierce gust, and he can cultivate peacefully.

The same cannot be said for Mo Bei.

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**Alternate Title:** River Swallowing Toad; Discussion; A Plan; Wanting to Suppress Two



Chi Cheng and Mo Bei nod with soft smiles. However, they now understand the differences in talent. Fang Zheng is already an Upper Stage Rank 2 Gu Master. Meanwhile, they are left stranded behind. It's partly to chase after the title of the Top Rank 2 Gu Master. They can match Fang Zheng's speed with their resources, but how can they readily forsake social interactions?

They must spread their name and influence for more power!

Yet, even a Gu Master like Fang Zheng realizes that cultivation and Gu are power. Lo Jik made a man out of that boy.

Their get-together eventually ends as Mo Bei and Chi Cheng walk different paths.

The former's muscled, bulky physique cuts through the stream of people. He looks tired, but the brilliance flashing in his gaze after several successful missions is hard to hide.

Mo Yan's Gu set might not be worthy of an elite. But it was customized to the scout's movement, investigation, and communication. Mo Bei learned to use her former Gu, not needing to develop a set himself since he would be a fool not to accept his Grandfather's gift. Since Mo Yan always doted on him, he expected her to embrace the change. Mo Bei didn't plan to take her Gu permanently. He wanted to return them once she apologized to their Grandfather.

That day never came. Mo Yan snapped at Mo Bei and the family, eventually advancing to Rank 3 and becoming an Elder.

That wasn't all.

Mo Bei recalled how Mo Chen wanted Mo Yan to get close to Gu Yue Zie Qi. His stomach churned with disgust, not because his Grandfather was sending his sister away. He knew she must marry someone. However, he had other intentions...

So, Mo Bei couldn't bear the thought of Mo Yan being with another man.

All that changed when Mo Yan emerged from her room a few days later with jade studs pierced in her earlobes.

Mo Bei vomited that night.

How could his sister do that?

When confronted, she only gave him a sidelong glance before mockingly sneering and

leaving. He tried following her. However, Mo Bei used Mo Yan's former Gu. How can she not understand Mo Bei's methods? She continuously slipped past.

It wasn't a one-time thing.

Mo Bei knew he loved his sister too much and would forgive her... if she named the audacious man so that Mo Bei could slaughter him. However, it wasn't a one-time thing.

She's left their estate a few times.

Mo Bei snaps out of his thoughts when he finds a familiar figure leaving the gates under the evening sky.

"Elder Sister," he speaks with a scowl. "Where are you going?"

Mo Yan blinks.

The sibling shares some features. Like Mo Bei, Mo Yan's nose is slightly longer. However, it barely takes anything from her delicate figure. Her Gu uniform wraps around her prominent bust and shapely ass, hiding a trained body that she uses to please her lover with.

'It will be slightly weird, and he didn't persist it. But he did say he was interested in trying to do it with my feet. Maybe we can try that tonight?' Mo Yan notes. She isn't the kind to deny Lo Jik anything. He barely asks for any assistance from her. So, she wants to fulfill any wish he might have.

Mo Yan didn't try it with her feet because... she wanted to train her movements on some similar items first. Now, she has some confidence in pleasing him with her toes.

"Elder Sister!"

"Oh," Mo Yan snaps from her thoughts, drawling, "You're still here? I can go wherever I please."

"Please, Elder Sister," Mo Bei clenches his fists. "Can't you see? You're hurting Grandfather. I miss those days when we laughed together. Please, stop this!"

Mo Yan tilts her head. Mo Bei wonders if she loves him and pretends to hurt him.

"Being the Family's man, eh?" Mo Yan smiles gently. Mo Bei's expression eases when she continues.



“Do you know where I’m going?” Mo Yan leans forward with a husky tone. She stares into his surprised eyes. “A man must know where the family’s women are, right? Grandfather doesn’t pretend to stop me. He knows and accepts it. What about you, Little Brother? Do you want to hear all the sloppy details?”

“Elder Sister!” He snaps.

“Hush,” an index finger on his lips stops him. Mo Yan smiles sweetly. “Don’t you want your Elder Sister to be happy? I’m blissful, Bei. We barely get to meet, but he treats me right. Do you want to hear the positions we do it in? Hmm. Just thinking about it makes me giddy!”

His body shudders.

“It’s nothing like what you did with Cao. My man uses me,” she throatily whispers. “Then he loves me. Now you know where I’m going and what I’ll do—for hours. Hmm. You can try following me. I will let you follow me one of these days. But will you still admire your Elder Sister once you see me covered in someone else’s pale essence? He is always so eager to meet me. Sigh.”

She leans back, straightening her back. Her gaze turns cold as she ruffles Mo Bei’s hair before leaving him.

Meanwhile, Mo Bei doesn’t move from the estate’s entrance for a few minutes. His expression shifts from disgust to anger, anger to helplessness, and helplessness to disgust!

If Lo Jik sees it, he’ll instantly point out—the *Cuck* cycle!

Mo Bei is disgusted by the thought of Mo Yan with another man, making him angry. His anger turns to helplessness once he realizes he can do nothing to Mo Yan even if he becomes an Elder. If Mo Chen cannot openly criticize her, how can the inexperienced Mo Bei? This helplessness makes him imagine all the scenarios Mo Yan put in his head. He feels disgusted again—with himself. After all, he feels something stir within.

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Her oiled feet rub his veiny shaft. Curiosity blazes in Mo Yan’s heart as she steadily becomes less awkward and tries different motions, including pressing her feet against his throbbing cock, making it struggle.

He grunts the final time as Mo Yan smirks and giggles, cupping his tip with her slightly curled feet as hot jets of cum stain her toes, dripping on their mattress.

“Was it that good?” Mo Yan wags her brows, jumping into Lo Jik’s embrace as he huffs, regaining his composure. “It felt good,” he sighs. “But I don’t think I’ll get used to it.”

“It’s fine,” Mo Yan pecks his jaw. “I’m glad we tried it. What next?”

“Next?” Lo Jik his brows in amusement as she scoffs with a blush. “Well,” she mutters. “It’s fascinating to try other stuff.” She inadvertently yawns when she says that, grumbling, “I’m already sleepy...”

He notes the guilt in her voice, prompting him to gently kiss her forehead. “Do you think I blame you, Silly? Let’s sleep. I’m just sad I didn’t get to return the favor.”

She hums with a broad smile, muttering softly, “I can’t let my man owe anyone. I must have you take care of me twice as much the next time.”

“Of course!”

Mo Yan leaves the next day as Lo Jik stares at his rewards.

***[Feet Sandwich (Silver): Experience an Orgasm Through Mo Yan’s Feet. Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

***[A Taboo Makeout (Bronze/Repeatable): Made out with Mo Yan. Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

Lo Jik stares at the rewards.

Rank 2 Red Steel Relic Gu.

And...

A Rank 3 Gu?

Lo Jik keeps the Red Steel Relic Gu, deciding to expose it at the right time to explain his cultivation speed. However, the Rank 3 Gu is something new.

‘It’s injured,’ Lo Jik narrows his eyes. This Gu is like a skull-sized blue jellyfish lying feebly on his lap. Its feelers are thin and almost dry. Meanwhile, a fist-sized hole on its body buzzes with electricity. ‘I didn’t know I could get injured, Rank 3 Gu. It was from a

Bronze-tier reward. What if it was a Silver gift?' Such thoughts appear in his mind.

'Rank 3 Lightning Thoughts Gu,' Lo Jik narrows his eyes. 'Scouts need to have lightning-quick decision-making. This Gu is very valuable. However, it will also take a small fortune to heal it to its full health. Feeding it is also a headache.'

Lo Jik sighs, letting the Gu hanging to its life by a thread into his second aperture.

'There is a way to quickly heal it. The Rank 2 Spider Gu cannot heal Gu Worms. However, it's Rank 3 fusion can. But if I advance it to Rank 3, I will have to consider the cost of using it. After all, Rank 3 Gu displays their optimal might through Rank 3 essence.' He frowns. 'Or I try finding a Rank 2 Plasma Flesh Gu to heal it. Lightning Gu are rare in Qing Mao Mountain. But they are available in large numbers during the Wolf Tide. The clan should have this Gu, but it's not for the public.'

Lo Jik narrows his eyes before snickering.

'It would be an issue if I had no backing. Didn't I work hard? I can ask Mo Yan. Clan Elders have a higher clearance and more resources available. And the last thing I'm afraid of is revealing an injured Rank 3 Gu to Mo Yan.'

He has confidence in the matter. Lo Jik knows he must display some trust to maintain his relationship with Mo Yan. Oh. He can continue requesting her assistance without telling her shit. But it will eventually ruin his steady supply of Bronze-tier rewards. Isn't this Gu from Mo Yan in the first place?

'I can even use her to purchase jade rocks,' Lo Jik groans. 'I'm almost out of White Jade's food. I must start showing more results and earn more stones on paper. That will clear Mo Yan's doubts about my repayment. She won't want to accept it, of course. But Lo Jik, in her mind, is a stubborn youth who always returns the favor.'

He plans his contact with Mo Yan.

'Now that I think about it, what's taking Mo Bei and Chi Cheng so long to cultivate? Fang Zheng is breaking the village's records by solely focusing on improvements while those two scum are still eager to join parties.'

He doesn't want more unwanted attention on himself, so he wants to advance his '*Public*' cultivation after their breakthrough. He can use the Red Steel Relic as an excuse. For instance, he can reveal he chanced upon a Red Steel Relic Gu, displaying it publicly. Of course, he won't use it but advance using his Primeval Essence. He will break through to the peak stage using the Relic Gu.

'But people can't constantly experience fortuitous encounters. Using such methods will eventually invite suspicion.'

Lo Jik is suffering from success. He wants others to grow so he can, too!

'I never had such an issue in my past life since I didn't have to *'nurture'* my bazookas and tanks!' Lo Jik was an avid collector in his previous.

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A crowd gathers near Gu Yue Village's southern entrance as Fang Zheng clenches his bloodied fists. The team from the Xiong Clan is aghast as their leader kneels on a knee while clutching his chest with a pale expression.

"Hmph! These Xiong Clan's members were too arrogant."

"To think they will claim Xiong Li to be the strongest physically. Hah!"

The crowd cheers for Fang Zheng as the youth quietly helps Xiong Li, earning him a grateful look from the latter.

"We fought fairly. This match of pure martial arts is your win." Xiong Li nods reluctantly. He never expected a junior to pack such a punch!

The rise of wolf packs compelled Bai and Xiong village to send their diplomatic teams and negotiate the terms of the alliance. However, such benefits are divided through competition. Xiong Li was Chi Shan's rival. However, Chi Shan quickly climbed the ladders with his family's help. Xiong Li could not challenge an Elder, so he challenged the number one talent of the clan.

Xiong Li already has bear's strength and can add another one with his Gu. However, this was not a Gu fight!

'The Elders promised to lend me some of their supporting Gu Worms to advance into Rank 3 if I gain advantages for the clan. Sigh.'

"You went easy on me, Senior," Fang Zheng claims. "You did not use your Gu worms."

Other Gu Masters from Xiong Clan look at Fang Zheng gratefully as the crowd cheers more for Fang Zheng until one voice echoes.

“These Xiong members cannot even handle Fang Zheng. How will they ever take on someone like Fang Yuan? He effortlessly moved the River Swallowing Toad Gu!”

Xiong Li’s pupils shrink as Fang Zheng’s expression darkens.

His bleeding fists creak as he forcibly calms himself.

Fang Yuan again!

Why did Fang Zheng spar against Xiong Li for several minutes, injuring the bones in his hands?

For Fang Yuan?

No!

Fang Zheng’s disappointment is immeasurable, and his day is ruined.

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“Fang Yuan? Upper Stage?”

Lo Jik blinks in surprise.

How?

He doesn’t linger around in the tavern. Fang Yuan’s cultivation speed is shockingly fast. One might assume it’s due to the resources earned from his Vitality Leaf business. However, Fang Yuan’s prices aren’t sky-high! He must also have his weekly cost of living. Anyone can calculate the number of leaves sold and understand that much.

Even Mo Bei and Chi Cheng aren’t at the Upper Stage yet!

‘I want to strangle those two sons of bitches. If only Chi Cheng had a sister or a mother. The bastard won’t even marry someone.’

Lo Jik scoffs. Yet, he understands he must endure and live.

‘The contract on the rental cabin will expire next year, too. I still have that small property where I built my cabin.’

His burdens eased once he requested Mo Yan’s assistance. She secretly sent him the

Rank 2 Gu to heal the Lightning Thoughts Gu. Even though she refuses to take his money, he knows he will have to forcefully give it to her.

Returning home, Lo Jik settles atop his mattress and glances inside his aperture. The Lightning Thoughts Gu is a blue jellyfish swimming within his Primeval Sea.

With a thought, 22.5% of his peak-stage essence enters the Gu! The Gu joyfully frolics around, releasing bone-chilling crackling noises as he feels something in his mind. Closing his eyes, he can *visualize* an orb of crackling lightning. It's white-hot in the center, with arcs of blue lightning dancing around it.

A Lightning Thought!

Rank 3 Lightning Thoughts Gu consumes 10% of Initial Stage Rank 3 essence to produce one Lightning Thought.

This is a mystical Gu. After all, Lightning Thought represents a '*manifestation*' of Lo Jik's thought. He '*stares*' at it with his mind's eye before allowing it to leave his body.

*\*Bzzt\**

A nail-sized orb of phantom lightning flies out from the middle of his forehead, floating midair.

'I want Fang Zheng to marry Shen Cui. What should I do?' As he thinks this, he uses the Lightning Thought floating ahead.

It lets out a static noise before rushing into his head.

An answer appears in Lo Jik's mind—Kidnap the two and wed them.

Quick and efficient!

This is the beauty of this Gu. It allows a Gu Master to form answers of a decisive, no-nonsense nature! However, a Gu Master uses the Gu. Lo Jik will never agree to this thought process.

Indeed, what he achieved with the Thoughts Gu was the '*manifestation*' of one's thought process.

Would Lo Jik kidnap the duo?

No.

Because there is deep context.

He has a Trait to exploit its use when Shen Cui marries an Elder. It needs to be done in a process where Shen Cui's affection for him doesn't lower but rises instead.

How can one thought account for all this?

To reveal this Gu's might, he must be a Rank 3 Gu Master. Even then, he must be at the Peak Stage!

'How amazing,' Lo Jik smiles. 'The ability to form thoughts and organize decision-making is undoubtedly beneficial!

'Tian-Yan's recipes reveal similar Gu. Some of these Gu produce thoughts that help in Gu refinement, others create beneficial thoughts that think about others, and so on. As I grow, I will have to choose and specialize. But I can't help but wonder how insane it would be to do it all—to have physical strength capable of destroying mountains with a punch and the smarts to survive the consequence.'

He sighs.

'There may be a way or not. I can only seek answers. For now, I must depend on Mo Yan to feed this Gu and focus on slaughtering wolf packs to earn more money on paper.

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Fang Yuan feels several gazes on him. It's unavoidable.

'I got the Four Flavors Liquor Worm months before the River Swallowing Toad's arrival. My cultivation is quicker than my previous timeline. However, I'll take this risk. I snatched a Red Steel Relic from Bai Ning Bing when she almost died. I used that Gu to reach the Peak Stage. But things won't be the same since Qing Shu is already a Rank 3 Gu Master. He won't be there to hold Bai Ning Bing back. But I can maintain my previous speed since I advanced the Liquor worm earlier.'

Fang Yuan purchases a few things before returning to his room.

'Elders won't try prying my secrets during the Wolf Tide. Like last time, Gu Yue Yao Ji might target me for my Nine Leaf Vitality Grass Gu. Heh! Fate is funny. I managed to invent a new Gu altogether during the wolf tide.'





Fang Yuan and Lo Jik received similar missions several times. The Higher-Ups wanted to suppress the duo's roguish natures by threatening their future evaluations. Unfortunately, the duo never gave a damn about these evaluations.

These evaluations never made anyone an Elder.

No!

Rank 3 Cultivation did.

How could they care about meager evaluations?

Both had their reasons and pretenses to ignore the missions.

Lo Jik earned a small fortune by selling the Rare Gu to Qing Shu, and Fang Yuan regained his familial inheritance.

The difference between Lo Jik and Fang Yuan was that the latter's excuse continues to exist. Fang Yuan possesses the Nine Leaf Vitality Grass Gu. Everyone knows Fang Yuan is making a killing from it, apparently saving enough to advance to Rank 2 Upper Stage! As the Wolf Tide turns severe, others predict Fang Yuan will earn more profits by increasing the Vitality Leaf's price.

Meanwhile, Lo Jik returned to completing the missions.

He would take whatever is left. Lo Jik's record displays how he still avoids a few fatal missions incapable of completion without a team. However, other teams are no less envious of Lo Jik.

Everyone hates his arrogant attitude AND his skills to get the job done. Since he gets the job done, he earns the compensation alone! Sometimes, he encounters rare materials and sells them before retreating from missions and continuing his extravagant lifestyle. Other teams also have these fortunes. However, they have to share the compensation between 5-6 individuals. How can they not envy Lo Jik?

But the crucial point is not his earnings—the mission RNG!

Lo Jik displayed a pattern. He only stops completing the missions when he earns big and desperately completes the missions he can after '*spending*' his wealth. Such a pattern let the higher-ups sigh in relief since they could use it!

As expected, Lo Jik received a high-risk, low-reward mission. The Clan values his skill

and won't assign him fatal missions needing more than 8 Gu Masters. He had to sneak into a Bear King's cave and collect its piss.

Lo Jik almost skipped while walking when he received the mission!

He spent a lot of effort to build that pattern. He specifically gave the External Hall fake reigns, letting them delude they control him—

“WHAT?!”

A loud screech socks the spacious hall. Other Group Leaders can be seen entering and exiting the pavilion as they stop and glance at the row of counters where a Gu Master files the mission details into the Clan's records. The middle-aged Rank 2 Gu Master stares at Lo Jik with unconcealed envy, purposely raising his voice. “You found a Red Steel Relic Gu?!”

A commotion spreads within the hall as everyone focuses on Lo Jik. Yet, isn't this what he wanted?

However, he pretends to get angry and scowls at the recording Gu Master. “Do your damn job!” He grabs the Gu Master's head before slamming it down on the wooden counter as he yelps in pain. Blood leaks from his bruised nostrils as the Gu Master nods fearfully, not expecting Lo Jik to retaliate like this. How can he, a Support Gu Master, tackle a combat beast like Lo Jik?

Yet, the Gu Master thinks sinisterly.

‘He must have gotten lucky in the wilds, allowing his combat strength to surge and complete several missions. Hmph! He wouldn't have to report personal gains. However, a Gu Master must truthfully iterate the mission's proceedings even if it fails. He had to expose his Red Steel Relic Gu. Hahaha! Others won't let him leave peacefully.’

“Serves you right,” Lo Jik sneers as he watches the man covering his nose. He turns around to leave, finding a few Gu Masters ‘*inadvertently*’ blocking him.

“Junior Brother Lo Jik, will you sell that Relic Gu?” One of the Gu Masters questions as others observe.

Reciprocating the warm smile, Lo Jik nods. “Of course, Senior Brother. It will be 20000 Primeval Stones.”

“What?”

“Are you crazy?!”

“A Red Steel Relic Gu is worth 8000 stones at best!”

“Are you mocking me, Junior Brother?”

“Mocking you?” Lo Jik cocks his head sideways. “The Wolf Tide is almost upon us! The price of this Gu will undoubtedly be several times more! Don’t want it? Step aside. I will use it and increase my cultivation.”

The Gu Master’s expression changes several times. “Think carefully, Junior Brother. Even if you advance to the Upper Stage, you’re still alone. I will give you a fair price for the Gu. You lack a team, right? Join my team. Our members will welcome you with open arms.”

“Hmph! Are you saying my team is any worse?” Another Gu Master snorts.

“Lo Jik!” a sharp voice disrupts the building argument as Chi Cheng suddenly appears in the hall with an anxious look. “Don’t listen to them! You are from my batch. Who dares take advantage of you? Come, let’s leave!”

Other Gu Masters reluctantly back down as Lo Jik narrows his eyes.

He had other plans involving a Gu Master’s arm snapping in two. But this is a pleasant surprise.

Lo Jik smiles and nods, leaving alongside Chi Cheng under everyone’s jealous gazes.

“Sigh! It’s a good thing I arrived on time. Hehe, you don’t have to say anything, Lo Jik. We have grown from being pissy academy students. Let’s talk— L-Lo Jik?! Where are you going?”

Chi Cheng hurriedly calls out as Lo Jik walks quickly. The latter suddenly chuckles. “Are you blind, Chi Cheng? I’m hurrying home to use my Relic Gu. Why will I sell it to you? Pfft!”

Lo Jik leaves a stunned and speechless Chi Cheng. His face flushes with anger and embarrassment. He looks around, finding other Gu Masters from before. They sneer at Chi Cheng.

News soon spread about how Lo Jik lucked into a Red Steel Gu. Someone from the

External Hall leaked that the Bear King attacked the Boar King's current mate, devouring it. It is known that the threat of Wolf Packs doesn't allow the Bears to hibernate, leaving them irritated during the winter. The Boar charged the Bear King's cave. These two beasts did not seem to care for Lo Jik. Their battle turned the cave upside down, revealing the Rank 2 Red Steel Relic Gu.

Some Gu Masters checked the mentioned cave, noting how it was destroyed with frozen patches of blood around it.

Others could only hatefully stare at Lo Jik, who revealed a Rank 2 Upper Stage cultivation the next day. Still, Lo Jik felt slightly complicated. He spent more effort staging the scene than he would need to complete the mission. It took significant time to lure the Boar King's mate AND children into the Bear Cave.

'But my peace also ends here,' Lo Jik narrows his eyes. He knows Mo Yan is getting slightly impatient and frustrated from all the doubt directed at her.

'Rank 1 Gu Masters are academy students or the dregs of the Gu society left to deal with the menial. Rank 2 Gu Masters are the primary fighting force of small to middle-sized clans like the Gu Yue Village. Rank 3 Gu Masters represent the higher force of power, acting as the Clan's supporting pillars. Meanwhile, Rank 4 is the King.'

'There are differences between the Ranks, too. Rank 3 Elders are categorized into those with deep pockets and those without one. Elders Mo Chen/Chi Lian and Elders Mo Yan/Chi Shang are extreme examples of the two sides. The former controls several Elders under their political faction, and the latter can barely support a few corresponding-ranked Gu.'

'Similarly, Rank 2 has its differences. The Initial and Middle Stages represent the weaker fighting force. They have little career choices and don't attract any Elders' attention. Meanwhile, the Upper and Peak Stages receive the Elders' complete focus—especially the Peak Stage! If it wasn't for Qing Shu advancing to Rank 3, moved by the losses during the first Beast Tide, the Elders would have kept firm control over the loyal Gu Masters. On the other hand, they will use several '*righteous*' reasons and the Clan System to suppress and even eradicate disobedient Gu Masters—like me.'

'That's not all,' Lo Jik thinks carefully. 'My strength represents a '*Noble*' class amongst the Rank 2 Gu Masters. There aren't many Upper Stage Rank 2 Gu Masters. Fang Yuan and I are exceptions. Even Fang Zheng's talent allows him to cultivate unchecked. Now that I'm at Upper Stage, Mo Yan will want to come clean. After all, the next stage for me is achieving the Peak Stage. However, I can't show such startling cultivation speed! Since it should take a long time to advance into Peak Stage, and the fact that I already have decent combat potential will make Mo Yan want to do away with the pretenses.'

Lo Jik isn't afraid.

Instead, revealing his relationship with Mo Yan will relieve the pressure on him. After all, Mo Yan isn't a Rank 2 Gu Master but a bonafide Elder. His intimate relationship with Mo Yan ties him to the Mo Faction. Other Elders will grow wary of the Mo Faction instead of a Lo Jik! Also, Lo Jik has decent qualifications, keeping others from doubting Mo Yan's choices. Even if they cast doubts, so what? She is an Elder. Others won't offend her because of this matter.

Gu Yue Lo Jik merely mourns the loss of his peace.

Many eyes will follow him once Mo Yan comes clean. Heck! Lo Jik will have to marry her soon, too, or it will reduce her prestige as an Elder. Others will also try to reason Lo Jik's combat prowess with Mo Yan's connection, imagining if she had a hand in his growth—reducing suspicion around Lo Jik.

'It's just that... I've never married before.' He smiles wryly.

A knock on his door snaps Lo Jik from his thoughts as he calms his expression and walks out to meet a bundle of excitement unbefitting her rank—Mo Yan.

She stares at him brightly. It's already September, and the days are no longer sunny. However, Mo Yan cannot help but feel emotional. Her eyes slightly redden as she feels unburdened. Mo Yan no longer has to sneak around to visit her lover! How can she not be excited?

Lo Jik smiles warmly, making her feel it's summer again. He strokes her cheek, gently touching the jade studs pierced into her earlobes.

"How are you so beautiful?" Lo Jik sighs.

"Liar!" she pounces in his embrace, unable to control her excitement. "I look the same!"

He wraps his arms around her waist, spinning as she curls her legs upward and giggles.

"No," Lo Jik laughs. "You're too beautiful. And I get to take the most beautiful woman of the Gu Yue Village into a tavern for some delicious Bamboo Wine!"

"During the day," she adds, grinning toothily as Lo Jik places her down, seizing her lips. He only pulls back after a familiar notification sound, snickering, "Yes. We can do what we were supposed to do from the beginning. We will enjoy each other's company during

the day. Hehe. And we will REALLY enjoy each other during the night.”

“Rascal!” she blushes while leaning on his chest and exhaling hotly, muttering. “You turned me into a bad girl. I can’t help wanting to try the opposite.”

She bites her bottom lip as he boldly squeezes her ass in broad daylight.

“Hush, girl,” he whispers. “What will others think? At least marry me and become my wife before thinking of fucking me under the tavern’s table.”

Mo Yan blinks in surprise, quickly looking at him. Lo Jik meets her gaze with comforting fondness as her expression brightens.

“Come,” Lo Jik smiles. “I can’t wait to share drinks with you.”

“Yes~!” She mewls, quickly hugging his arms as they leave the grove, shocking everyone who stumbles across them.

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“What?!” Mo Bei yells in shock. He stands from his seat, almost leaving the room when Mo Chen’s cold shout stops him.

“Where are you going?! Sit!” The Elder slaps his table. “Mo Yan is already frustrated with the family. She is young but not naive. Do you think she won’t act against you if you continue your foolishness? How will you inherit the family if you can’t see Mo Yan is Mo Family’s asset, and now Lo Jik is our asset, too?!”

Tongue-tied, Mo Bei stares at his Grandfather. Vicious hatred flashes in the boy’s eyes as he recalls those demeaning descriptions Mo Yan laid for him.

‘She did that with Lo Jik?! How dare he touch my sister? My Mo Yan!’

A look of resignation appears on Mo Chen’s face. How can he not see Mo Bei’s emotions? It isn’t weird in this world for siblings to live together. However, Mo Yan never once considered Mo Bei in a similar fashion.

“Sit down,” Mo Chen repeats. “Bei’er, you must learn how to control your emotions. You and Lo Jik already have some history. Isn’t it already evident? Mo Yan spoke against the family, rapidly cultivating against my advice—all for Lo Jik. Trying to hurt one is enraging the other. Besides, you will eventually reach Rank 3. Meanwhile, a C-grade Gu Master like Lo Jik will take years to surpass you. However, he is a qualified man for

Mo Yan.”

Mo Chen can understand political notions well. If Mo Bei intrudes on Mo Yan’s peace, she may as well defect to Chi Lian’s side, exposing everything she knows about the Mo Family.

It’s one of the reasons why Elders don’t like seeing others enter their domain!

The three new Battle Elders represent the ‘*disobedient*’ faction amongst their rank, feeling suppression from every side. However, others don’t dare pressure them too much because the trio knows too many things about their respective factions.

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‘Sharing fortune and misfortune.’

These words emerge in Fang Yuan’s mind as he quirks his lips and sips his Bamboo Wine, recalling the couple in the tavern.

‘What would their expressions be if they knew Mo Yan was betrothed to me in my previous life?’ Fang Yuan strolls at a casual pace. ‘Those two must have been going at it for a while. After all, they revealed their relationship the second Lo Jik advanced to the Upper Stage. Hahaha! Too funny! I wonder what Mo Bei is feeling. After all, Mo Bei forced Mo Yan to marry him right before I left the village. Their marriage wouldn’t have lasted long, given Qing Mao Mountain’s fate.’

Fang Yuan returns to his inn.

He remains largely unaffected by these changes.

<<<>>>

‘Elder Mo Yan?’

Shen Cui cannot help but feel shocked in her heart. She also feels depressed. Was Lo Jik playing with her?

She remembers the news of Mo Yan wearing Jade studs. The timing is too coincidental not to believe Mo Yan’s mystery lover was Lo Jik.

So, Lo Jik was with Mo Yan WHILE he touched her there, whispered into her ears, taking her aside and revealing his bold intentions for her. She clenches her fists, feeling

hurt. Did he only do that for power?

Such thoughts appear in Shen Cui's mind because she did the same.

'I have nothing to offer,' her emotions slightly stabilize. 'So, why would Lo Jik want me? He must like me for me.'

Her heart shudders.

It's too ironic.

Shen Cui believes Lo Jik is doing the same thing as her—forming a relationship above his weight class.

'Wait!' Shen Cui blinks. 'If Young Master knows Lo Jik is with someone else, he won't have any worries.' Her heart longs to leave this house. She dared not stroll in the village after the last time. Shen Cui realized how coincidental it was for Fang Zheng to appear during her most compromising state.

Too coincidental!

Gu Yue Chi Hua!

Shen Cui curses that wench.

It's also been stressful these few months. Fang Zheng remains too stressed. She doesn't expect Fang Zheng to shower her with praises while vying for the top position. Can she not understand the basic premise of letting her man achieve her ambitions? However, when they DO share a rare few nights together, he often finishes quickly and sleeps, leaving Shen Cui to deal with her urges.

Not all is without hope.

There are days when Fang Zheng rests, returning to his more caring side. Shen Cui is sure Fang Zheng intends to marry her instead of taking her as a concubine.

How can that be possible? Shen Cui smirks derisively.

'The Clan Leader will never let Fang Zheng marry a mortal servant. It's fine. Being a concubine is fine.'

A stuffy feeling suppresses her chest.



'We're both no longer near each other,' she fishes out a pair of red clips from her drawers, staring at them until her vision clouds.

*\*Drip\**

A tear falls atop the clips.

'He will marry an Elder, and I will be an Elder's concubine. Why am I crying? It's good. I can move around freely again. When I see him... there won't be much to say.'

Her tears flow unceasingly since she genuinely enjoyed Lo Jik's company.

<<<>>>

Fang Zheng's body feels light despite returning from a mission. He heard Lo Jik advancing to the Upper Stage before someone rushed into the southern tavern, revealing Lo Jik's and Mo Yan's relationship.

The thought of Lo Jik advancing to the Upper Stage left Fang Zheng feeling pressured until he connected the dots.

His scowl deepens as he almost crushes the wooden mug in his hand.

'That Bastard wasn't interested in Cui and was playing with me!' Fang Zheng rages. He feels guilty about how coldly he treated Cui these last few weeks. He must make amends. However, Fang Zheng also feels relieved. Despite being the Clan's rising talent, Fang Zheng always felt insecure around Shen Cui.

Shen Cui was originally his Elder Brother's servant. She would bathe Fang Yuan and spend time with him. Fang Zheng could only watch from a distance, feeling envious. When their fates changed, Fang Zheng was eager to enjoy Shen Cui's company.

His insecurity around Shen Cui stems from Fang Yuan and Lo Jik. The former is proclaimed Gu Yue's Hero, and the latter resoundingly defeated Fang Zheng during the graduation. Frustratingly so, Shen Cui met those two men. She knew Fang Yuan from before, and she met Lo Jik later. What does Shen Cui think of the two men who outshine him—wondered Fang Zheng.

Such concerns don't eclipse his thoughts anymore.

Mo Yan and Lo Jik?



Securely closing his study door, Mo Chen sits across the couple with a collected look. He looks at the dressed Lo Jik and Mo Yan with a complicated gaze.

Lo Jik and Mo Yan are dressed in lavish gold-trimmed red robes. The former's slightly long hair is tucked into a topknot. Meanwhile, Mo Yan's long hair is worn using beautiful headdresses and ornaments. Her jade studs stand out amongst her slightly powdered face, painted lips, and slight face paint near her eyelashes. The jade bracelet around Lo Jik's right wrist signifies his status as a married man.

"Hmm," Mo Chen merely hums after a while. "The gifts from the guests will cover the wedding costs. Welcome to the family, Gu Yue Lo Jik. The Mo Family gifts you the cottage you are living in."

Mo Yan frowns. The gifts from other elders and the Clan Leader include a few useful Gu. How can all that compare to a small banquet? Furthermore, Mo Chen's gift of a small grove to the couple is offensive enough! Mo Chen blatantly clarifies that the gifts given to the Mo Family will be handed to the couple once Mo Yan apologizes. It's true. Like other Elders, Mo Chen and his family also hand out congratulatory gifts to other families during special occasions. One must return the gift of an equal value to maintain social niceties. Meanwhile, Mo Chen's gift of the small grove signifies that Mo Yan isn't welcome in the estate—until he puts her aggression aside.

Lo Jik gently holds Mo Yan's hand, smiling, "Thank you for your gift, Senior. However, Mo Yan is all I needed. It's good that others' gifts can help you recover your losses."

Mo Yan smiles at Lo Jik, slightly leaning onto him. Meanwhile, Mo Chen's eyes twitch.

The Elder wonders if Lo Jik refers to the meager cost of setting the banquet or an Elder's loss once Mo Yan leaves.

With nothing else to say, the couple leaves before Mo Chen, smilingly accepting the toasts from others and eventually exiting the estate to *'fulfill'* their obligations.

Mo Bei roughly breathes once he sees those two leave. Anger and hateful killing intent flash in his eyes as he excuses himself once Mo Chen returns. The couple's departure does not signify the end of the banquet. The higher-ups are smart enough to use this chance to discuss many different things.

{*A/N*: Some NTRish content ahead.}

\*Step\*

*\*Step\**

Mo Bei slowly approaches the bamboo grove. He wants to talk to Mo Yan before things change. Mo Bei wants to try one more time to help see her reason. The youth grinds his teeth as he raises his fist to knock on the door.

“-hng~!”

An echo of a muffled groan slips through the moss-layered wooden structure. Mo Bei’s expression freezes as gentle, throaty moans steadily devolve into hot, needy mewls. Mo Bei’s body shudders. His face pales, and his eyes turn bloodshot! Those lurid moans transition into muffled screams and squeals.

‘Hehe, you have to look after yourself, Little Brother.’

‘Don’t act so shy! See? Her name is Cao. Sister brought here for you. Aren’t I great?’

‘You will lead the Mo Family. I know it! Our parents will be so proud of you, Little Brother.’

Those sweet memories flash in his mind.

“Ahh! Ah! M-More! Jik, harder!”

Those sweet moans and squeals trample upon the dignified image Mo Bei holds of Mo Yan.

“It feels so good~! Hnngh! I love you! Y-yes! Please! I love it when you do that!”

Her desperate begging leaves Mo Bei with the disgusting images of another man ‘*using*’ his sister, holding her naked. Mo Bei’s breathing turns rough as he suddenly covers his mouth and hurls by their doorstep.

“Yeeessss~!” Mo Yan’s muffled scream echoes. “Make me yours!”

Mo Bei is no longer present to hear them. He couldn’t take it.

He could not handle his own arousal at the sound of someone taking his sister, the one whom he loved.

<<<<>>>>

***[Finally Married? (Silver): Consummated your first marriage with Mo Yan. Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

***[A Taboo Makeout (Bronze/Repeatable): Made out with Mo Yan. Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

***[Scouting Booty Call (Bronze/Repeatable): Had Penetrative Sex With Mo Yan, Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

‘So, marriage DOES have a reward. Nice.’ Lo Jik smirks as he strokes the sleeping Mo Yan’s hair. ‘Too bad I never get cheating rewards. I would have gotten something if Mo Yan and Mo Bei were officially engaged.’ How can he not know Mo Bei was at his doorstep? He can see past the wooden walls. If anything, he went all out on Mo Yan last night to see if he could provoke a violent reaction from Mo Bei, using him to fork out those gifts Mo Chen refused to share.

Alas, Mo Bei had a weaker heart than that.

‘I’m plenty powerful. I should stop summoning Silver Rewards for now.’

His Trait replaces stored rewards whenever he achieves the same title. However, the Silver Achievements are non-repeatable. He can keep those rewards indefinitely. Of course, it doesn’t mean he can advance to Rank 3, and the rewards will evolve correspondingly.

He only wants to keep from summoning a silver reward to avoid getting a Rare Gu, which he cannot feed! That will be a tragedy. However, now that he’s married to Mo Yan, his supply of Bronze Rewards will drastically increase. Lo Jik doesn’t think about foolishly gifting them to Mo Yan. The Bronze-tier Gu are rare among their kind. He risks Mo Yan’s suspicion and their relationship by handing such Gu without proper explanation.

‘But I’m also nearing the sum total of my growth in Gu Yue Village. I should start planning my departure and convince Mo Yan to tag along. She’s an experienced Gu Master and a scout. Her experience can avoid several pitfalls.’ He exhales softly. ‘I also need to be cautious in the house. I cannot reveal my second aperture.’

Lo Jik quietly nurtures his first aperture using Crimson-Red Upper Stage Essence.

‘I’m down to my last 500 stones after paying Mo Yan for healing Lightning Thoughts Gu and its food. I’ll see what I get today.’

“Mmgh,” Mo Yan groans softly, waking up with her body unconsciously stretching as the blanket slips sideways, revealing her naked body with several hickies. She lovingly glances at Lo Jik, pecking his cheek without calling for him as she freshens up.

Last night was amazing. However, marriage is the last thing that can excuse an Elder from their duties.

“Ah!” she gasps while getting ready as Lo Jik hugs her from behind, letting out a comforting groan. “Already leaving, dear wife? Can’t you take a break?”

“Heh,” Mo Yan giggles. “And let Qing Shu and Chi Shan use it to spread their influence in the External Affairs Hall?” She turns, coiling her arms around Lo Jik before kissing him. The Elder mewls hotly. “Your wife must work hard. I still have a few Gu to refine and need resources and money.”

“I planned to leave the village and help you find those,” Lo Jik smirks. “I advanced and married an Elder within a week. I’m on a lucky streak. I might just find something for you, too.”

“Be careful,” she cautions worriedly. “The wolf packs are rising.”

“No wolf pack is going to keep me from you,” Lo Jik grins crookedly. He glances at her lips, stroking them. “I just wish you stayed for a few minutes. We could eat together.”

Mo Yan smiles, “Let’s do that!”

Lo Jik freshens up, too, leaving the house with Mo Yan to eat outside.

He knew how to cook, but others didn’t know about his culinary expertise. He can use it to his advantage and reveal he is slowly learning to cook for Mo Yan. After all, even if the societal norms ‘expect’ Mo Yan to cook—she won’t have time for it. She’s an Elder who has to spend hours building her combat prowess from scratch!

The couple received plenty of attention until they parted ways, with Lo Jik returning to the wooden cabin.

‘Damn, I already lost one Bronze reward,’ he smiles wryly. He had yet to summon the reward from kissing Mo Yan before they kissed again.

He cleans the mattress, replaces the sheets, and soaks them in a bucket before entering his blanket’s realm. He summons his rewards. One rare material and one Gu.

Stowing the material aside, Lo Jik stares at the strange Rank 2 Gu.

It's a finger-sized scarlet-red ladybug with two white, heart-shaped marks on its round back.

A Rank 2 Heart Engraved Gu!

This Gu's use is similar to Bookworm Gu's effects. However, this is an expendable Gu that imprints one's *'heart'* with the stored information. The user won't be able to forget the knowledge even if they want to!

'A silver-ranked Bookworm gifted me half the inheritance of a proper Rank 4 Gu Master with several hundred recipes and a Rank 5 Gu recipe! What will I get now?'

He activates the Heart Engraved Gu. It glows scarlet and turns into a stream of light that enters Lo Jik's body, making him instinctively close his eyes.

He locks his brows.

Due to its *'permanent'* nature, the Heart Engraved Gu stores exponentially less information than the Bookworm Gu. His mind now has a recipe series from Rank 1-5—Blood Qi Gu.

'My Trait's selections aren't COMPLETELY random. It plays the odds based on my situation, too.'

While he had been with several professionals in his past life, he always got rare collectibles without distinction. However, Lo Jik himself has a shadow of specialization in this world.

He realizes that his trait uses the RNG based on two categories—his partners and himself.

For instance, Mo Yan.

She's an experienced scout, is a Gu Master of the Gu Yue Clan, and lives in Qing Mao Mountain—these should be Mo Yan's broad defining traits.

Lo Jik received random rewards from such categories until he started developing himself. After building a base, Lo Jik started uncovering rewards capable of expanding on his foundations. He failed to refine a Black Mane Gu. However, he received one from

his Trait.

He was unsuccessful in refining the Concealment Mane Gu, instead receiving the Stealth Scales Gu.

It's a pattern.

The one thing that confused him was the Blood Python Gu.

Why?

He considered it a steed-type Gu until realizing he could use the python's senses as a makeshift scouting Gu. Even then, Mo Yan should have nothing to do with Blood Gu Worms.

'Could it be she is talented in such Gu? Several individuals have an innate talent for something.' Lo Jik frowns.

This isn't surprising. Lo Jik recalls how he once slept with a painter, receiving a revolver instead. No wonder she never got admitted into her preferred Art School.

'There are also cases like Chi Shan. He was born with divine strength as a kid and could beat an adult to death as a child.'

However, if Mo Yan was talented in such aspects, why did she never work on it? Maybe she never knew about it.

The reward is related to a Blood Gu and beneficial to Lo Jik!

'Rank 1 Blood Qi Gu and a Rank 1 Blood Python Gu. Hah!' He eases his frown. Questioning such mysteries won't help him. Blood Qi Gu is a beneficial healing Gu that replaces lost blood within the Gu Master's body. A Gu Master can fight without the fear of dying from blood loss.

'And this Gu is surprisingly easy to refine. Like other Blood Gu, this one also consumes blood. I should refine two of them. I will use one to advance Blood Python Gu into Blood Stream Python Gu and refine the other into Rank 2. Although I have the two Spider Gu, one can never have too many healing Gu that are easy to feed. Besides, the Spider Gu cannot replace lost blood.'

This instance reassures Lo Jik that he should strive to summon every Bronze reward. He won't know when he'll strike it rich!



'But if I summon a rare Gu that's hard to feed... sigh. I'll have to let such Gu die. I've gotten too fortunate over the past few months. Discovering the rare materials is already touching many nerves.'

Didn't the recording Gu Master in the External Affairs Hall release the information about his Red Steel Relic Gu?

That was merely a taste of another's envy.

Lo Jik isn't powerful enough to fuck with a large group of Gu Masters.

He clenches his fist.

'While I cannot temporarily increase my cultivation further, I can work on my combat. I'm still far from utilizing all my Gu efficiently. Just being able to master trick shots with Moonglow Gu isn't enough!'

He recalls about Fang Yuan.

Lo Jik needs the Battle Instinct Gu to efficiently switch the Moonglow Gu into different limbs and incorporate it into his martial arts. But that combat monster emulated Lo Jik's skills after a glance without possessing such a Gu.

'And Fang Yuan is growing. I may have an advantage regarding the quality of Gu Worms. But that advantage is useless unless I master them.'

Still, he feels reluctant.

He never faced any life-death situation outside the village after the Blood Hound Wolf, but that threat never faded.

'No use bitching about it,' he suddenly smirks. 'I should have thought about being less crazy before sticking an eye-eating Eye Gu into myself.'

<<<>>>

A Gu Master's cultivation surpasses the basic norm of merely learning to control the Primeval Essence to nurture the Aperture. As one experiences several combats, one must learn other techniques and develop unique paths.

There are several BILLIONS of Gu! A Gu Master nurtures, uses, and refines the Gu.

These three aspects of cultivation are unimaginably broad!

If one focuses on the study of using the Gu, a Gu Master must find their *'focus'* and *'path.'*

The former refers to the three basic premises of Gu-type—Attack, Defense, and Support. The support category expands into Storage, Healing, Movement, Concealment, and other similar Gu.

Lo Jik already has a focus—Attack.

Even as a lone Gu Master, he must find ways of using his Gu to increase his offense and efficiently remove the enemy. His best offensive methods are his body and the Moonglow Gu. His body possesses the strength of two Boars, effortlessly capable of brawling with wild beasts like boars, bears, and wolves. With the Peak Stage essence, Lo Jik can also display the optimal might of the Moonglow Gu, capable of splitting several wild beasts at once!

As an attack-type Gu Master, his options will be divided into short, medium, and long ranges. His fists and Moonblades cover the former two options. Meanwhile, Lo Jik doesn't have a long-range method. His bow and arrows are mortal weapons, barely able to pierce the beasts' thick hides.

Ordinarily, with this decided, a Gu Master will find ways to increase their available offensive might. After all, others are in a team. They have different Gu Masters to fulfill different roles.

Meanwhile, Lo Jik is alone.

He needs to possess many support Gu Worms to display the highest combat potential possible. He would have many options if Mo Yan chose a similar focus. Lo Jik can take the title of the top scout if he finds ways to maximize that focus. However, a scout's profession is merely a supporting path, allowing him to conveniently advance and retreat.

The Heaven Piercing Eye Gu takes care of that department.

As Lo Jik thought before, the combination of Blood Rousing Incense Gu and Battle Instinct Gu increases his close-quarter combat potential. If he uses the White Jade Gu, he can beat the living shit out of a Wolf King, too! He won't worry about getting scuffed if he refines a Rank 2 Blood Qi Gu.

This merely demonstrates the *'focus'* aspect of a Gu Master's development.

Due to a lack of quality options, Gu Master only worries about the *'path'* once they advance to Rank 3. Mo Yan and Chi Shan are tackling such topics. Meanwhile, Qing Shu already has his *'path'* determined.

Taking a step back, Lo Jik quickly realized that he could improve one aspect of his offense—control of Primeval Essence!

One must concisely control their essence to pace their Gu Worms' use. Even a Legendary Rank 5 Gu Master will be a lump of meat on a chopping board if they exhaust their essence.

Some Gu consume Primeval Essence once and stay active for a pre-determined duration. Lo Jik's Battle Instinct Gu is the best example, as it stays active for 15 minutes for 5% of his Peak Stage essence. One might even consider the Blood Rousing Incense Gu as an example since Lo Jik has to *'buff'* himself away from the enemies lest the incense scent introduce adrenaline in the beasts' systems! Such Gu are easy to use and don't continuously consume a Gu Master's concentration.

However, Gu Worms like White Jade and Black Mane are the opposite—needing a Gu Master's constant attention! A Gu Master has to fight WHILE controlling their essence and using the Gu. Such Gu Worms exhaust a Gu Master's mind. Lo Jik usually alleviates this issue by using the Battle Instinct Gu.

Not anymore!

Since Lo Jik can turn invisible and restrict his body's odor, he locates weak wolf packs to train. These wolf packs barely possess more than 5 Lightning Wolves.

Lo Jik might start small, but his ambitions are grand. He eventually wants to refine his control until he can battle while controlling two things at once. It's a reasonable objective.

He wants to be able to use White Jade and Black Mane simultaneously. One is a *'aura-type'* defense Gu, and the other is a physical one. These two Gu do not conflict and can increase Lo Jik's defense by a notch, barely contending against a Rank 3 Gu Master's attack.

It will at least give him time to prepare for his escape should a powerful enemy corner him despite his investigative means.

So, he trains!

Martial Arts and Moonblades—he will try transitioning between the two without the Battle Instinct Gu. The Gu indeed exists to be used. However, relying entirely on a Gu for one's survival may itself be the cause of their death! So, Lo Jik will get injured at times.

After killing the beasts, Lo Jik will collect their blood and eyes before leaving. In fact, finding these small packs of wolves is becoming challenging with time. It won't be long before Lo Jik turns to wolf packs with 15-20 wolves. The Clan missions are only something Lo Jik continues with to dispense his rare materials, slowly recovering his Primeval Stones.

There's also the constant stream of Bronze-tier rewards!

Those will end the moment he advances to Rank 3. After all, his Trait rewards him based on the difference between his partners and himself. Once he reaches Rank 3, Lo Jik will have the same cultivation and status.

It's a happy worry!

Mo Chen can keep those gifts from their wedding. Lo Jik already has so much that he doesn't know what to do!

Meanwhile, Mo Yan also focuses on her cultivation. Since Lo Jik often finds rewards tainted by her chosen expertise, the rare items he 'encounters' in the wild are more than helpful to her. She tries paying him, but Lo Jik always refuses, deepening their bond. It allowed Lo Jik to effortlessly complete the Silver Achievements he could gain from Mo Yan! Of course, he never raised the topic of fucking her navel, ears, or some shit like that. Fuck that.

Lo Jik refuses to be an ear fucker!

Also, Lo Jik's pressure to purchase food for a few Gu is relieved now that he's an Elder's Husband. While he still doesn't get access to the Clan's superior shop, he can certainly use his influence to purchase the rare items available to his rank without the other side prying information from him.

Marrying Mo Yan was also the right move in the sense that Mo Bei took to cultivation like a man possessed! He has yet to advance to the Upper Stage, but rumors suggest he isn't far from the rank. Meanwhile, Chi Cheng became a disappointment. His cultivation is notably slower than Mo Bei.

And Fang Zheng?

Peak Stage!

Others in the village hail Fang Zheng as a genius no worse than Bai Ning Bing. Even if there is another Gu Yue Zie Qi, he's yet to graduate. That boy also rarely leaves his dorm, only choosing to converse with Gu Yue Yao Le. Their good relationship has been a source of gossip for a while. After all, Gu Yue Yao Le is Gu Yue Yao Ji's granddaughter and the supposed inheritor of the Medicine Hall. One is a talent no worse than Fang Zheng, whose records make many veterans sigh in admiration. The other is the rising star of Healing Path Gu! It's like a match made in Heaven!

Several Gu Masters are already impatient about this batch's graduation, conversing about the new batch will compare to the previous one regarding Martial Arts.

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Fang Yuan lets out a turbid breath, relaxing after a cultivation session as he reaches for a Primeval Stone to recover his essence.

'While it's true that a stream of unending resources will see a Gu Master advancing without limits at no time, Primeval Stones alone cannot fulfill the gap. As my cultivation rises, I'll need more Primeval Stones to recover my essence, leading me to waste time. Such waste is the cause of some Gu Masters being unable to advance past certain ranks. No matter how many Primeval Stones I have, I won't be able to force my way into Rank 3 without raising my talents.'

'A Rank 2 Peak Stage Gu Master needs almost 1.5 Primeval Stones to recover 1% essence. It means I require about 63 stones to recover 44% of my Essence once I advance to the Peak Stage. Even if I can multi-task, the time needed to balance breaking the aperture's wall and recuperating is too extreme. It's why I tried to refine Gu Yue Yao Le until Zie Qi stepped in.'

'But there are other support Gu Worms. One of the most renowned Legendary Gu is right under the village! It can help me recover my essence and is an invaluable asset to Gu Masters with low talent.'

'However, I can't rely on Mo Chen to earn 50000 stones. I never expected Lo Jik and Mo Yan to be a thing. That's understandable. Lo Jik died in my previous life. Meanwhile, Mo Bei died during the Beast Tides, leaving the Mo Family without an heir. Mo Chen wanted me to marry Mo Yan. I used it to fork out the required Primeval Stones from the Mo Family. But that path is closed for me.'

'I can use Chi Lian. I know Chi Cheng has a C-grade Aptitude, and Chi Lian helped his

Grandson fake the results. Even though Chi Lian uses his White Silver essence to nurture Chi Cheng's aperture, their combined effort cannot compare to Mo Bei's or Fang Zheng's speed. Elder Chi also purchased the Cleansing Water Gu for Chi Cheng to use on the latter to remove any sequela once he reaches Rank 3.'

'If Chi Lian and Chi Cheng won't have such worries if they have that Bone Path Gu,' Fang Yuan considers. 'I can't reveal that information or blackmail the Chi Family yet. However, I undervalued Chi Lian last time. I thought he wouldn't pay much for Chi Cheng's secret. However, he and Mo Chen are rivals. If one can fork it, the other can, too. My considerations should be what to do after escaping the Qing Mao Mountain. Entering the Bai Gu Mountain may alert the Bai Clan. I recall other inheritance sites, including that Legendary Gu in the Shang Clan.'

'But those sites need special conditions. Before Zie Qi, I planned to travel the Strength Path. Time Path... it's not worse. I only know one inheritance regarding it. Wait!'

His gaze brightens.

'That Gu will appear in the final half of Jia Family's internal struggle!'

Fang Yuan may know many secrets from 500 years in the future. However, his memory cannot keep track of it all. Fang Yuan now recalls another ancient Gu's appearance.

He was set on the Strength Path and didn't think more about the other paths.

A complicated look flashes in his eyes.

'I can forget the Immortal Inheritance if I don't walk the Strength Path. Yet, what I experienced after killing Zie Qi confirms that Time Path is the most suitable. If this risk... if my hunch is correct, I will walk a fatal path. The rewards will be plenty, too. One leads to an immortal treasure—which I may fail to refine. The other leads to an unknown path with astounding benefits on my side. Hehe. Both paths have my death written on them once I make a wrong move. Yet, how can I hope to look down on the world from its highest peak without a demon's grit?'

Not the kind to waste time in self-doubt, Fang Yuan shifts his focus.

'Fang Zheng... I can use him to refine that Gu in the Bai Gu Mountain. But it's useless to me once I refine Zie Qi. Besides, depending on another person, especially a morally deluded one like Fang Zheng, is inefficient. No, I will move northwest and enter Drifting Keng's Cave. It's a Righteous Path Gu Master's Inheritance regarding Water Path. I'll use those gains and earn recognition in the Jia Family's struggle. Water Path is superior to the Demonic Faction Gu Master—Old Flaming Beard Keng, Drifting Keng's Elder



that's left the Gu Yue Clan feeling sad.

The Wolf Packs destroyed a few hamlets, leading to a food shortage. There's enough in the Clan's storage to support the Village. However, everyone fears the future should the Wolf Packs continue rising with such fierceness.

Today, it's the mortals—it could be *them* tomorrow. How can the Gu Masters not fear? The silver lining to the current disaster was the survival of the Gu Masters stationed in these hamlets. Gu Yue Clan doesn't care about mortal lives. They cared about the services provided to them through the cheap labor and their Gu Masters.

Sunlight filters into Lo Jik's bedroom through the blinder's slit, announcing its need for replacement. He slowly opens his eyes, stretching his legs with a soft moan leaving his lips. Mo Yan doesn't stop at his movements. She increases her pace instead and allows her pillowy lips to slide down against his veiny shaft as thick spit sputters from the corner of her lips. *\*Ghhk\** Wet, sloppy choking noises echo from her throat as she sinks till her spit-lathered lips kiss against his curling balls. Lo Jik's hand suddenly covers her head, holding Mo Yan's head in place. Her lower eyelids tremble as accumulated tears slowly down her cheeks until her nostrils flare, causing an errand jet of cum and snot to flow out.

Lo Jik exhales as he slowly lets her pull up.

Mo Yan lets go of his cock with a seductive pop before gasping for air and coughing. She looks up at Lo Jik, soothingly nuzzling her cheek against his sloppy cock as a thin stream of cum leaks slips from the corner of her stained lips.

"Good morning, dear~!" she whispers.

"You didn't have to do that," Lo Jik smirks. "But I loved it."

"Heh," she grins as Lo Jik sits up, cleaning her face with a towel. She lets him do that, giggling, "You say that. But how can I let it be in pain every morning?" She pokes the tip of cock. "And I loved it when you did it yesterday morning."

The world IS going to hell, but it doesn't affect Lo Jik and his impeccable game as a husband. He knows how to keep things exciting in a marriage. Besides, he's unknowingly become a crucial reason for Mo Yan's steady rise in combat prowess. They've been married for almost two months now!

Mo Yan now possesses three Rank 3 Gu and a few Rank 2 Gu to support her focus and path. Even though she's a scout, an Elder like her must have an offensive method.



After cleaning up, Mo Yan bids farewell, stating, “Be sure to arrive on the alliance slope on time. I’m expected to arrive early with Qing Shu, Chi Shan, and others.”

Lo Jik sees her off with a pleasant smile. As she leaves, he settles in his usual spot.

2 months.

Lo Jik shakes his head.

It’s an understatement to say he earned a lot.

After all, he managed to get all Silver Achievements but one.

***[Churning Milk (Silver): Experienced an Orgasm Through Mo Yan’s Breasts. Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

***[Silver-Tongued (Silver): Experienced an Orgasm Through Mo Yan’s Mouth. Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

***[Why Not Anal? (Silver): Experienced an Orgasm Through Mo Yan’s Butt Cheeks. Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

*\*Hisssss\**

A low hiss spreads in his bedroom as a meter-long blood-red python crawls atop the bed before coiling around Lo Jik’s feet.

Rank 2 Blood Stream Python!

As expected, several things occurred in the last two months. First, Lo Jik refined the Rank 1 Blood Qi Gu, using it to advance the Blood Python into Rank 2 Blood Stream Python Gu. Its next advancement is Rank 3 Blood Torrent Python. If he’s lucky, he’ll refine the Gu into Rank 4 Blood Flood Python and Rank 5 Blood River Python Gu!

The Gu turns into a stream of red light before entering Lo Jik’s Second Aperture.

The advancement of Rank 2 Blood Stream Python is merely the beginning. Even if he focused on developing and polishing his multi-tasking ability, that didn’t mean he and Mo Yan didn’t want to do it whenever possible. Gu Masters often have higher libido due to their risky lifestyle. If it wasn’t for Mo Yan sensibly taking care of a few things, she’d already been pregnant. However, she didn’t want to trouble herself with pregnancy right

before the Wolf Tide.

Lo Jik heavily agreed due to his reasons.

Journals, materials, and Gu, including another rare instance of an injured Rank 3 Gu. Unfortunately, Lo Jik didn't heal it, letting the Rank 3 True Mind Eye die. Mo Yan already had this Gu. It allows a Gu Master's five senses to grow exponentially. However, it's challenging to feed it, and it's not naturally found in Qing Mao Mountain, not leaving Lo Jik with any excuse to reveal it.

Such cases became common once Mo Yan built her set of Shadow Gu. Shadow Gu Worms reputedly produce better quality Gu regarding Concealment, Movement, and Attack. Masters of this path are incredible assassins. Alas, such Gu is not common in Qing Mao, and the few Gu on this path Lo Jik received were destined to die since he couldn't feed them.

He could give them to Mo Yan, but it would do more damage than help. For instance, Lo Jik received a rare Rank 2 Shadow Follower Gu. It's a crucial ingredient for the Rank 3 Shadow Edge Gu. However, Lo Jik could not hand the Gu to Mo Yan.

Kindness isn't lost on him. Lo Jik helps her when he can—when he has a convenient explanation. Conversely, reckless help and selfless kindness will only endanger him.

His greatest asset was gaining a Rank 4 Gu Master's travel records bereft of any secret recipe. However, it maintained its use of extensive knowledge about the Southern Border. Heck! He never knew the Five Regional Walls was a real thing! He always chalked it up as an unmarked border guarded by Gu Masters of the five regions. He also learned about several named Mountains.

There are several intriguing ecosystems near Qing Mao Mountain.

Mountain of Bones, Bai Gu.

Fiery Peak, Qing Qing.

The Starry Gazing Cliff, Yao Lan.

Floating Boulders of Heaven, Ning Chu.

The list goes on.

Lo Jik recalls how awe-inspiring these records were.

Aside from the accumulation of knowledge and the unfortunate Rank 2 Shadow Gu, he could never reveal as they died of starvation, Lo Jik earned plenty!

Out of the 53 rewards, 31 summoned materials. There were times when Lo Jik brought kilos of wet dirt on his bed or stinky Beast King's dump, making him clean things several times! However, such materials were qualitative food for his Gu. For instance, the Smell Lock Gu consumes beast shit. Consuming the Beast King's excrement allows it to sustain longer for less food. Such excrements are good fertilizers once dried and powdered, acting as high-quality Gu refinement material. Lo Jik couldn't throw them away. However, caking and drying it without getting caught isn't easy.

Instead, he wrapped it up in leaves despite his moderate disgust and stored it. He used large leaves to keep the waste from infecting his other stored products.

Lo Jik sold 5 bundles to the Clan and handed 7 to Mo Yan. His costs weren't low either. Since Mo Yan procures the food for the White Jade Gu, she is aware of Lo Jik's possessions. However, she doesn't tear such pretenses. Instead, she shows enough respect for his secrets and trump cards, more than relieved that her Husband isn't defenseless. Still, he continued paying for such costs.

He currently possesses 6451 Primeval Stones.

As for the remaining 22 rewards, 6 were recorded journals and recipes.

The four Shadow Gu and the injured Rank 3 Gu died. He only wished that the Earth Hold Gu could store other Gu Worms.

The remaining Gu were either great or pure burden for Lo Jik since they were easy to feed, but he didn't have a use for them and couldn't sell them.

Lo Jik closes his eyes, glancing into his aperture.

The Hope Gu shines brightly, unbothered by a longer Blood Stream Python coiled around it. The Rank 3 Feathered Boots Gu hovers around. Two Spider Gu rest in their webs, stranded in midair. The Blood Rousing Incense floats in the sea beside one of the two Vitality Leaves, upon which is a curled Smell Lock Gu. Near these three is a swimming, fist-sized, blood-red rat! Its beady eyes are like precious rubies.

The Rank 2 Blood Qi Gu! Lo Jik didn't get to refine this Gu and received it as a reward. One the other vitality leaf rests a strange lump of green flesh. This lump looks slick and slippery. Observing the Gu for a few minutes will reveal incredibly thin slits in the center

of the flesh twitching rapidly.

The Rank 2 Seed Communication Gu! This Gu creates 7 seeds a day from its slits. When fed to someone, a Gu Master possessing this Gu can send their voice into the recipient's mind! There are several restrictions on this Gu. First, a seed's effect lasts 4 hours only. Second, the recipient and the speaker must be within 400 meters. Third, the recipient cannot communicate with the speaker.

It's one-sided communication.

Lo Jik knows two Gu Masters who own this Gu—Mo Bei and Fang Zheng. The former received it from Mo Yan, and the latter borrowed it from Qing Shu. This Gu is easy to feed and has satisfactory effects on a team. A scout can use the Gu to move ahead and relay information to the team behind them.

He shifts his focus from the Seed Communication Gu to another rare Gu. It's floating on the Primeval Sea, facing up. It's a striped, orange bee without wings and its stinger.

Rank 2 Tiger Strength Gu!

The use of such Gu is already known. Also, Lo Jik has strangely higher caps. He always could hold the strength of four boars. Or, this time, two boars and a tiger. However, this Gu is weaker than the rest. While Lo Jik used the last month to solidify a tiger's strength in his body, he didn't find many tigers to feed the Gu. The rise of wolves heavily shifted the Beasts' territories.

Lo Jik also has other Gu like Rattan Shield, Bamboo Warrior, and Spring Jump in his aperture. However, Blood Qi, Tiger Strength, and Seed Communication are the few well-received Gu by Lo Jik.

The remaining nine Gu? Lo Jik wants to sell them swiftly. However, he cannot sell them in Gu Yue Village without appropriate reasons and chooses to feed them for now. He can't let them die, right? What if he's in a situation where he needs them?

He heaves deeply. Things would be different if he were an Elder. He can effortlessly sell these Gu to the caravan or other Elders if he has a similar position.

'Soon,' he musters. 'I've already met Shen Cui in the bazaar. We haven't talked because I'm waiting for her to marry.'

Lo Jik is unwilling to expend any more effort until she marries. Wouldn't he be a fool for wasting his time if Fang Zheng took her as a concubine instead of a wife? He's already

done everything he can, short of kissing and fucking Shen Cui in Fang Zheng's presence.

'I'm aware of the differences in the ranks between the achievements in this world. A threesome with an Elder and an Elder's wife should net me a Golden Achievement. No, two Golden Achievements if I can get them to swap cum.'

After all, his Trait only registers a threesome and other group achievements once he creampie his partners or makes them swap his jizz with each other.

Lo Jik moves from his bed after a round of cultivation. He quietly wears the warmer inner shirt before donning his blue tunic and covering it with a light-blue, furlined kimono shirt. He picks the nearby bamboo wraps, tying them around his forearms and ankles, adjusting his bamboo shoes, and running his fingers through his hair to loosely comb them.

He rubs his cold nose as he steps out, inhaling the fresh air. His gaze brightens once he watches the beautiful snow.

Like Lo Jk, several Gu Masters can be seen walking down the southern exit, descending in small groups before collecting near a sharp cliff. From a bird's POV, one observes blue, brown, and white collecting together.

Gu Yue, Xiong, and Bai!

Like the Gu Yue Clan, Xiong and Bai Clan's Gu Masters wear similar uniforms with different color schemes.

The Xiong Clan dons brown, while the Bai clan assumes white and sky blue.

The Gu Masters of the three clans arrange themselves in neat rows, standing in the cold and gazing at the giant boulder atop the cliff carved into a hollowed building.

The Alliance Slope!

Gu Yue Clan's Second Patriarch formed the first alliance with the Bai and Xiong Clan on this hill. It's been used to set truces between the three clans for generations since that event.

Standing in the cold, the Gu Masters cannot help but talk with each other to alleviate their boredom. After all, talks between higher-ups tend to extend without rhyme or reason. Case in point—the negotiations have been going on for months without a

resolute conclusion!

Lo Jik observes the other Gu Masters.

Gu Masters of the Gu Yue Clan are leaner, projecting a fierce disposition cultivated through numerous dangerous encounters.

Gu Masters of the Xiong Clan are almost all buff and muscular. Like Gu Yue's Moonlight, the Xiong Clan has their signature Bear Strength Gu. Lo Jik desired that Gu until he used the Tiger Strength Gu.

Gu Masters from the Bai Clan are pale and skinny. They might look gentle in their soft, white tones. However, their signature Rank 1 Stream Gu is incredibly vicious—long-ranged and fatal! Anyone who underestimates them due to their exterior is a stupid motherfucker.

"Tch, I heard Qing Shu, Mo Yan, and Chi Shan advanced to Rank 3. The Gu Yue Clan is domineering!"

"Hehe! Don't feel so sad. Life of a young Elder may not be so easy."

"Hmph! That Mo Yan is already an Elder. She cut off my arm once, costing me a small fortune to heal it. Isn't she married?"

"Didn't you hear? She married a Rank 2 upstart."

"Psst, look, that Xiong Jiao Man. Don't fall for her delicate appearance. She is battle crazy!"

"Don't forget about Bai Zhong Shui! You don't know who she is? See that chubby girl? Yeah, her. She is promiscuous, and her Water Boar's Gu food is a man's essence. That woman killed a few men and fed their family jewels to her Gu. Don't ever get in a room alone with her!"

"Where is that Bai Ning Bing? I don't see her."

"Isn't she also an Elder? But I don't see her around the square."

The Alliance Slope started as a forested region, experiencing generations of changes and development to accommodate the Clan Leaders, turning the area into a town square surrounded by snow-capped forest.

“She isn’t here.”

More Gu Masters start discussing Bai Ning Bing.

“That girl was terrifying. She defeated every challenger during the last Gu Competition!”

“Didn’t she also defeat an Elder as Rank 2 Gu Master? I wonder how strong she is now that she’s already a Rank 3 Gu Master for years.”

“She’s the Bai Clan’s rising talent. But so what? Our Gu Yue Clan has Fang Zheng!”

Fang Zheng straightens his back once the conversation steers in his direction. Meanwhile, Lo Jik continues feeling a glare on his back. Glancing in that direction, Lo Jik meets Mo Bei’s gaze, politely smiling at his Brother-in-Law.

‘Oh, he’s planning to kill me. Isn’t he?’ Lo Jik returns to stare ahead. ‘Well,’ he shrugs internally. ‘Don’t mind if I strike preemptively, Dear Brother-in-Law. It’s not like I’ll get an achievement with you around. Instead, killing Mo Bei and Chi Cheng using the Wolf Tide might reduce pressure on me due to a lack of competition, allowing me to advance to Peak Stage without others finding trouble with me.’

He considers all this as the three Clan Leaders stand and overlook the gathering. Gu Yue Bo announces the finalization of the Three-Clan-Alliance, issuing the start of the Gu Competition. Of course, he cautions the Gu Masters to stop before fatal attacks.

The Alliance always issues such a competition to help relieve the grudges between their other members. After all, they need to work together to survive the Wolf Tides.

The Alliance Slope descends into silence. Nobody wants to readily step out. What if they challenge someone and lose? It will be a humiliating experience for their clan.

Bai Ning Bing swept the competition the previous time, confidently dealing with her opponents. However, the Gu Master from the Bai Clan stepping out looks slightly hesitant as he walks over to the Gu Yue Clan’s region. He exhales sharply and recovers his composure. His team stands beside him as they meet the Gu Yue Clansmen’s gazes.

“Who is Gu Yue Lo Jik? Your wife, Mo Yan, cut my arm before! A husband shares his wife’s sins! Step out! I challenge you.”

Lo Jik blinks in surprise. Other Gu Masters hear these words, understanding the *‘reason’* behind them before parting, leaving an open path between the Bai Gu Master and an

impassive Lo Jik.

“I’m Bai Shu Zhe! Face me!”

Lo Jik narrows his eyes, deciding to take the challenge. Mo Yan and her reputation are important to him. Publicly defending her is one of the best ways in Lo Jik’s arsenal to maintain their relationship. He may sound like a broken record here. However, his Trait provides many advantages when coupled with a stable relationship. After all, this world also has crazy gals like that Bai Zhong Shui, fucking men to feed her Gu. So, Lo Jik prefers Mo Yan over others.

He calmly steps out as others notice the difference between their sizes. Lo Jik is only eating healthy and growing taller and bulkier. His body is built like a fortress. Surely, muscles alone mean shit when Gu like Boar and Tiger Strength exist. However, his well-maintained physique displays his discipline and commitment to a healthy lifestyle.

Bai Shu Zhe sneers.

“So, you’re Gu Yue Lo Jik. Hmph, I will act the bigger man this once and let you off if you apologize.” He begins with malicious intentions. “Say these words—Mo Yan was wrong, and she deserves to be treated like the slut she is!” Shu Zhe evidently holds a deep grudge against Mo Yan, going as far as to publicly humiliate her. Still, Lo Jik agrees internally. His Mo Yan DOES deserves to be treated like the shameless slut she is!

Lo Jik smiles, “Which arm did she take, Brother Shu Zhe?”

The man chuckles coldly. “Brother? You are not my brother! Hmph, your wench took cut this arm—”

He raises his right arm when Lo Jik kicked!

They are still a distance away. However, a sharp Moonblade flies, reflecting the cold morning sun.

*\*Slash\**

*\*Pfft\**

A geyser of blood drenches the cold snow under their feet as Shu Zhe tumbles to his right, losing his right leg!

“AAAGGGGHHHHHH!”



“Ssh!” Lo Jik crosses the distance, placing his left bare feet against the man’s neck and silencing his scream. “Don’t shout, Brother Shu Zhe. It’s bad manners. See? Now you can remember me, too. Aren’t we couple great?”

The crowd is stunned before they explode. One of the elders from the Bai Clan screams. “Apprehend that shameless Junior! How dare he attack before any warning?!”

“Warning?” Lo Jik presses his feet against Shu Zhe’s neck, stopping others from approaching him as the Bai Gu Master spasms with his eyes rolling into his skull.

“He challenged me. The battle started already, you Dumb Fart. Did your mother drop you on your head?”

The Elder pales, unable to believe a boy half his age is insulting him. Fury boils in his veins as Lo Jik crouches to pick up the bleeding Shu Zhe. “Here!” He tosses the man several meters away. “Heal him, or let him die. Doesn’t matter to me.”

“You arrogant junior!” The elder seethes when another from the Gu Yue Clan retorts sharply.

“Who are you calling arrogant? Your Clan’s Gu Master was the arrogant one! How dare he try to insult Elder Mo Yan’s honor?”

While there are internal conflicts within any organization, the Elders unite against external forces. Mo Yan quietly stares at Lo Jik with slight fondness before darkly glancing at Shu Zhe.

“Did that just happen?!”

“This junior is too galling!”

“Shit! Didn’t Bai Ning Bing cut someone’s arm, too? That’s why the Xiong’s Clan Elder stepped to challenge her before losing his arm, too!”

Meanwhile, the Gu Masters of the Gu Yue Clan have a different conversation.

“This scene is familiar, right?”

“Hmm, am I seeing things?”

“Isn’t this like last time?”



***Title: Gift***

After the awkward end of the first match, others refrained from challenging Lo Jik due to his dishonest act. Several Gu Masters compete at once. Colorful attacks flicker in the Alliance Square as the competition continues for hours. Such a competition allows the Gu Masters to vent and respect each other's skills. Many undoubtedly refrained from revealing their trump cards.

Some Gu Masters challenged Fang Yuan. However, the latter admitted defeat without fighting. This shamed and pricked Gu Yue's Gu Masters' pride and ego, prompting Fang Zheng to reciprocate and accept these offers. Others tossed contemptuous glances at Fang Yuan while Lo Jik is left wondering if his clan's Gu Masters are so forgetful that they don't remember the skills the youth showed during their graduation!

The competition only eases once the sky darkens, allowing the Clan Leaders to explain the alliance's rules. First, murdering fellow Gu Masters is forbidden. A team will be sent to investigate such cases. The criminals will be exiled from their respective clans before the three clans judge them. The criminal's family shall face the consequences should they flee the mountain.

Second, a dead Gu Master's Gu Worms must be returned to their respective Clan. Such acts will gain them credits known as '*merit points*.' Defaulting this rule and using another clan's Gu Master's Gu will subject the wrongful party to the same punishment as murdering an alliance mate.

Third, a Gu Master must help other teams despite their private grudges.

There were several more rules. However, almost all these rules provided fair compensation through Merit Points for the Merit Exchange Board!

A Primeval Stone's consumption during the Beast Tides favors the replenishment of a Gu Master's essence rather than being a currency. So, the Clans use these Merit Points as temporary currency capable of being exchanged for listed rewards. These rewards are precious for two reasons. First, the Clan uses many rare Gu Worms from their stocks. Second, the Exchange Board can exchange Gu from the other two clans since it's a combined pool of resources! Of course, the Clans' signature Gu isn't on the exchange board. However, there are enough benefits to motivate almost all Gu Masters!

The three clans set a daily quota for Gu Masters, compelling them to work and

contribute to the Clan's survival. Every Gu Master must kill 5 wolves a day! They can scoop out the Wolves' eyes as evidence and exchange them for 10 merit points an eye.

The Clan Leaders also stoked the Gu Masters' love for honor and pride by stating how the Battle Exchange Board would be the actual competition between the teams since they had to limit themselves during the day's spar.

As for Lo Jik?

He returned home to his wife's loving embrace, who was more than willing to show her appreciation for his brave act of protecting her honor. What's more? She loved every second of Lo Jik stripping her of that decency, moaning his name till she could only scream incoherently.

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"Here," Lo Jik hands the blood-drenched pouch to a Rank 1 Gu Master, who glances at the content before controlling a Gu Worm. Lo Jik looks behind the Gu Master. His gaze lands on a massive board that now graces the village square. This board has hundreds of names! Looking at the top left corner, one will see the names Bai Bing Yi, Xiong Li, and Fang Zheng. These are the top three teams in the Qing Mao Mountain. Meanwhile, Fang Yuan and Lo Jik's names stay on the bottom right side.

Lo Jik watches his merit increase by ten. Even the Rank 1 Gu Master, who updated his information, cannot help but reveal slight contempt for Lo Jik. Indifferent to it, Lo Jik observes the rewards list.

'Blood Qi and other Blood Gu,' Lo Jik narrows his eyes. Qing Mao Mountain has a surprising number of Blood Gu since the Gu Yue, Bai, and Xiong Clans had several such Gu in their coffers. Lo Jik always wondered if Mo Yan had a knack for Blood Gu. However, it looks like Qing Mao Mountain produced Blood Path Gu, too.

If Lo Jik didn't have so many Gu, he would exchange his merit points for the Rank 2 Blood Stream Gu. He could use the Gu to produce buckets of blood and feed his other Blood Gu. Meanwhile, Blood Stream survives on river water.

'Actually,' Lo Jik blinks. 'I have to unload the Gu in my aperture anyway. Should I purchase Blood Stream? There are only three Blood Stream Gu Worms in the listed rewards, costing about 1500 Primeval Stones's worth of merit points. All these Gu are at a discount to encourage other Gu Masters.'

He decides to purchase the Gu in these few days. Since he needs to feed the eyes to his Heavenly Piercing Eye, Lo Jik only gives the minimum number to fulfill his daily

quota.

As he turns around, he finds Fang Yuan returning to the Village Square, stepping up the stage and completing his daily mission. A wave of commotion spreads when they glance at each other.

“Look! Fang Zheng reached the second position!”

“He is young but effortlessly competes with his seniors’ rivals! This Fang Zheng makes me proud of being a Gu Yue!”

“Haha! Too good! Brother Fang Zheng will reach the top position soon!”

The competition between the top three spots is fierce. The top two positions keep changing between each other. However, it’s the first time Fang Zheng rose to the second spot, making many Gu Yue Gu Masters puff their chest out proudly.

Fang Zheng accepts the praises with a moderate flush as he unconsciously glances at the two lone figures on the stage. Fang Yuan looks impassive while Lo Jik smiles back at the youth. Yet, Fang Zheng cannot help but feel pity for the two men.

He isn’t as secure as before and doesn’t feel suppressed by the duo’s presence. As Gu Yue Bo said, success is the only medicine for Fang Zheng’s condition.

‘The Clan Leader promoted Elder Brother as a team leader, and Elder Mo Yan did the same for Lo Jik. However, these two did not accept any teammate, stubbornly tackling the dangerous wilderness alone. Sigh. Can they not see one person’s power is limited? I was nervous to lead the team when Senior Brother Qing Shu became an Elder. However, my teammates helped and guided me, allowing me to eventually lead them. Unknowingly, I’m already a Rank 2 Peak Stage Gu Master and second in Merit Points. Look, Elder Brother, Lo Jik. Everyone is kind to me. It’s because I show kindness to others. Aren’t you two tired of being alone?’

Fang Zheng clutches his fists before smiling brightly. “Thank you, everyone! I’m going to the Academy for the Graduation Competition. Let’s look at the new talents and help them through the Wolf Tides.”

Others instantly agree.

Lo Jik muses, ‘Another graduation, eh?’

His smile broadens as he recalls his graduation from last year. He is already

seventeen... and married.

'Ah!' he blinks. 'Isn't there that 90% aptitude Zie Qi? Let's go look at him.' Lo Jik idly speaks to Fang Yuan for formality's sake. "Would you like to check this year's talent, Batchmate Fang?"

Subverting his expectations, Fang Yuan smiles back. "Of course."

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Other teams are eager to adopt new Gu Masters since they will receive lucrative concessions from the village to accommodate swift growth for the graduates and improve their workforce. The Gu Masters also need slight respite from their arduous crusade against the Wolf Packs, steadily reducing their numbers!

"It's already the time for these saplings to grow beyond the academy."

"Sigh! These children have it lucky."

"It's no matter. We are effortlessly dealing with those wolves. Our clan's Battle Elders also provide support, reducing our losses."

"Don't be so careless. Didn't you hear about the Bai Clan?"

"Tch! That Bai Ning Bing is too daring! She actually wants to challenge our Battle Elders while suppressing her cultivation!"

"Oh, look! That's Mo Bei of Mo Faction. Hehe. He's already a Rank 2 Upper Stage Gu Master."

"Chi Cheng doesn't look good. The competition between the Mo and Chi Faction is ferocious."

"Psst. Look at that girl. She's so beautiful. She's Elder Yao Ji's granddaughter, right?"

"The youth beside her must be..."

"That's him," One of Fang Zheng's teammates points out as the youth glances at the lean, dark-haired boy. Unlike others, the boy casually talking with Gu Yue Yao Le looks refined and mature. His fair skin seems more beautiful than the women around him, and he has a red birthmark in the center of his forehead.

“Gu Yue Zie Qi,” Fang Zheng nods. His gaze turns slightly complicated as he looks at Zie Qi. Unlike others, Fang Zheng knows that Zie Qi possesses the aptitude of 99% Essence! However, Fang Zheng is no longer an insecure child. Instead of viewing Zie Qi as a rival, Fang Zheng finds Zie Qi’s appearance convenient.

‘If he replaces me in the team...’ Fang Zheng quietly muses. ‘I didn’t share my thoughts with the Clan Leader or Senior Brother Qing. I know they will try to stop me. However, I don’t wish to wait. Others look at me and see an opportunity. Only Shen Cui cares about me. How can I disappoint her? My duty to the clan won’t interfere with my promises to Cui’er. That’s the kind of man I want to be!’

“That’s Zie Qi?” Lo Jik smiles while leaning from his seat. “Did you know Zie Qi is an outstanding artist, Batchmate Fang? He painted the scene of his half-yearly graduation where he took out a wolf pack of 30 wolves!”

Fang Yuan smiles, nodding. “Talented indeed. I heard Gu Yue Zie Qi trains during the night, refining his martial arts nonstop.”

“Any team will be lucky to have him. Alas, our teams are the last ones he will consider,” Lo Jik shakes his head.

Other Gu Masters refrain from sitting around the duo, creating a conspicuous ring of unattended seats. Lo Jik doesn’t mind this situation. Others might use his lack of efforts against Mo Yan. However, Lo Jik already displayed his sincerity. However, even if Mo Yan doesn’t mind other Elders using Lo Jik’s bad ranking, she is curious why Lo Jik doesn’t accept a team.

His reply at the time was hunting alone was his preference. But Mo Yan’s worries require more than such assurances.

‘The Gu Masters are only dealing with crippled and old wolves. The actual terror of the Wolf Packs will start in the summer when healthy wolves leave their liars to hunt in Qing Mao Mountain. It will be hard to deal with Mo Yan’s worries then. She might even do something behind my back for my well-being, which may worsen the situation.’

Spouses tend to hide things from their partners if they feel their acts are FOR their partner’s well-being. What if Mo Yan secretly tails him, discovering some of his secrets?

Lo Jik is confident in his scouting ability. However, the Heaven Piercing Eye is not infallible. First, the Gu does not sharpen his vision. So, Lo Jik’s scouting range does not exceed the limits of his eyesight. Second, he can only scout one direction at a time. He knows he won’t be able to discover an enemy too far from him. The situation shall worsen if the other party possesses a Gu that enhances their eyesight.

Mo Yan has a Rank 3 Gu, True Mind Eye. This Gu enhances the five senses exponentially at the cost of mental fatigue! Mo Yan can effortlessly keep track of him. Others would feel disoriented by using such a Gu. However, she has years of scouting experience.

'Even if I produce good results, it might not lessen Mo Yan's worries. The only way to appease her would be by advancing to Rank 3. However, I cannot do that. Others won't stop trying to find my secret. After all, I'm still a C-grader even if I lie about discovering an Inheritance. A Gu Master like must possess special cultivation-assisting Gu to break into Rank 3.'

He feels slightly pressured.

Lo Jik also doesn't want to enter Rank 3 until he tries having a threesome.

'I'll have to look at other Elders' wives if Fang Zheng doesn't marry Shen Cui.'

Lo Jik isn't set on ruining Fang Zheng's life. However, bedding Shen Cui is merely the most effortless option available to him.

The competition begins.

Students step on the three stages, fighting against each other and displaying their practice with Moonlight Gu. They try their hardest. However, other Gu Masters soon lose their interest. After all, this batch didn't have favored juniors aside from Yao Le and Zie Qi.

"They are barely any good."

"The last year's batch was the cream of the crop."

"Sigh, we were hoping too much."

There are also other Gu Masters who accept the positive side.

"You can't say that. Remember what happened last year?"

"Ah! You mean those rogues!"

"How can we forget? Lo Jik and Fang Yuan robbed their classmates blind!"



“Exactly!”

“Even if their martial prowess is average, the batch’s cultivation is significantly better than the previous year’s students!”

Only Zie Qi stood out compared to the rest. As expected, the youth won the match against Yao Le. While the crowd didn’t witness an almost choreographed fight like before, they still cheered for Zie Qi.

Something strange transpired when others believed Fang Zheng would have a tough competition since Zie Qi is a Rank 2 Initial Stage Gu Master.

As Mo Bei, Chi Cheng, and the Rank 2 Leader of the Medicine Faction ferociously competed for Zie Qi, Fang Zheng made a move and brought Zie Qi under his team—surprising everyone!

Other Elders glanced at Gu Yue Bo, who looked calm.

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Gu Yue Bo quietly stares at Fang Zheng. The former sits in the Clan Leader’s chair while the latter stands in the middle of the hall. The aged Rank 4 Gu Master glances at Fang Zheng with complex emotions.

How can Gu Yue Bo not understand the intent behind Fang Zheng’s action?

Fang Zheng wants to advance to Rank 3! However, he doesn’t want to leave his team without the necessary seeds to let them rise through the ranks again. Zie Qi will grow and lead the team.

“Nobody is stopping you from marrying,” Gu Yue Bo sighs.

That’s the crucial cause!

Gu Yue Bo knows Shen Cui latched onto Fang Zheng to leave her maid status. However, he never revealed this to Fang Zheng. Why would he? Doing so may cause Fang Zheng to resent the Clan Leader and the Clan! So, Gu Yue Bo doesn’t mind Fang Zheng marrying Shen Cui now and leaving her later once he realizes the truth.

“No, Lord Clan Leader,” Fang Zheng bows slightly. “I don’t wish to marry Shen Cui and later be forced to push her as my concubine once I advance. I want to reach Rank 3 and marry my beloved. I know it’s not what you want me to do. However, I am unwilling to

back down. Senior Brother Qing Shu uses his cultivation to protect our Clansmen, reducing the casualties from the Wolf Packs. I want to do the same. Why must I force myself to stay at Rank 2?"

His expression turns heavy.

"There is also Bai Ning Bing. She represents the Bai Clan's fangs. How long will they sit still? Our clan must be ready to meet their rise and suppress them. Possessing more Elders might dilute some benefits. However, we will incur reduced losses. We might gain more from the Bai Clan's remains once we deal with them!"

Gu Yue Bo blinks in surprise. He never expected Fang Zheng to think all this.

Thinking about it, Gu Yue Bo is forced to accept that even Qing Shu's advancement helped his faction more since the green-haired Gu Master snatched the initiative.

"I see," Gu Yue Bo mutters before questioning, "What do you think about Gu Yue Zie Qi?"

"Clan Leader?" Fang Zheng blinks.

"Given his relationship with Elder Yao's granddaughter, one might expect him to enter the Medicine Faction. However, he chose your group."

Fang Zheng frowns.

It's true. Was Zie Qi not afraid of the competition Fang Zheng represented?

"Sigh," Gu Yue Bo shakes his head. "He also rejected Mo and Chi Faction's offers. What is he thinking?"

"Anyway," Gu Yue Bo nods at Fang Zheng. "I accept your decision, Fang Zheng. I shall stand by your side."

"Thank you, Lord Clan Leader!" Fang Zheng beams and bows deeply.

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'Hehe~! I acted Lowkey before striking rich, just like in those reincarnation novels!' Zie Qi lies in his academy dorm. 'That Yao Le is cute, too! I would have joined her team if Fang Zheng hadn't invited me. I can learn a lot from the leader of Gu Yue's strongest team.'

'It's already been a year since I arrived in this world. It's good that I remained lowkey. My aperture is slightly weird, allowing me to focus on practicing martial arts entirely!'

'Hah! I'll rise through the ranks and find more lovers. Yao Le is only the beginning.'

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"Cui Cui!"

An excited voice spreads in the house as Shen Cui almost drops the cup in her hand. She wipes her hand and places the soapy cup on the counter before greeting Fang Zheng with a sweet smile.

"Welcome back, Young Master. How was the compe—eh?!"

She gasps as Fang Zheng holds her hand, pulling her into a hug. Her mother, the house's head servant, is not far away, watching with approval in her gaze.

However, Fang Zheng's words shock them all!

"Marry me, Cui'er! I settled everything. You won't be anybody's mistress. My wife, Cui'er. Will you be my wife?"

He hugs her tighter as tears unconsciously spill from Shen Cui's eyes. She cannot help but feel moved by Fang Zheng's sincerity. Yet, why does she find the image of a brown-haired man flashing before her eyes?

They don't talk anymore.

They don't look at each other anymore.

"Yes," she sobs. It doesn't matter anyway. She wanted this, didn't she?

Fang Zheng went above and beyond for her. It's time she selves her foolish thoughts.

Lo Jik was wrong about their relationship. Fang Zheng didn't take her as a concubine but as his wife!

He was wrong!

Shen Cui chants in her heart.

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The news of Fang Zheng entering closed-door cultivation spread like wildfire, shocking the entire Clan!

Another Bai Ning Bing!

Gu Yue's Hope!

Such titles adorned his name. Even more surprising was his devotion to his lover. The story of how Fang Zheng withstood pressure from all sides to stay true to his love made many women shed emotional tears. Others stared at Shen Cui with unconcealed envy! Their marriage is set to commence after Fang Zheng leaves his cultivation.

Past issues about the couple's life also emerge, painting Lo Jik as the bad guy. However, Gu Masters and Elders alike didn't dare go overboard. Lo Jik is an elder's husband. He also attacks without caution, already attaining a reputation for cutting others' legs. How can other Gu Masters not fear him?

Meanwhile, Mo Yan is no longer a budding Elder. She surpassed Chi Shan in terms of assembling her Gu. Her skills are also more helpful than a streamlined attacking Gu Master. As the Wolf Tide becomes ferocious, her scouting ability may prove handy! Besides, attacking Mo Yan's reputation is offending the entire Mo Faction!

As if suppressed by public opinion, Lo Jik doesn't stroll around in the bazaar. Shen Cui doesn't know what to think of it.

It's already been three days. Fang Zheng should emerge in the coming four days!

It is all so sudden that Shen Cui cannot completely wrap her head around—

A hand covers her mouth before snatching her from the empty street under the gloomy afternoon sky. Her eyes widen as her back is pinned against the wall of bamboo. Her wide brown eyes tremble when she meets her former *'friend's'* cold gaze.

She gulps, tapping Lo Jik's sturdy and thick forearm in panic. Her gaze begs him to refrain from doing anything regretful as he smirks.

"You think that little of me? That's fine, too."

Her shoulders tremble as he leans forward, whispering into her ear. "I'm going to lower my hand. Scream at your own responsibility."

She nods, gasping for air once Lo Jik uncovers her nose and mouth.

“I heard about your marriage, Shen Cui. Congratulations,” Lo Jik sneers. “I’m sure Fang Zheng will keep you happy.” The sarcasm doesn’t fly past her head as she grits her teeth. “You don’t know anything about Young Master Fang Zheng!”

“I know he’s doing something wrong, or we wouldn’t have almost kissed,” Lo Jik leans back while crossing his arms.

“We didn’t,” Shen Cui retorts icily. “Please refrain from joking like this, Lord Lo Jik. Our spouses are Elders. It’s not appropriate.”

“You’re yet to marry Fang Zheng,” Lo Jik smirks. “I can still kill you for speaking to me like that.”

Shen Cui bites her bottom lip, staring defiantly at Lo Jik. Lo Jik doesn’t shy away from her stubborn gaze.

“So,” he sighs. “He is going to become an Elder, eh? I can only hope the Wolf Tide worsens.”

“What?” Shen Cui squawks.

“Your husband will be busy if the Wolf Tide worsens,” Lo Jik snarks. “I hope we have the worst year.”

“You cannot talk that way about Fang Zheng!” Shen Cui scowls.

“Oh? And who’ll stop me? You?”

Shen Cui clenches her fists. She lowers her head, indignance flashing in her gaze. “You were the one who married Elder Mo Yan.”

“And?” Lo Jik cocks his head. “Did you expect me to make you smile and send you to Fang Zheng’s bed daily? Don’t be naive, Cui. Everyone except Fang Zheng knows why you’re with him. Aren’t you happy? It’s finally happening.”

“I am!” She snarls. “I am leaping with joy! Got it? Why did you have to appear now?!” Her gaze snaps at him, revealing her watering eyes.

“Why?” Lo Jik shrugs. “To hand you your wedding present. I don’t think Fang Zheng will

let me give it to you. Here.”

He fishes out a nail-sized jade-green seed.

Shen Cui blankly stares at the seed as Lo Jik brings it to her face. He gently caresses her lips with his thumb as her body trembles, and she closes her eyes. Tears pill down her round cheeks.

“Is that poison? My gift?” She whispers, puckering her lips against Lo Jik’s thumb.

“You have to do better and think even worse than that of me,” Lo Jik smiles, pulling her bottom lip. “I will never poison you, Shen Cui. I can’t hurt you.” He whispers sincerely, his masculine scent traveling to her nose as she feels him approach her. The cold seems to vanish due to the heat radiating from his body.

“My gift is worse than poison,” she feels him whisper on her lips. Her petite frame shudders. She sniffs loudly.

“Just say the word. I’ll stop.”

“N-no,” Shen Cui replies. Her hand slowly reaches for his, and their fingers interlock as she refuses softly. “Please, don’t.” Yet, she stands on the balls of her toes, chin raised.

“Hmm.” Lo Jik nods.

Suddenly, he pushes something inside Shen Cui’s mouth. Her eyes snap wide, and she unconsciously gulps the seed!

“What was that?”

She pulls back, letting go of Lo Jik’s hand.

“Your gift,” a voice replies in her head.

It’s Lo Jik’s voice. However, his lips don’t move!

“Don’t look so confused. It’s one-sided communication, Cui. Congratulations on your marriage.”

She blinks in surprise as Lo Jik quietly leaves without further explanation.

What just happened?

The woman stays rooted before quickly wiping her tears and leaving the spot.

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Seed Communication acts like a radio with seven distinct channels. A Gu Master can switch channels to communicate with seven individuals or send noise around them. The former allows leaders to calmly set formations and direct changes in the middle of the combat. The latter lets Scouts share information alongside audio samples if they are unsure.

Lo Jik uses this Gu for his debauched means!

His grove is in the same residential area as Fang Zheng's Uncle's home.

So, Shen Cui can hear it all because he wants her to!

Lo Jik correctly stated that Shen Cui should have the lowest possible impression of him!

"Hnngh~! Right there! Mmmgh! Ah- You're incorrigible, Jik! What would others think if they saw me in this position?"

"They'll think you're a lucky slut," he grunts as his firm and consistent pistons resound in Shen Cui's senses, making her further curl in their bedding. She hugs her thighs around her hand. Shen Cui lies in Fang Zheng's spot, furiously fingering herself and rubbing her wet entrance as she bites on her blanket.

Her toes curl at the mere sound of Lo Jik and Shen Cui fucking like animals for almost 2 hours now!

She was shocked when the voices appeared in her mind earlier. However, she quickly retired to her bedroom after the first hour.

Shen Cui's body shudders as she orgasms on her fingers again, staining their sheets! Her glassy eyes stare ahead in a daze, envisioning Lo Jik slamming down on Mo Yan's *'allegedly'* tight cunt with her legs spread wide open. She can imagine his full balls slapping against her flesh, pushing thick loads of cum from her filled entrance with each pump. Shen Cui's ears heat up as she hears Mo Yan begging Lo Jik to fuck her from behind. The dignified Mo Yan sounds like a total slut!

Shen Cui hears Mo Yan sucking Lo Jik's cock, wantonly moaning.

'Her ass?'

Shen Cui's eyes go round. Deep crimson freckles her cheeks as her fingers gently poke and prod her anus. 'He is going to press his thick cock in there?' Her breath hitches at the thought. It's scary!

'But Fang Zheng and I never did it here,' she bites her bottom lip. The thought further frustrates her when Lo Jik ends the communication, leaving Shen Cui curious. However, his words resound in her mind.

"Did you enjoy that gift? I have more. Meet me in the same spot tomorrow."

Shen Cui covers herself with the blanket, quietly working on herself as she thinks illicitly, 'Lo Jik likes butts. I heard a few maids talking about it. It's supposed to be pleasing after some practice.' She imagines Lo Jik's throbbing member piercing her butt hole after using her quim for hours, filling it to the brim with his hot seed. Her breath shudders as she—

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"—cumming~!" Mo Yan squirts on the mattress as she feels her ass clamping down on Lo Jik's fat cock. He promptly smacks her round ass, leaving a red mark on her pale skin. Her eyes roll into her skull as she feels better in her ass. Lo Jik doesn't last too long either, painting her insides white before leaning against her with a grunt, hugging her from behind.

"That was amazing!" Lo Jik pants as Mo Yan hums aloud, still enjoying his tender embrace.

"I'm glad you like it. Shit Eating Gu is easy to find. It took me a while to obtain the Elastic Skin Gu," Mo Yan smiles brightly despite her disheveled state. These two are Rank 1 Gu Worms. The former is popular among Gu Masters about to enter closed-door cultivation. Once activated, this one-time Gu will take care of one's excrement for three days. Meanwhile, the latter temporarily enhances the stretchability of one's skin.

Lo Jik chuckles. "It was worth it," he compliments. "It felt good."

"That's the point," Mo Yan shifts slightly, resting her head on his chest as they settle on their bed. "I've been slightly busy these days and wanted to do something nice."

"Now I feel bad for only doing the bare minimum against the wolf packs," Lo Jik huffs.





It's his brother's wedding banquet. Hehe, how can he miss it?

Qing Shu cannot help but sigh in his heart. He's the one who *'persuaded'* Fang Yuan to join the banquet. It took some Primeval Stones out of the Elder's pocket since he understood it was the easiest way to compel Fang Yuan.

Despite the twin's strained relationship, the Clan Leader and Qing Shu cannot have Fang Zheng reveal his distaste for his Elder Brother. It's an unfilial act. The duo wants Fang Zheng to grow and succeed as the Clan Leader. How can they have such a blemish on Fang Zheng's reputation? Instead, inviting Fang Yuan shows his open-minded nature!

Of course, there is another person whom Fang Zheng dislikes with the ability to join the banquet.

Qing Shu glances at the handsome, brown-haired man. He doesn't like growing his hair, and his chiseled appearance makes him a rarity among other elders with long hair tied back or in top knots with long beards. Qing Shu understands why one wouldn't want beards unless they have an appropriate Gu to use with it.

Feeling his stare, Lo Jik glances at her and nods. He's alone like Fang Yuan. His wife congratulates the couple alone due to Lo Jik's and Fang Zheng's past.

"You look ravishing," a hot whisper makes Shen Cui feel butterflies in her stomach as the voice's wife gifts a Rank 2 Gu to the duo. Lo Jik smirks at Shen Cui's reactions. He's been teasing her for most of the banquet, filling her head with many lurid ideas and promises. From unwrapping her gown to taking her in everyone's presence—he tickles all her darkest fantasies. It's a pity Lo Jik won't be able to take her tonight and confirm if he gets the Golden Achievement.

Shen Cui's toes curl as she *'accidentally'* glances at Lo Jik with a reproachful glare.

"Now, now," he whispers. "Such a stare makes me want to spank your ass red, dear." They've been at this play for a few days now, with Lo Jik denying her any physical contact and only filling her head with him fucking his wife every night for hours!

So, it's been an exhausting week for Lo Jik, Mo Yan, and Shen Cui.

She looks away while Lo Jik glances around, locating Gu Yue Zie Qi trying to chat with Gu Yue Yao Le.

“Forgive me, Yao Le,” Zie Qi smirks appeasingly. “I wanted to face the wolf tides. How can I protect you from those damned wolves if I don’t kill them?”

Yao Le keeps pouting, crossing her arms, and making Zie Qi work for her forgiveness. The spectating Elders smile at each other before glancing at Yao Ji meaningfully.

‘Bruh, face the wolf tide?’ Lo Jik blinks, feeling speechless. He’s seen many *‘loyal’* Gu Masters, but someone volunteering to endure the wolf tide is new for him. Even Lo Jik, with his accumulation, refuses to throw himself to the Wolf Tide. It’s not about gaining any advantages. He’ll earn much from the wolves and the beast king’s remains. It’s about the Primeval endurance.

‘It’s strange,’ Lo Jik muses. ‘Didn’t Zie Qi and others already learn about the exhaustion of Primeval Essence? I would use other pick-up lines.’

As expected, Yao Le snorts, muttering, “They’ll tear you to shreds, silly! What can we do once we exhaust our Primeval Essence?”

Zie Qi snickers without explaining further. There are other Rank 2 Gu Masters, too. Fang Zheng’s teammates, Mo Bei, Chi Cheng, and other Gu Masters from his batch are present.

It’s a joyful banquet!

However, everything is temporary.

Shen Cui quietly hugs her man, panting raggedly as the latter sleeps in her embrace. She’s naked, left to her devices after consummating their marriage. She cannot hear Lo Jik’s and Mo Yan’s sex either. After all, one seed lasts for 4 hours. However, she can imagine that couple going at it without respite while she’s left soaked and wanting.

The woman cannot help but stroke Fang Zheng’s slightly plain face. She glances at the jade bracelet around her husband’s wrist, feeling guilty about her thoughts. Her mind and heart don’t respond to Fang Zheng. She’s taken, right? Even if she married someone else, she’s already someone else’s woman.

‘He must be angry at me,’ Shen Cui chews her lips in frustration. ‘Why else would he continue torturing me like that?’

She reluctantly sleeps, feeling bothered. Shen Cui doesn’t dare wake Fang Zheng up with her noises should she touch herself.

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Shen Cui stares at Lo Jik quietly. Her expressive brown eyes refuse to swallow his seed, staring at him with expectations and indignance. The last night was all she needed to understand the difference. She wants to feel like Mo Yan, teased and spent. Shen Cui wishes to lie on her beloved's chest with an exhausted but happy smile. She wants his finger brushing her disarrayed hair and patting her firmly-spanked ass.

"What is it?" Lo Jik smiles.

Annoyed, Shen Cui glances away, purposely revealing her jade earrings. When Lo Jik narrows his eyes, the woman nibbles her bottom lip while steadily plucking the jewelry from her ears and looking at Lo Jik again. Her bottom lip wobbles as she clenches the earring in her fist.

"Swallow it," Lo Jik commands softly. He extends his rough, thick digits to stroke her fair and soft cheek. She nods, swallowing the jade-green seed.

"Now close your eyes," his voice appears in her head again. His thumb teasingly presses into her bottom lip as Shen Cui shuts her eyes, raising her chin. Her shoulders tremble when Lo Jik catches her chin between his thumb and curled index. She feels his breath against her lips before his lips take hers. Her body seizes in shock despite expecting this. Shen Cui's clenched fists loosen when she feels Lo Jik's other hand interlocking with hers. His tongue does wonder inside her mouth, making her heartbeat speed up!

Shen Cui soon melts into his embrace, feeling comforted to have her petite frame against his bulky one. Her soft melons press into his lower chest as Lo Jik's hand around her chin snakes down to her waist.

"Hmm," Shen Cui softly mewls as he wraps his thick around her waist, keeping his firm hand atop her needy ass.

"Good," Lo Jik opens his mouth. "Now you know whom you belong to."

His gaze glints as he pecks her lips again. "We're done if you sleep with Fang Zheng."

Lo Jik doesn't care whom Shen Cui sleeps with. He admits he likes Mo Yan. However, he will never mistakenly attach himself to a mortal. It's how this world works. But he represents the *wildness* Shen Cui is aching to feel. How can he not keep the act when—

***[Fang Zheng's Number One Enemy (Silver): Kissed Shen Cui For The First Time. Parties Involved—Host, Shen Cui.]***

***[Serving Lips (Bronze/Repeatable): Made Out With Shen Cui. Parties Involved—Host, Shen Cui.]***

Hot damn!

It works!

“But,” Shen Cui sputters, not knowing what to say as Lo Jik pins her against the bamboo wall. “But what?”

“Young Master might...” She looks down.

“Do you want me to teach you how to keep a man happy?” Lo Jik raises her chin, staring into her eyes. “Kneel.” His voice booms in her head.

Shen Cui gulps, slowly kneeling on the cold ground as Lo Jik gently tugs his trousers, letting his erection spring out. “Your hands.” He looks at her, extending his hand. Dazedly, Shen Cui lets Lo Jik grip her wrists with one hand as he yanks them upward, locking her in her kneeling position. He adjusts his cock against her lips as Shen Cui opens them, inviting Lo Jik into her mouth.

She's doing it!

Her lower lips turn wet at a rapid pace as Lo Jik forcibly shoves his cock into her mouth, making her gag and choke. Shen Cui's voice fails to attract anybody since this grove housed a group of late hunters who died to wolves.

The girl looks at Lo Jik, meeting his illicit gaze as his voice continues guiding her. “Do you feel this? You're married to Fang Zheng, and you have your duties. Don't I know that? You heard us for days, right?”

She gently starts bobbing her head, opening her pretty lips wide to suck and slurp his cock.

“I'm reasonable, Shen Cui. But I won't let Fang Zheng have another go at you. Find other ways to please him. Spike his food with drugs to lower his excitement—I don't care.”

He gently pats her head, careful enough to not ruin her hair, as he suddenly shoves his

cock deep into her throat, making her eyes go wide as his erection throbs powerfully before releasing his sticky essence down her pipe!

She loudly coughs, saliva and cum spatter out from her mouth as Lo Jik lets go of her hands.

He kneels by her side, using a handkerchief to wipe her chin. "You did good," he whispers.

"Y-Yes," Shen Cui nods. She tries to kiss him when Lo Jik smilingly stops her. "Remember. I will know when you break our promise, Cui. Let's end for the day. I'll teach you several things and always cum inside your mouth once. You know what you need to do after that?"

"What?" Shen Cui gulps, feeling her body react in the right way for all the wrong reasons!

"Bring those beautiful lips to your husband and kiss him with that cum-stained mouth of yours."

Her eyes widen before something dark and lewd brews in her gaze.

"What do you say after your master teaches you something new?" Lo Jik's voice questions.

"T-Thank you, Master," Shen Cui coos hotly, unconsciously opening her lips wide and sticking her pink tongue out to reveal the mess he made out of her.

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'Let's see,' Lo Jik muses. 'Shen Cui's *categories*' should be related to her mortal status, Qing Mao Mountain, and Fang Zheng. Extending to Fang Zheng since she is his wife, we also get Clan Genius, a Defensive Gu Master, and an Offensive Gu Master.'

Fang Zheng majors in defending his team using the Moon Raiment Gu and utilizing the strength of two Boars to cleave through the enemy! He's publicly recognized as the physically mightiest Gu master in Qing Mao Mountain.

Lo Jik has no issues with Fang Zheng holding that title despite possessing the strength of two boars AND a tiger. Lo Jik prefers not to reveal how weirdly adaptive his body is. There are limits, of course. Lo Jik feels *'bloated'* and cannot use another Beast Strength Gu without causing internal injuries.

While Lo Jik saves the Silver Rewards from Mo Yan, he cannot help but feel curious about the rewards he may receive from Shen Cui—especially the Silver ones.

He already has two of those.

***[Fang Zheng's Number One Enemy (Silver): Kissed Shen Cui For The First Time. Parties Involved—Host, Shen Cui.]***

***[Serving Lips (Bronze/Repeatable): Made Out With Shen Cui. Parties Involved—Host, Shen Cui.]***

***[Serving The Master (Silver): Experienced an Orgasm Through Shen Cui's Mouth. Parties Involved—Host, Shen Cui.]***

***[Master's Bitch (Bronze/Repeatable): Had Penetrative Sex With Shen Cui. Parties Involved—Host, Shen Cui.]***

Since all kinds of penetrative experiences amount to one repeatable achievement, Lo Jik gained both the Bronze rewards.

He starts with the Bronze rewards.

Light flashes ahead of him as a Gu quietly materializes and lands atop Lo Jik's lap.

This Gu is shaped like a finger-sized carving knife. Its body is silver and exudes a rustic aura.

'Oh?' Lo Jik knows this Gu. He saw it in the Gu House of Jia Clan's caravan.

'A Rank 2 Dismemberment Gu. This Gu can divide fleshy corpses into organs, neatly sliced flesh, pelt, and bones. It's a Hunter's best friend if they are Gu Masters, efficiently splitting their game and allowing them to choose the rare materials from the corpse and leave the rest.'

Lo Jik never purchased this Gu because it was unneeded at the time, and this Gu consumes 400 grams of silver every 2 weeks. However, it's easy to feed Gu during this hunting season since everyone gains several benefits by hunting the wild wolves, chancing on different materials, and other similar fortunes.

'This Gu is good. It will save me the trouble of personally scooping the eyes out,' Lo Jik nods and stores the Gu in his Aperture.

He continues with the second Bronze reward. The flashing light reveals a silhouette of a strange pile of *'something.'*

Lo Jik groans when he sees a pile of wet mud suddenly appear and ruin his bedroom.

'Fuck,' he sighs.

It takes an hour to clean things up. Lo Jik soaks the sheets and blanket while pulling fresh sheets from under the bed.

'It's getting harder to find excuses for the ruined sheets now that Mo Yan lives here. Dismemberment Gu is a start. What I need is a Rank 2 Vacuum Storage Gu.' He shakes his head and returns to his bed.

Only the two Silver rewards remain.

He takes a moment to regain his composure before summoning the reward.

"What's this?"

Lo Jik stares at the grey scroll. Its texture is different from the bamboo paper from Qing Mao Mountain. He feels the paper for a while before realizing its texture is like a bone!

'A Bone?' He frowns. 'So, it's nothing to do with Qing Mao Mountain. Sigh, let's not jump to conclusions. I didn't even know about Qing Mao's collection of Blood Gu until recently.'

He unfurls the scroll.

*—Heart of righteousness; Struggling Aptitude  
The scholar's heart aspires.  
Flesh and Bone is the way.  
Bring two, the scholar smiles.  
A cave in the heart of Bai Gu is the path.  
Left are my ambitions, untainted by power.  
Forever I remain righteous, flesh and bone try.—*

Lo Jik further stares at the mountain's map.

The Bone Mountain—Bai Gu.



'An inheritance site. It's the first time I got an actual map.'

Lo Jik retrieves his Bookworm and feeds the map to the Gu.

'But why Bai Gu? How does it relate to Shen Cui or Fang Zheng?' He sighs.

'Doesn't matter. Let's continue.'

He summons the second reward. Lo Jik's body relaxes when he sees the silhouette in the flashing light doesn't belong to a Relic Gu.

He gapes when he witnesses the Gu form.

It reveals a weak aura of Rank 3!

It's a flower gu shaped like a Lotus with beautiful blue petals. Its body transitions from material to phantom form as Lo Jik feels its weakness stemming from the half-eroded ninth petal.

'It's actually a Rank 3 Heavenly Treasure Lotus? How? This Gu is not naturally occurring and has legendary origins. Its fusion recipe is one of the most desired treasures in the world due to the Gu's effect!'

Lo Jik quickly places the Gu Worm in his Aperture.

This Gu's recipe is the creation of one of the Immortal Venerables! Only a handful of such beings ever emerged from humanity! These are Gu Masters beyond the likes of Mortals and Immortals.

Venerables!

'It's injured,' Lo Jik notices. He only knows a few myths about the Gu. One such rumor states that an incomplete Heavenly Essence Treasure Lotus Gu disappears if pulled out of a Spirit Spring before it is healthy. Gu Yue Clan has its Spirit Spring under the Clan Pavilion. It produces the Clan's stock of Primeval Stones. However, there are other things to consider. This Gu is no longer wild the moment it appeared through his Trait. Even if injured, the Gu can sustain in his Primeval Essence. But Lo Jik can feel Gu's condition worsening.

'This is an invaluable Gu! Possessing this Gu is like having a portable Spirit Spring. This Gu produces 50 Primeval Stones a day. However, its actual use lies elsewhere.'

'Rank 3 Heavenly Treasure Essence Lotus produces 30% of Rank 3 Peak Stage Essence three times daily! It's one of the rare Gu capable of assisting one's cultivation. Even if I had Rank 3 cultivation, I would still break into Rank 4 as a C-grade Gu Master with enough preparations AND this Gu. Taking a step forward, the Rank 4 Heavenly Treasure Monarch Lotus produces 40% of the peaks stage Rank 4 essence four times daily.'

'The Rank 5 Heavenly Essence Treasure King Lotus continues the trend, producing 50% peak stage Rank 5 essence 5 times daily!'

Lo Jik doesn't know much about the Rank 6 Variant besides its existence. He takes a deep breath to recollect himself.

'It's injured.'

With a thought, Lo Jik feeds his Primeval Essence to the Gu. This Gu entirely depends on the Essence—healing or nurturing it. Even after Lo Jik provides 30% of his essence to the Gu, he finds the lotus barely stabilizing, threatening to lose its vitality at any moment.

'I need more,' Lo Jik frowns. 'More Primeval Stones!'

Lo Jik wouldn't have liked a spotlight on himself if it were before. However, he knows too little about the Lotus and cannot risk its life. He already lost Gu like the Tiger Strength Gu due to his inability to persistently feed them. He refuses to let such a precious Gu leave his grip.

'What's the best way to deal with this? I need thousands of Primeval Stones. Should I reveal my collected materials to Mo Yan, crediting it to an inheritance? I'll have enough Primeval Stones after selling all the materials in my Earth Hole Gu. But how will I explain the Earth Hole Gu? No, taking a step back, what if Mo Yan decides to see the Inheritance Site? She's a scout. She would want to take a look and see if I missed anything, even if it's for my benefit.'

Lo Jik narrows his eyes. 'I need to smuggle the goods somehow. Being an elder will be the easiest way! I'll be able to sweep past suspicions through my cultivation. But I can't do that. I will surely get two Golden Rewards from a threesome between Mo Yan and Shen Cui. If the Silver Rewards are so great, how startling will be the higher-ranked achievements?'

So, he can't use Mo Yan or progress his cultivation.

What are the other choices?

The Merit Board?

He is a Lone Gu Master. He'll incur suspicion and greed if he reveals too much combat strength, prompting others to spy on him. How will he get a chance to fuck Shen Cui if that happens? He sighs deeply. One way or another, he'll have to adopt some risks.

It's acceptable. After all, the reward will be a healthy Rank 3 Heavenly Essence Treasure Lotus!

The only decision to be made is what risks he should adopt.

'Let's first use my savings,' Lo Jik begins to wantonly absorb Primeval Stones, feeding the aura of rejection to Hope Gu and the rest to the Lotus Gu. He has a few thousand Primeval Stones. He'll think about gaining the remaining amount somehow.

As he nurtures the Lotus, Lo Jik belatedly realizes how this Gu will shoot his combat strength through the roof! After all, he can access Rank 3 Peak Stage essence!

***{A/N: I didn't like how the limitations of this Gu Series were left in the air. So, I put numbers for convenience. It will also feel like a Legendary Gu at Rank 9, capable of producing 90% of Immortal Essence 9 times a month.}***

Mo Yan returns later, groaning, "You did something with the sheets again? I keep telling you to wear boots when practicing martial arts outdoors instead of using sheets and blankets for your feet!"

Lo Jik opens his eyes, grinning, "I also control Moonglow around my feet. It destroys my boots."

She slumps atop him, moaning softly and 'recharging' herself, whispering, "So? Did you enjoy yourself today?"

She glances at Lo Jik meaningfully.

Of course, he told Mo Yan about his plans this morning. How else will he get a threesome? Mo Yan didn't care if he fucked someone's wife as long as the woman was a mortal. How can Lo Jik do that behind her back after her express support?

"I bet that slut was nothing compared to me," She pecks his lips.

"She wasn't," Lo Jik smirks.

“So, why do you find her attractive?” Mo Yan pouts. Her support does not exclude her jealousy as Lo Jik hugs her.

“I just dislike Fang Zheng,” he lies. He’s indifferent about the youth.

“And seeing your little Brother so jealous of me awoke something inside me,” He adds, making Mo Yan giggle. She admits. Something about emotionally fucking others up is oddly satisfying. It’ll only be more enjoyable if they do it together, right?

She lovingly kisses her debauched husband.

“Oh!” she suddenly frowns and pulls back. “Did you hear it?”

“What?” Lo Jik questions. He’s been inside his room for hours, nurturing the Lotus.

“That Bai Ning Bing attacked and defeated Chi Shan in 10 moves. She was suppressing her combat strength by using Rank 2 Gu the entire time.” A flicker of fear seeps into the usually courageous Mo Yan since she isn’t stronger than Chi Shan. “She is following the rules and playing around. Be sure not to get targeted by her. You move alone, so—”

“I’ll stay in for some time and only leave to complete the quota,” Lo Jik smiles.

Mo Yan’s expression eases before she mutters, “Sorry.”

“Hey,” he cups her cheeks. “Why are you apologizing? I’ll take this time to cultivate. I need to catch up to you so we can work together.”

She sighs with a fond smile, but her expression turns complicated. Lo Jik has a C-grade Aptitude. Forcing his way into Rank 3 will be easier said than done.

He notices her expression but doesn’t say much. He pecks her forehead instead.

“I will help you,” she whispers with determination. “We’ll find a way.” She promises. “The majority of Wolf Tide has yet to appear. The Clan Leaders of the three clans will reveal more benefits to motivate the teams. There might be something.”

“You’re too good to me,” Lo Jik smiles.

“And you repay my dedication with chasing skirts,” she snorts before pressing her hand atop his chest. “How will you repay me?”



After a while, Lo Jik planned action regarding the Lotus Gu.

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*3 Months Later, April.*

Spring winds blow over the mountain as flowers and grass alike dance. Sweet sunny afternoon alleviates the gloom in the Gu Master's hearts. Dragonpill crickets chirp in the Bamboo groves while colorful rainbow parrots return. Their playful dance in the sky rouses one's mind and spirit.

Qing Mao Mountain's situation slowly stabilized in the last 2 months, with excited Gu Masters doing everything to hunt the wolves and extract their eyes. Some Gu Masters lost their lives in pursuit of wealth and glory, while others rose to prominence. Such Gu Masters, laughing and praising each other's bravery while leaving the East Gate, freeze in their tracks. Their expression changes when they see a Gu Master in rags enter the village.

Tears and small holes litter his blood-drenched uniform. His brown hair slicks back under caked blood. His chiseled features are barely visible as he carries a massive leather sack atop his shoulder. The sack on his back trembles, releasing the sick, squelching noise of multiple wet items squishing together as he moves. However, his eerie and quiet gaze makes others look away with a slight chill seizing their hearts.

Lo Jik's appearance attracts everyone's attention.

"He's back..."

"This Lo Jik cannot be understood by common sense!"

"Too powerful. Alas, Lo Jik only has a C-grade Aptitude."

"I think he snapped. Didn't he start this madness once Elder Fang reached Rank 3?"

"Hmph, you useless idiot! Lo Jik is Elder Mo Yan's husband. Look at everything he's done in the last two months. He obviously wants to maximize his strength using the Wolf Tide."

"It's actually clever. Things will get more dangerous in the coming months."

Lo Jik's appearance causes other Gu Master to whisper amongst others. Nobody could

have expected Lo Jik's rise after his pathetic display within the merit board. He eventually steps on the stage and gently places the large sac for the Rank 1 Gu Master to count. Several other Gu Masters watch with interest as the Rank 1 Gu Master starts storing wolf eye after other.

"Hiss," one of the current batch's Gu Master inhales coldly.

"What was Lo Jik's record?"

"Hmm? 270 wolves, right? He returned two days later that time. We all thought he died, and Elder Mo Yan left to investigate."

"Oh. It stopped. 120 wolves!"

"That's Gu Yue Clan's Gu Master!"

Lo Jik ignores the crowd's praises and their barely-veiled envy. Instead, he carefully unwraps the sac around his waist. It's half the size of the previous sack. The crowd goes silent as the Rank 1 Gu Master starts counting the wolf fangs and pelts before gasping, "A—"

He stops, fright stemming in his gaze as he dips his head. "Sorry, Lord Lo Jik. Please don't hit me."

Lo Jik's expression softens as he nods. "Hurry up." He commands.

Others cannot help but click their tongues.

Lo Jik has built a reputation for himself. It started about two months ago—from his plan. Unable to use Mo Yan or advance to Rank 3, Lo Jik considered several options. He also organized his thoughts using the Lightning Thoughts Gu. Eventually, he realized that the best way to earn Primeval Stones for the Lotus Gu is through his combat potential. However, he had to incur some losses for that. First, he needed to set a foundation for his strength in the public's view. After all, how can he suddenly get stronger without explanation?

So, he had Mo Yan buy a White Jade Gu from the backdoors. Lo Jik destroyed it, of course. He didn't need to feed two same Gu at once. He also didn't have any recipe requiring two White Jade Gu. He wouldn't have destroyed it if it wasn't so expensive to nurture.

Things snowballed from that point. Lo Jik left the village for half a day before returning

with 70 wolf eyeballs, shocking the crowd. After all, he's a loner! He shouldn't be able to possess such might. However, the Elders, already aware of his martial talent and a boar's strength, understood the benefit of a White Jade Gu. They also didn't forget Lo Jik possessed a rare Blood Gu—Blood Rousing Incense. On the second day, Lo Jik's productivity dropped. It was because of him extracting the Cold Ice Heart Crystal from a distant frozen spring. He was horribly injured that day, with several claw marks on his body.

Worried, Elder Mo Yan called an expert from the Medicine Hall to heal Lo Jik.

Still, the youth earned enough merit points to enter the top 50 at once! You see—the merit points rise and fall as the teams exchange merits for different things. The only difference was that Lo Jik used those points for himself alone. There was no one to share his gains. He instantly consumed all of it for several materials. Others realized that it was a recipe for Rank 2 Dismemberment Gu. The fact that Lo Jik purchased the remaining three Rank 1 Cut Gu as one of the refining materials showed he was going for the broke.

Envious of his gains, others scoffed at him. Calling him a fool for refining such a useless material. Lo Jik only destroyed one portion of the Gu recipe this time, leaving the other two intact. Things changed from that point. After three days, Lo Jik shocked the Gu Masters near the Battle Exchange Board with hundreds of wolf eyes, fangs, and pelt! He rose from the last spot again. On the second day, Lo Jik brought even more wolf materials. He used some merit points to purchase mortal materials, incurring other's suspicion. On the fifth day, when Lo Jik found another rare mineral, using his merit points to buy a Blood Stream Gu, others could not hold their curiosity and secretly followed the next day.

Lo Jik planned this all, secretly using his Heaven Piercing Eye to keep track of the followers. He revealed his secret.

Traps and Dismemberment!

Lo Jik would set traps early dawn, using a wolf lure that's sensed even by the Lightning Wolves, who have a weak sense of smell. Others speechlessly watched Lo Jik rain a fiery hell of arrows and spiked bamboo before boldly jumping amongst dozens of wolves. The spectators paled! However, a few remembered that Lo Jik had a White Jade Gu. He should use that, right?

Wrong!

Lo Jik used Battle Instinct Gu, decimating the small wolf pack using a sharp dagger and other wolves' bodies. It took him 80 seconds to do that. Others didn't have a chance to



offer him any help. They watched Lo Jik peacefully use his Dismemberment Gu. A stream of white light emerged from Lo Jik, covering the wolf corpses before neatly splitting them. He stored the Eyes, fangs, and pelts before leaving.

The popularity of Dismemberment Gu was short-lived. Others wanted to emulate Lo Jik's success. They soon found two issues. First, they could never battle like Lo Jik or even dare use a wolf lure to attract wolves. That's suicidal! Second, the materials for refining the Dismemberment Gu were out of stock!

Lo Jik purchased all of it before, unscrupulously selling these materials at four times the usual price! This angered others. However, the two teams chose to swallow their pride and purchase it. After all, Lo Jik wasn't the first to exploit his Clansmen. That's right! Fang Yuan did it before it became popular. The man raked in neat profit by selling his Vitality Leaves at an extravagant price.

Fang Yuan's circumstances didn't matter to Lo Jik. The latter only cared about himself. The Heavenly Essence Treasure Gu may as well be considered a fake aperture for Rank 3 Gu Masters due to its benefits. Due to the increased attention on himself and to prevent any issues, Lo Jik temporarily cut off any contact with Shen Cui. He also stopped summoning Bronze-tier rewards altogether, incurring opportunity losses.

Why?

Because detection methods in this world are too weird. Lo Jik cannot be seen shoveling shit or dirt from his house before using an Earth Hole Gu. Due to such sacrifices, Lo Jik steadily sold the rare material in his stock. In only two months, he raised merits worth 30000 Primeval Stones. Naturally, he needed to appease the crowd's greed. He entered closed-door cultivation lasting 6 days at the start of the second month, revealing his peak stage cultivation. Such a speed would be shocking for others. However, others felt it was normal. They were only shocked when Lo Jik entered another session of closed-door cultivation, arrogantly proclaiming he would also advance into Rank 3.

The fool!

Was it so easy to reach Rank 3?

He *'failed.'* Of course, he will. Lo Jik used all those stones to nurture the Lotus Gu! As for reaching the Peak Stage? Lo Jik used the Red Steel Relic Gu in his aperture.

His callous routine of never using his Trait in capacity proved correct as Mo Yan revealed the *'truth'* to him last week.

She was secretly following him to make sure he didn't get killed. He rightfully spooked

his wife when he didn't return one night. However, his combat talents even made Mo Yan slightly embarrassed. It also tickled her horny bone as she *'showed'* how sorry she was. Unfortunately, Lo Jik refused to change his routine for now.

As for the Rank 1 Gu Master fearing he would hit him?

These Gu Masters used their *'shock'* to loudly announce his gains. It only attracted more greed from his surroundings, something he promptly shook by publicly beating such Gu Masters till they coughed blood. Things settled after the third time.

Of course, he was only so quick in his means because of Mo Yan's backing. He's an Elder's spouse. Why would he let such a backing go to waste?

Things like reputation and name must be used for benefits!

'I also used my newly built reputation to gain one final burst of Primeval Stones,' Lo Jik recalls what he asked Mo Yan to do last night. Staring at his name rising through the ranks, Lo Jik smirks proudly, laughing, "Hehe! I failed last time. I will surely succeed this time. If that punk Fang Zheng can, so can I!"

He exchanges his merit points into Primeval Stones before leaving. He's almost sold all his materials in the last two months, save for pits of mud and shit. He uses the latter to feed his Smell Lock Gu.

Lo Jik's words make others scowl. It's the third time he's saying this. Other Gu Masters tried advising him against the foolish act of attacking another Major realm. They even invited Lo Jik into their teams out of the *'kindness'* of their hearts. However, he spat at their kindness! Now, everyone wants to see him fail and waste his gains.

Lo Jik returns home, finding a complicated Mo Yan waiting for him.

"Are you sure?" She whispers. The woman points at the wooden chest beside their bed. Lo Jik's expression reveals his sadness as he nods. "I'm sorry, Yan. I made you—"

"That's not what I'm worried about, you fool! We are married. Didn't you risk your life to help me find some material for my Gu? How can I not do the same for you? Just lowering my head and asking Grandfather's help was nothing. It's just 10000 Primeval Stones. I would have forced him to fork out 50000 if you wanted. But..."

She hesitates.

"I don't have the talent," Lo Jik sighs. She quickly embraces him, consoling him. "Don't

worry. We'll find a way."

"I'm sorry, Yan. I wish I wasn't so stubborn. I promise to take things slowly and assume less danger if I fail this time," Lo Jik whispers as Mo Yan nods.

"Hmm. Don't worry. I should also thank you. Living with you has been so great that I didn't even feel angry with Grandfather. We chatted for hours, and Grandfather appreciates your talent a lot. He also apologized in his way and gifted us the Primeval Stones. He said he regretted how he acted during our wedding."

Lo Jik nods. That's what he wanted. He entered the fray using Fang Zheng and his 'envy' as an excuse. Now, he will use his 'failure' as an excuse to return to being lowkey. Of course, things will never get normal. He was too bright! What he didn't expect was Mo Chen and Mo Yan making things up. It must be because of their familial emotions and his display of might, eliciting Mo Chen to accept Lo Jik.

"What about your brother?" Lo Jik snarks. "I don't want you to—"

"He can kiss Cao's maggot-riddled ass," Mo Yan snorts. "That little bastard had the cheek of demanding you beg to Grandfather. Grandfather threw him out of the study."

Lo Jik laughs as Mo Yan looks at him. "I'll leave you to cultivate."

"So eager to leave our poor house for your estate?" Lo Jik teases as she rolls her eyes.

"I love our bedroom more than any part of Grandfather's estate," she winks. "I trust you, Jik. I'm sure you will advance! If not now, then someday in the future. Besides, I can cheer you up if you feel down."

She plants a peck on his lips before giggling.

"I will try my best to feel down even if I succeed," Lo Jik vows as she laughs aloud.

'It's done,' Lo Jik sighs.

He closes the door behind him. Lo Jik lets out the Blood Stream Python to quietly guard him under the bed before he begins refining the Primeval Stones to nurture an almost complete Heavenly Essence Treasure Lotus!

He effortlessly sacrificed nearly 70000-80000 Primeval Stones' worth of rewards AND used an almost similar amount to nurture the Gu.

But how can Bronze rewards compare to Rank 3 Heavenly Treasure Lotus?

It's an unbelievably rare commodity, even amongst Rank 3 Gu Masters.

Besides, Lo Jik wanted to tip the RNG in his favor.

'I got the Gu from Shen Cui. The chances of me getting a recipe for the Gu from Shen Cui are slim but viable. Didn't I get the Blood Qi recipe from Mo Yan? These odds may increase if I possess a healthy Lotus instead of an injured one. This and Fang Zheng's stay in the village made him postpone any further meetings with Shen Cui.'

'I need to be more vigilant, too. I will summon stored Silver Rewards from Mo Yan's side to see what I can get. Shadow Gu are incredible for sneaking around. They will be useful now.'

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"Grandfather!" Mo Bei scowls. "Why did you hand Mo Yan—"

"If you refuse to think of her as your sister, you will show her an Elder's respect and call her ELDER Mo Yan!" Mo Chen snaps at his grandson. The youth freezes in shock as Mo Chen sighs. "You've gotten sensible, Bei. But you let past and anger cloud your judgment. Think! Lo Jik used his resources two times. He surpasses Fang Zheng and Qing Shu in combat as a Peak Stage Rank 2 Gu Master. However, the former two cultivated beyond him and are both Initial Stage Rank 3 Gu Master. Your Sister is an Elder, too. Learn to see things logically, Grandson. 10000 Primeval Stones is nothing to earn your Sister's forgiveness and his talented husband. His ambitions will take a hit when he fails to reach Rank 3. He will learn to work under our system."

Mo Chen doesn't elaborate that he also wanted his family to unite before his death. No Grandfather wants to die while still being on bad terms with his Grandchildren. However, Mo Chen knows what to reveal and what to hide. Mo Bei might see Mo Chen's emotion threatening his inheritance, so the Elder wisely spoke half-truth.

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"Hmph! That Lo Jik is too arrogant. I still remember how he brutally abused those poor Rank 1 Gu Master!" Gu Yue Yao Le snorts while eating her food. She isn't alone as Gu Yue Yao Ji, Zie Qi, Shen Cui, and Fang Zheng sit around the table. Fang Zheng's house servant serves the food as Fang Zheng sighs.

"You must understand Lo Jik, Junior Sister Yao. He's an unbelievable fighter. How can

he not want more?"

Shen Cui doesn't participate in the conversation and eats quietly.

"Reaching Rank 3 isn't easy," Gu Yue Yao Ji sighs. "His frustrations are justified."

"But he was wrong to beat others," Yao Le pouts.

"Let's not talk about him," Zie Qi offers with a smile.

The Medicine Faction was always under Gu Yue Bo's control. The incidental absorption of Zie Qi through Fang Zheng instead of Yao Ji gave Gu Yue Bo the needed power to suppress the growing Medicine Faction. Also, Zie Qi's and Yao Le's friendly relationship eased the tensions between the two groups.

"Right!" Yao Le puckers her pillowy lips. "Heaven is fair. Gu Yue Lo Jik is too brutal. A man like him shouldn't wield more power."

Others don't verbally antagonize Lo Jik. However, there is a silent agreement in their gazes.

At this moment, Shen Cui cannot help but feel slightly repulsed by a beauty like Yao Le.

'What is surprising about talents realizing their potential? Isn't Lo Jik more admirable? He is working and bleeding to surpass his limits! Besides, how can this Yao Le be so blind? Those Gu Masters asked for a beating by inciting trouble for Master!' Her heart throbs for the man. They didn't meet for a few months. But Shen Cui persevered by her promise and managed to relieve Fang Zheng through other means. She was also careful about adding a few medicines that made him less aroused.

She didn't dare go overboard with it.

But...

'I want him,' she squeezes her thighs together while eating. 'I heard how serious his injuries are. Good Heavens! I want a disgruntled, frustrated Lo Jik bleeding from his injuries to take me.' Her lips purse slightly while a slight flush reddens her cheeks. She cannot help but desire an animalistic Lo Jik to ravish her before embracing her lovingly and letting her sleep in his arms.

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'I did it, baby! With 2910 stones to spare!'

Lo Jik would do a backflip if his legs weren't asleep.

He stares at the ethereal blue-white lotus floating in his Primeval Sea.

The Rank 3 Heavenly Essence Treasure Lotus Gu!

'It's healed after almost 3 months. Truly! It's troubling and nerve-wracking to do things in the open. I'm almost willing to advance to Rank 3. If I do that, I'll stop getting the rewards from Mo Yan and Shen Cui. Our status will be equal. Shen Cui's status might also be beneath mine. I should use this Wolf Tide to fully acclimate my gains. Even if a steady stream of Bronze rewards is enticing, I will advance to Rank 3 after attaining Golden Achievements. After all, I already have several Gu. Even if I fail to refine a few Gu, my combat strength only rises by advancing to Rank 3.'

'Only combat strength matters the most in this world. Others may be suspicious of me. However, I don't intend to stick around in Qing Mao Mountain after reaching Rank 3. I'll go to Bai Gu Mountain.'

He steadily understood more about the Bai Gu inheritance. One must have a partner and act righteously to attain the entire benefit of that inheritance site! Mo Yan fits the bill.

He planned to fill his storage Gu with essential items and leave for Bai Gu after reaching Rank 3 using the excuse of experiencing the world. He can also use his Feathered Boots without limitations as a Rank 3 Gu Master. He could escape at any time.

Speaking of rewards—

'Summon!'

He has 5 Silver Rewards stored.

Light flashes ahead before revealing a Steel Relic Gu.

'Well, that sucks.'

He speechlessly stores the Gu in his aperture, willing to sell it to the Mo Faction using Mo Yan.

Lo Jik summons the second reward. A round silhouette appears in the flashing light. It's different from the relic Gu.

Lo Jik watches an obsidian crystal with a Rank 2 aura settle on his lap. He picks up the orb, observing it for a while. Within the crystal is a constantly roiling shadowy fog. It twists and turns, forming different living animals and insects.

'A Shadow Beast Gu,' Lo Jik almost whistles. This is tailored for Scout Gu Masters under the Shadow Path! A Gu Master can use this Gu and convert it into a shadow beast of their choice. This Shadow Beast can merge with the shadows and share its senses—sight, hearing, smell, and even touch, with the user. The best thing about this Gu is that one can create an Eagle to have better vision, a hound for a better sense of smell, and the like!

But this is a Rank 2 Gu and possesses strict limitations. First, it's only controllable within 100 meters of radius. This distance is smaller than ordinary Rank 2 recon Gu. Second, the sharing of senses exhausts mental stamina. Third, the Gu can be attacked and killed outside the Gu Master. So, the Gu Masters use this Gu to hide a '*scout*' in nearby shadows for immediate investigation. Only Gu Masters with extensive knowledge of various beasts can use this Gu to its complete potential.

Use, Nurture, and Refine.

These are the three aspects of Gu Master's cultivation. Lo Jik admits that while an outstanding Rank 2 Gu, it won't reveal its entire potential in his hand. Also, Lo Jik's Heaven Piercing Eye is geared toward his needs.

He quietly stores the Gu. If possible, he will gift the Gu to Mo Yan. She's been unimaginably helpful to him. However, he won't give the Gu without finding the right moment.

'Like other Shadow gu, it's a hassle to feed. It would be too much of a pity to let it ruin in my hands. It's a silver reward, after all. Sigh, that's why it's so troublesome. Others can go decades without finding this Gu.'

He summons the third reward.

Lo Jik's eyes widen as a strange Rank 1 fist-shaped Gu falls on Lo Jik's lap. Strangely, he feels a pinch of pain once the fist lands atop his lap. He instantly identifies the Gu as a part of an inheritance.

Precisely, he understands that the '*storage*' Gu isn't the actual reward.

Yes, the Rank 1 stone-like enclosed fist is a Storage Gu meant to store another Gu

inside its fist for future generations.

Lo Jik quietly admires the Rank 1 Determined Fist Gu before gently peeling its fingers. The stone Gu disintegrates into ashes once Lo Jik successfully opens its index finger, revealing a pink earthworm. The Rank 3 Gu reveals a weak aura and is severely hungry. It slowly wakes and curls into a spiral on Lo Jik's palm.

'Fuck me,' Lo Jik blinks. 'It's the Pink Muscles Gu!'

Lo Jik carefully stores the Gu inside his aperture. This Gu's value might only be lower than the Heaven Piercing Eye Gu for Lo Jik.

'But if I use this Gu...' He shakes his head. It will be like narrowing his future growth onto one path. There are benefits and drawbacks to such an act. So, a Gu Master must consider their options carefully. Still, Lo Jik must feed and nurture the Gu. It's unlike the injured True Mind's Eye Gu.

Emboldened by the most recent reward, Lo Jik summons the fourth one!

It was a rare material useable by Shadow Gu users.

And the fifth?

'What's with this luck?'

Lo Jik stares at the Red Steel Relic Gu.

Where is he going to unload two of these?

Lo Jik can't even destroy them since they will effortlessly sell for 11000-13000 in the current economy. Everyone wants to get stronger to survive the Wolf Tide. Also, other Elders don't want such Gu to circulate in the market and might purchase it for themselves.

There are also the Elders willing to stock this for their future offspring. Isn't Gu Yue Yao Ji dotting of Gu Yue Yao Le?

The issue is that Lo Jik will almost certainly face the Elder's suppression if he tries selling them now!

Wait until becoming an Elder.





anniversary. They married in September.

Only a few months remain.

As for Lo Jik?

He doesn't mind continuing his routine. Others may feel greedy for Bronze-tier rewards. However, Lo Jik believes he can create such a stream of resources wherever he goes. He's already benefitted from the Bronze achievements. Meanwhile, the silver ones feel lacking lately. He wants to make a move once and swiftly gain his Golden-tier gifts before working down for the Silver ones from Shen Cui.

As for leaving Shen Cui for another three months?

Who cares!

He can't get near her right now, anyway. Why risk everything for lust?

He regains his focus and targets a medium pack of crippled wolves. It won't be long until the healthy Lightning Wolves ascend the mountain. They are currently busy mating during the spring. Those menaces will likely appear in a few weeks.

Lo Jik welcomes the challenge. He wants to see how his traps hold against the healthy wolves.

'I should also focus on the Pink Muscles Gu. I already procured its food, and it's ready for use.'

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\*Grrrrr\*

Cautious snarl fill the verdant pine forest as Lo Jik continues to aim the wolves with his arrow from a branch. As a Lightning Wolf jumped closer, a sharp moonblade split it in half, causing hot blood to splatter on the ground and making the other wolves step back.

Unlike the crippled wolves, these green-furred wolves are robust and powerful. They aren't as cautious as their more experienced counterpart and chase after anything that moves.

'Just a bit more,' Lo Jik licks his lips, aiming at the wolves. The beasts surrounding the pine tree snarl in warning, no longer confident in being the predator since 11 wolf

corpses lie on the ground, drenching the soil with blood.

Lo Jik suddenly changes his aim, shooting the flint arrow into a small rock. A spark catches massive flames, extending into a ring of fire that scares the wolves, causing them to retreat in panic.

'Heh,' he smirks before shaking his head. 'It's all fun and games before the hundred-beast king ascends the mountain. Those wolves are stronger and also have Gu on their bodies.'

He jumps down. A stream of white light emerges from his abdomen, covering the eleven corpses and splitting them into neat piles of organs, bones, pelt, and flesh. Lo Jik glances around. His left eye's irides shimmer with a kaleidoscopic glint before he exhales and releases his Gu to feed on the Blood. Meanwhile, Lo Jik collects the eye, fangs, and pelts. The former two are on top of their respective mounds.

He promptly leaves as the fire slowly dies down around the wet grass. His return elicits a modest welcome.

Lo Jik didn't continue '*risking*' his life in dangerous spots to find rare materials and climb the ranks after his third failure. However, he did not fall off at once. Instead, Lo Jik maintains a steady spot in the top 30 since he only converts his merit points for Gu Food and materials for his traps.

It's been a month since that point.

After completing his routine, Lo Jik returns home and freshens up before settling to cultivate. Since both his apertures are at the Rank 2 Peak Stage, Lo Jik doesn't nurture his Aperture during his cultivation session.

Glancing within his Second Aperture, Lo Jik locates a cute pink earthworm—Rank 3 Pink Muscles Gu!

A snow-silver stream of essence rises from the Lotus bud, directly activating the Pink Muscles Gu. The pink earthworm's body straightens as it shines a hazy pink glow. From outside, Lo Jik's skin reddens at a breakneck pace. Sweat pours from his body as every muscle group, ligament, tendon, and other flesh aside from his organs feels a wave of itchiness stimulating their activation.

Lo Jik's expression doesn't shift for the first 5 minutes. He quietly grits his teeth for the next 5 minutes. His body then trembles, swaying at the spot in the next 5 minutes.

He stops after 15 minutes. His body is caked with sweat as he exhales sharply. His muscles continue trembling under his skin.

Rank 3 Pink Muscles belong to the category of Gu—*Body Refinement*. Like the Beast Strength Gu, this Rank 3 Gu permanently alters his body's flesh underneath his skin. Although the name of the Gu only has '*Muscles*,' it refines everything alongside his musculature. However, this process is painful and time-consuming.

'I don't have any healing Gu to directly target the spots under my skin. The Two Spider Gu cannot do that. Their Rank 3 variant can. If I had that Gu, I could lower the time needed to use this Gu to 3 months. However, I've attracted enough attention. I can't refine the Rank 3 Gu yet.'

Lo Jik lies on his bed, resting. Heck! Even his dick hurt. However, he also becomes physically robust by the day.

'Since my body is weird and can possess twice the ordinary man's limit, I may just walk this path,' Lo Jik reaffirms his ambitions. The crucial use of Body Refinement Gu is to '*increase*' the body's capacity aside from other benefits. For instance, the Pink Muscles Gu fuses the aspects of musculature's endurance and explosiveness, allowing one's body to meet its reactionary instincts! There's also the benefit of the Gu allowing Lo Jik to use another Beast Strength Gu after completing its use. That's because his muscles will be Pink Muscles—more enduring than before.

'Truthfully, Pink Muscles Gu is too rare these days. Gu Masters would prefer steel tendons Gu instead. That Rank 3 Gu refines one's flesh with a steel-like tenacity. However, the combination of Pink Muscles and Tough Bones is the best combination since the former aids in one's martial arts with improved reaction timing and massively boosted physical endurance! The initial set will be completed once I find another Rank 3 Thick Skin Gu.'

That's far in the future.

'This path is rare and almost ancient. However, I should choose the best options given my Trait. Floundering and self-doubts won't be suitable at this stage.'

He smiles with contentment.

'An ordinary Gu master can only have two Rank 1 Beast Strength. After successfully refining the initial stage of the Body Refinement set—Skin, Bone, and Flesh—a Gu Master can possess eight Rank 3 Beast Strength. I should be able to acquire 9 or 10 instead.'

He isn't naive enough to believe that his gains from the Body Refinement Gu will be twice as much as others. If that were the case, he would also have twice as much strength after using one Beast Strength Gu.

Life isn't so colorful.

However, having the advantage of two Beast Strength over his enemy won't be anything to scoff at either!

'Also, the Body Refinement Gu permanently increases my body's defenses. The negative consequences of Beast Strength will be less on me than others since Pink Muscles and Tough Bones are meant to be used with Beast Strength Gu. That's another advantage!' He thinks gleefully.

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Time flies by as the summer peaks, inviting waves upon waves of wolf packs. The Wolf Kings have yet to appear.

It's almost the end of July!

Lo Jik spent his day cultivating with a single-minded focus. At times, when he planned to stay inside the village, he would use the Pink Muscles Gu twice, bearing unimaginable pain and strain on his body to quicken its completion.

'Hmm?'

Lo Jik glances at the rapidly darkening sky. He stares at the small hill of flesh and organs, quickly collecting the Eyeballs for merit and his Eye Gu. He doesn't forget the fangs and the uncut pelts.

He doesn't stay to feed his Blood Gu due to the dark clouds shrouding the sun. It's going to rain.

Lo Jik refuses to fight during the rain. Why?

Because his vision is compromised despite the Heaven Piercing Vision Gu. Meanwhile, the wolves will fight unchecked! How can Lo Jik willingly face such terrifying enemies with a handicap?

He's about halfway near the village when Lo Jik hears a dignified howl!

His expression changes as he speeds up, only breathing a sigh of relief after entering the village. He doesn't stop by the exchange board as usual.

*\*Pitter\* \*Pitter\**

*\*Crackle\**

Droplets of rain gently drizzle as lightning crackles in the sky, momentarily illuminating the dark clouds as more dignified howls alert and surprise the Gu Yue's higher-ups!

A Wolf Tide!

The Wolves want to use the rain and bad weather conditions to surprise attack the Clan.

It also means the arrival of Wolf Kings—*Bold Lightning Wolves!*

These wolves command packs of hundreds of beasts, increasing their potency against the enemy! Three teams of Gu master must face such beasts. There's such a difference in capability due to teams assigning one role to everyone. Meanwhile, Gu Masters, like Lo Jik, are self-sufficient and capable of dealing with a hundred-beast king.

However, it's raining. This weather condition increases the potency of the beast's lightning attacks. After all, every Lightning Wolf's bite is electrically charged. It will do more damage now, more than capable of seriously injuring a Gu Master.

'And I'll have to participate,' he grits his teeth. 'Fuck!'

That's another cost of rising to prominence to nurture the Lotus Gu.

'The Lotus Gu produced 5050 Primeval Stones since I healed. Heh,' he smiles bitterly. 'Such an amount is enough for other Gu Masters to risk their lives for.' Since he used merit points to feed his Gu, he retained his previous wealth, raising his savings from 2910 to 7960 Primeval Stones.

Was it enough to risk his life?

No.

Lo Jik snaps out of it and blinks.

'That is dangerous. Did I almost fight to maintain a reputation I no longer need? Isn't this the best way to ruin my name and return to the shadows?' Lo Jik smiles heartily. 'Pride

and reputation is infectious. I almost let it control me when reputation should merely be a tool. Let's stay inside.'

Lo Jik cleans his dagger before injuring himself and crudely bandaging it.

'Hehe,' Lo Jik lies on his bed, closing his eyes. 'Work hard. If only I could influence Mo Yan in such a manner. While she is appropriately kinky, her devotion to the Clan is unwavering. She won't willingly stand by and let it fall to ruins. Such shamelessness is a lonely road.'

He sighs.

As expected, Mo Yan arrived to check if Lo Jik stayed behind. However, she didn't find anybody after a cursory glance, promptly leaving. Lo Jik's figure appears with formless ripples around him,

Rank 2 Stealth Scales Gu.

Lo Jik yawns before returning to the bed again, a sharp wound on his right thigh. Just because he decided to stay back didn't mean he would foolishly ruin his relationship with Mo Yan by showing cowardice.

He simply isn't here. How will Mo Yan find him in the chaos outside the walls?

When she returns, she will meet an injured Lo Jik. Sure, the wound on his thigh is artificial. However, who can say he cannot wound himself during the chaos of thousands of wolves?

Lo Jik hears the distant beast roars and GU Master's shouts. The rainstorm intensifies as his cabin's window trembles, releasing a low 'drrrr' noise. Thunder booms in the sky, flashing lightning. As the rainstorm persists, the wolves continue injuring and killing the Gu Masters.

'The Wolf Tide this time is undoubtedly dangerous,' Lo Jik muses idly. 'It's just the first proper tide. However, there *sounds* to be several casualties. It shouldn't hurt Mo Yan since there shouldn't be any Frenzy Lightning Wolves.'

*\*Aooooouuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu\**

An almost desolate howl sends a chill down the listener's heart as Lo Jik hums in surprise. 'A Frenzy Lightning Wolf in first Tide? This year's Wolf Tide is more dangerous than earlier predictions.'

Lo Jik's resolve to stay here strengthens. He would rather wait things out and advance to Rank 3 to bully the beasts instead of putting his life on the line and fighting with his 'comrades.'

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### *Bai Clan.*

Built near the back side of Qing Mao's waterfall, the clan houses several ponds of varying sizes and shapes. Bamboo structures and paper boats crash in these ponds as the rain batters down on the entire clan. Some ponds overflow, prompting the Rank 1 Gu Masters to contain the water. The wolves' loud howls frighten their hearts. They can only imagine the scene of carnage around the clan's Northern Gate.

At the gates, the Gu Masters dressed in white and blue bravely tackle the beasts with their Stream Gu variants. Jets of pressurized water snipe several wolves, thinning the Beast Tide. However, the Bai Clansmen don't feel easy. They can see the constantly booming lightning briefly illuminating a shadow the size of an Elephant. Its cold green eyes sparkle with electricity as it stares at thousands of wolves charging the gate.

A Frenzy Lightning Wolf!

This variant can effortlessly control thousands of wolves—a thousand-wolf King!

"A-Ahhhhh!" A Bai Clansman screams, falling off the walls when a formless suction force from a nearby Bold Lightning Wolf disrupts his balance. His gaze turns desperate when he sees hungry Lightning Wolves eyeing him from the ground.

"Ming'er!" a woman's desperate scream fails to combat the howls and wolven snarls when a white shadow leaps from the walls!

The woman's tearful eyes widen as she screams, "Lord Bai Ning Bing! Please save my husband!"

The fallen man's hope reignites at the shout.

Ning Bing?

He's saved!

As expected, an ethereal presence lands beside him. Bai Ning Bing's drenched white



hair sticks to her slim and comely body. The woman's usually graceful robes now somehow distract the nearby men, who only assault the wolves after a moment's break. After all, her white robes and fair skin create the illusion of a drenched, pure-white maiden bereft of any clothes.

The man's breath hitches when Bai Ning Bing glances at him with pitch-black eyes. He sees nothing in them. The man recovers from his delusion as he feels something.

Bai Ning Bing suddenly removes her gaze and locates the Frenzy Lightning Wolf. Wolves, including two Bold Lightning Wolves, surround them as her pitch-black eyes quietly transition into crystal blue. The woman's feet dig into the wet mud before dashing ahead! Wet hair flies back, leaving her sharp features uncovered as a burst of cold aura combats the rain, creating a visible mist around her.

*\*Hrrgrff\**

Bai Ming's expression changes when one of the Bold Lightning Wolves pounces at him as the other chases Ning Bing.

"No!" His wife screams in terror as the wolf tears his neck out.

Meanwhile, cold and ice materialize around Bai Ning Bing, shooting at the Bold Lightning Wolf and forcing it to dodge.

"I'm not here for you, Stupid Beast!" Bai Ning Bing's lips curve, speaking for once. Her fickle heart pounds against her breast as she stares at the elephant-sized Lightning Wolf.

'I could kill a Rank 3 Elder as a Rank 2 Gu Master but failed against a Frenzy Lightning Wolf. Let's see if things are the same!'

She claps her head before parting them slowly, creating a long ice katana as she charges the Frenzy Lightning Wolf!

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Legend says Ren Zu had obtained the Attitude Gu. Attitude Gu was like a mask he could not wear without a heart.

Before this, Ren Zu had given his heart to Hope Gu, and from then on, he never feared difficulty.

But if Ren Zu wanted to use the Attitude Gu, he needed a heart.

Ren Zu was troubled. He asked Attitude Gu; he said, "Oh Gu, sometimes attitude says it all. Now that I have encountered a problem, you know it. I'm here to seek advice."

Attitude Gu said, "This is not hard. Ren Zu, you lack a heart. You just have to find a new one."

Ren Zu was confused, asking again, "Then how can I find a new heart?"

Attitude Gu sighed, "Heart is nowhere and everywhere. Finding a heart is both easy and difficult. With your situation, you can obtain a heart now."

Ren Zu was overjoyed, "Quick, tell me, how?"

Attitude Gu warned him, "This heart is called loneliness. Human, are you sure you want it? Once you obtain it, you will face endless pain, loneliness, and even fear!"

Ren Zu did not listen to his warning as he continued asking.

Attitude Gu could not defy Ren Zu's orders. He said, "You only have to stare at the sky on a starry night and say nothing. Once you reach daylight, you will obtain the heart of loneliness."

That night, it was a star-filled sky.

According to Attitude Gu's instructions, Ren Zu sat alone at the mountain peak, staring at the night sky.

Before this, his life was harsh and challenging. He constantly struggled for survival and had no time to admire this beautiful yet mysterious sky.

But now, as he stared at the starry sky, his thoughts began floating. Constantly thinking about himself, such a meager and weak being like himself, living a life of constant fear and insecurity.

"Sigh, although I have Hope Gu, Strength Gu, Rules Gu, Regulations Gu, and Attitude Gu, it's still hard to survive. Even if I die tomorrow, it is not shocking. If I die, will the world remember me? Will anyone rejoice over my existence and grieve over my death?"

Thinking of this, Ren Zu shook his head.

In this world, he was the only human. How can there be others?

Even with Gu accompanying him, he still felt a strong sense of —

Loneliness.

Heart of loneliness!

At this moment, when Ren Zu felt lonely, his body suddenly had a brand new heart.

The sun rose from the horizon and shone on his face. But Ren Zu felt no happiness and instead felt endless pain, despair, confusion, and even fear.

He could not endure this loneliness and fear, for all he felt was the advent of darkness and apocalypse!

Thus, he painfully cried, stretching out his fingers and digging out his eyes.

His left eye fell onto the ground and transformed into a young man. He had golden hair and a strong body. Once he appeared, he kneeled at Ren Zu's feet, saying: "Oh Ren Zu, my father, I am your eldest son, Verdant Great Sun."

At the same time, his right eye turned into a young girl, and she held Ren Zu's hand, saying, "Oh Ren Zu, my father, I am your second daughter, Desolate Ancient Moon."

Ren Zu laughed loudly, tears flowing out of his empty sockets. He said 'good' three times and continued, "I have children now. I can finally endure the pain of the heart of loneliness. From now on, there will be people celebrating my existence and grieving for my death. Even if I die now, you will remember me."

"Only that..." Finally, he sighed, "I lost my eyes and can no longer see the light. From now on, you two shall observe this world for me."

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Bathed in blood as the rainstorm passes, Bai Ning Bing slowly returns to her village. She's indifferent to the beast's blood marring her beauty and tears on her robes that expose her since-healed pale flesh.

Others surround her, cheering her name. She did it. She killed a Frenzy Lightning Wolf by limiting herself to a Rank 2 Gu Master's means.

Yet, why can't she smile?

She enjoyed the battle.

But why can't she appreciate the result?

The cheering Gu Masters do not interest her as much as the grieving Gu Masters, mourning the loss of their loved ones. Bai Ning Bing identifies one of the women who asked her to save her husband.

Why?

Why should Bai Ning Bing kill something to save another? How is that fair?

However, Bai Ning Bing never cared about fairness.

To do so in an unfair world is the epitome of stupidity.

She did not save because the thought bored her.

Would saving that man bring any new color to her life? Would it help Bai Ning Bing overcome her fate? Would it make her less lonely? Would it make this mountain less boring?

It's tedious.

Everything.

The wolves continue to attack every few years, and the Clans will form an alliance. How boring! She won't help anyone, but even Bai Ning Bing can see that the Wolf Lair is no threat if the Clan joins to eradicate them all at their source!

Yet, nobody does that. Nobody has the balls to trust each other or take exciting risks.

So, Bai Ning Bing's pitch-black eyes look beyond the smiles and thankful words.

'The wolf tide is tedious. Only fighting with other Gu Masters is remotely entertaining. I already defeated Xiong Li and Chi Shan. Hmm. There's still Mo Yan, Qing Shu, and the newbie Fang Zheng.'

'That's my life, isn't it? Chasing others for excitement. Oh, there's another one from Gu Yue Clan. Lo Jik, right? I'll find them all and see if they're entertaining.'



'Pink Muscles Gu is now useless for me. However, I must continue nurturing it. I also let my rank fall and purchased years' worth of food for the Gu since it is material to refine the Rank 4 Elite Muscles Gu. Body Refinement does not end at Rank 3. Instead, a Gu Master needs adequate Rank 4 counterparts to continue increasing their capacity for more Beast Strength.'

It's already been a few days since the Beast Tide in the rainstorm. The casualties included 25 teams of Gu Masters across the three Clans. Such losses made the clans reveal even better rewards to motivate the Gu Masters.

But the situation did not last long since reports of multiple Bold Lightning wolves and even Frenzy Lightning Wolves terrified the Gu Masters. Be it coincidence or fate, the Gu Yue Clan was somehow ready for this through their four Battle Elders—Qing Shu, Chi Shan, Mo Yan, and Fang Zheng. Other clans also sent their Elders. The support of Elders through Signal Gu relieved other teams to continue their efforts.

'It's been months,' Lo Jik opens his eyes.

'Anyone spying on me should already have my pattern. I constantly checked my body and let Mo Yan inspect me, too. She has more experience than me and didn't notice anything strange. I shouldn't put off the Golden Achievements any longer. Fang Zheng will be the most active for the foreseeable future. The Tide occurred recently, and the Wolves won't attack for some time. I won't get better conditions than now.'

His gaze glints.

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A team of Gu Masters has an ugly expression as two Bold Lightning Wolves surround them. The surrounding Lightning Wolves lock the area, eyeing the Gu Yue Gu Masters with a ruthless glint in their eyes.

"What is going on?"

"The Bold Lightning Wolves have their hunting zones. Why are they flanking us?"

Their cries do not matter as one of the Gu Masters releases a Ball Gu with a yellow body and tiny wings. The Gu flies into the sky and explodes into a mass of light visible from 50 kilometers! However, their fate remains the same despite the use of Signal Gu.

In the distance, Fang Yuan calmly stares at the wolves, tearing his Clansmen to shreds.

It's his doing.

He used the Stealth Scales Gu to lure another pack of Bold Lightning Wolf. He would transition from being visible to going invisible to lead the wolves there.

Why?

'I used this method to lure the wolves and kill Gu Yue Man Shi to collect his Gu for the merit points and exchange it for the Nine Steps Fragrant Grass Gu. However, Gu Yue Yao Ji wants my Nine Leaf Vitality Grass and will prevent me from buying it. Besides, I don't want to return to the cliff area near Man Shi. That's where I attracted Bai Ning Bing's attention. Although I used my means to chase her, luckily encountering Qing Shu and forcing her to self-explode her arm—I might not have been lucky this time. Qing Shu and Fang Zheng are elders. They might not even be near the cliff like last time.'

'As for this group. Hehe. I underestimated the Divine Investigator's daughter, and she uncovered Gu Yue Jiang He covering for me. Killing mortals and Jiang He covering it to protect his evaluation isn't the point. It broke the illusion of my *'attitude'* for the Divine Investigator's Daughter. Fang Zheng was almost assassinated by the Hunter's Eldest Son because of me. It also snapped the last of my relationship with Fang Zheng, making him completely cooperate with the investigation.'

'These are all simple measures to delay the investigation once the Tie duo arrives. The crucial point is still healing the Heavenly Essence Treasure Lotus Gu before they arrive.'

Fang Yuan moves from the site.

'The best way is to kill Chi Cheng and blackmail Chi Lian about his family faking the results. However, Chi Cheng's team has a scout that can detect heat. Stealth Scales Gu is useless against him. I must use the Wolf packs to kill the Chi Faction and advance to Rank 3. For that, I must isolate Zie Qi.'

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"Save me!"

"Jian!"

A wave of blue mist stops the Bold Lightning Wolf. The wolf snarls and bites. However, the formless defensive fog is like an unbreakable bubble that protects the Xiong Clan's Gu Masters.

“It’s the Moon Treasure Mist Gu!”

“Ah! Elder Fang Zheng!”

“It’s truly you!”

Fang Zheng steps from the bushes. His gaze does not leave the Bold Lightning Wolf as he flicks two moon blades—cutting the remaining Lightning Wolves! Lightning dances on Bold Lightning Wolf’s claw as it swipes at Fang Zheng. The snappy lightning fails to pierce the protective mist around Fang Zheng, dispersing.

The Xiong Clansmen watch Fang Zheng calmly deal with the wolf before revoking his Gu’s effect.

“Thank you, Elder Fang,” The team leader bows. “Even though we aren’t of the same clan, your talent and character are respectable! This Xiong Jian is in your debt.”

“I must uphold the Alliance’s terms,” Fang Zheng smiles. “We can’t let internal disputes be the end of us, Brother Jian. Of course, I will assist others against the wolves.”

Other Gu Masters from the Xiong Clan feel a rush of admiration toward the youth. One of them cannot help but compare.

“Elder Fang Zheng is younger than Bai Ning Bing with similar results. But why are the two so different? Bai Ning Bing has been nothing but a mess! She hurt our Clan’s Xiong Li and even killed one of our elders three years ago.”

“Sigh, Elder Fang is a dragon amongst men.”

“A crane in a flock of chickens, indeed.”

Fang Zheng doesn’t shy away from such comments now. He elegantly adjusts his sleeves before offering, “Your team must be out of Primeval Essence.”

The comment instantly makes the team cautious until Fang Zheng beams pleasantly. “Let me escort you near your village.”

They sigh in relief, accepting the offer while using Fang Zheng’s protection to retrieve their Primeval Stones and recover their essence.

Curious about him, the Xiong Clansmen question different things. Fang Zheng answers most of it without disclosing any clan secrets. Xiong Jian speaks up.



“We all heard about your marriage, Elder Fang. I don’t mean to be disrespectful, but wouldn’t it have been better to marry a Gu Master and accept your romance as a concubine? Other female Gu masters might not want to be your concubines if your wife is a mortal.”

As if used to such doubts, Fang Zheng reveals an understanding look. He sighs, stating. “How can anyone reason with love? Gu Masters are also mortals, and we all perish one day. And a man in love can never love another person. I don’t care about concubines.”

The two female Gu masters feel moved while a burly Gu Master laughs.

“That’s where we disagree, Elder Fang. I think a man and a woman can love more than one person. Don’t many legendary female Gu Masters possess a harem of men?”

“Idiot! There’s a difference!”

“Exactly!” The two women retort as Xiong Jian smiles. “What about a person loving two different individuals at different times? A lover of past and present. Who would one choose? The first love that never was, or the next.”

Fang Zheng gazes at the team leader with surprise. Xiong Jian’s question is intriguing.

The group discusses the topic while traversing the dangerous forest, unable to conclude the topic in one session.

Meanwhile, Lo Jik answers a similar question without even trying.

Choose?

Sacrifice one for another?

He mocks such notions. One does not choose between two things he wants. He takes them both and merely appoints different priorities. That’s what he is about to achieve as he leads Shen Cui in one of the newly built Bamboo cabins inside a grove. Other cabins are rebuilt, too.

He once possessed a portion of the property in the grove.

Now?

With the death of all the hunters, it’s all bought under Mo Yan’s name by Mo Chen.

Shen Cui enters the cabin with a nervous expression. Her petite frame shakes with each step—fear and anticipation. Keeping true to his unforceful ways, Lo Jik revealed his intentions to Shen Cui. She should have refused. But she didn't. Wasn't she the one waiting for him? Didn't she want his lips? His warmth?

Did she not deny Fang Zheng several instances of intimacies with her hand and mouth, even introducing a few drugs? What was all that for?

Him!

Would a Mo Yan scare her when she's already drugged Fang Zheng?

A blue film of light flashes within the cabin before disappearing. The flash briefly illuminates Mo Yan's amused features as Shen Cui lowers her head.

"The Rank 1 Hide Sound Gu lasts for 5 hours. Is she truly worth 200 Primeval Stones, Dear?"

Mo Yan's derisive words pour a bucket of cold water over Shen Cui's courage as the latter feels a warm hand on her shoulders. Lo Jik's comforting words almost make Shen Cui as he chuckles, "200? She's more than that. So much more. Don't you already know me, Yan?"

"I do," Mo Yan sighs with a smile, closing the distance and pecking his lips. "You're the man who constantly put his life on the line to help me get strong. I'm just worried this wench is using you the same way she uses that Fang Zheng."

"I-I'm not!" Shen Cui works up, profusely blushing. Her eyes adjust to the dim interior as Shen Cui observes the mockery in Mo Yan's eyes.

"You're not using Fang Zheng?" The woman questions.

"No, I-" Shen Cui pales slightly when a loud spank rings, followed by Mo Yan's yelp.

"Stop giving her such a hard time," Lo Jik snickers.

"Hmph, fine!" Mo Yan scoffs as she further pushes her butt against Lo Jik's wide hand, allowing him to squeeze her.

"Come," his other hand boldly grabs Shen Cui's pert ass, making her squeak. He leads the duo to the mattress beside the study table. "Hehe, I remember I only used to have a

shelf. But it's so different now."

"Do you like it?" Mo Yan questions.

"Well..." Lo Jik lets his words linger. Eager to curry his favor to not feel suppressed by his wife, the mistress smiles, "I'm sure you will rise further and feel similar nostalgia about your current house."

Mo Yan narrows her eyes.

"It's not nostalgia," Lo Jik sighs. "It's just a pity to ruin such good furniture."

The duo understands his meaning, growing speechless. Does he feel so confident taking two women at once?

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"Hah! I'm back!" Fang Zheng grunts as he enters the village. Before he can think of anything else, a Gu Master hurriedly calls out for him.

"Elder Fang! We have several pending assignments to issue. Elder Mo Yan and Qing Shu already finished their share of it."

Fang Zheng groans softly before nodding. He just wants to return to his wife and say: I'm—

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"—*cumming!*"

Shen Cui shrieks as a pool of juices gathers under her toes. Her body leans against the desk, standing on the balls of her toes as Lo Jik slams his cock into her stretched, pink slit. He grunts aloud, filling Shen Cui as the Elder's wife's pupils roll into her skull. Her tongue lolls out. However, there is another person taking advantage of her.

"Now, now," Mo Yan moans, snatching Shen Cui's head and stuffing it against her creamed cunt. "Don't pull out so suddenly."

Shen Cui instinctively licks and eats Mo Yan out as Lo Jik grunts. "Those Gu, Yan'er."

"Here you go, dear," Mo Yan trills as two lights shoot out of the woman, who is squeezing her breasts. One Gu enters Shen Cui's buttocks as the girl's eyes pop open.

Meanwhile, the other Gu has a mysterious effect on Shen Cui. She doesn't feel her entrance strained.

"It's a Gu that temporarily makes your skin and flesh more elastic than usual." Lo Jik smiles as his thumb instantly slides into Shen Cui's sloppy asshole.

The girl struggles to say something. However, Mo Yan keeps a tight hold of Shen Cui's head.

"Don't worry," Lo Jik continues. "The other Gu cleans you up. I don't know when we'll see each other again. So, I don't want to waste any time when I'm with you, Cui'er." He speaks softly. "I want you. I want to make you mine in every way possible before I let you return." He covers his true desires and gently pushes his slobbered cock inside Shen Cui's tight anus.

The trio grunts at once as the sharp exhale from Shen Cui's nostrils along Mo Yan's wet clit makes her explode in the former's mouth as Shen Cui obediently laps it all up. Meanwhile, Lo Jik quietly enters Shen Cui's hot ass. He exhales once he bottoms out, stretching the woman in ways Feng Zheng never could imagine.

He glances at the duo ahead. Narrowing his eyes, Lo Jik grabs Shen Cui by her hair and yanks her up, forcing her ass to squeeze around his cock.

"Aaaagh~!" Shen Cui moans, shivering as juices spill and slide down her pale thighs.

"Aw!" Mo Yan pouts. "You're so greedy, dear!"

"Sorry," Lo Jik smiles wryly, letting Shen Cui lean forward till her stained lips latch onto Mo Yan's breasts.

"Hhmgh," Mo Yan coos. She strokes Shen Cui's head, grumbling, "Don't think being silver-tongued will help your case, Shen Cui. You also answer to me now. Say: Yes, Mistress."

"Y-yes, Mistress," Shen Cui whimpers as Lo Jik moves, making her lean forward. She wants something to kiss. Someone!

Mo Yan rolls her eyes. Shen Cui's slutty expression is *'barely'* enough to move her as the woman leans down, tasting herself and her husband from Shen Cui's tongue as they embrace each other, with Lo Jik steadily increasing his pace.

'That's two Golden Achievements. Lucky~!'

He fucks Shen Cui even harder. She would need a healing Gu to walk straight after they are done—something Lo Jik prepared. He had the two Vitality leaves from before. It's time to use them.

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“—so, I told them that I would consider their thoughts about it. What do you think, Cui? Cui'er?”

Fang Zheng prompts the woman as she blinks before forcing a smile.

“I'm sorry. I'm just a little tired. I took a stroll in the village and still feel slightly sick,” Shen Cui shakes her head.

“Is that so?” concerned, Fang Zheng prompts, “I should ask—”

“It's alright, dear.” She whispers. Shen Cui leans forward and pecks Fang Zheng. “Could I sleep early tonight?”

“Of course!” Fang Zheng nods. It's rare for him to stay at home during the night these days since the Elders take turns keeping watch of the Village's defenses. Even if he wanted to spend time with her tonight, he readily agreed for her to have rest.

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It's natural for Lo Jik to complete all the Silver rewards from Shen Cui—especially a damn footjob. Besides, it took time for Lo Jik to *'persuade'* the two women to eventually kiss each other. He couldn't have done that had he focused on other Silver Achievements like a boobjob or a handjob.

He stares at the list of accomplishments waiting for him to summon.

***[The Devil's First Threeway (Golden): Creampied Mo Yan and Shen Cui in one session. Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan, and Shen Cui. Rewards Stored.]***

***[The Ladies Agree (Golden): Mo Yan and Shen Cui swapped cum. Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan, and Shen Cui. Rewards Stored.]***

***[The Servant's Carrot (Silver): Had Vaginal Sex with Shen Cui for the First Time. Parties Involved—Host and Shen Cui. Rewards Stored.]***

***[The Servant's Stick (Silver): Had Anal Sex With Shen Cui for the First Time. Parties Involved—Host and Shen Cui. Rewards Stored.]***

***[Creamy Takeaway (Silver): Creampied Shen Cui. Parties Involved—Host and Shen Cui. Rewards Stored.]***

***[Servant's Tea (Silver): Made Shen Cui Orgasm for the First Time. Parties Involved—Host and Shen Cui. Rewards Stored.]***

***[A Taboo Makeout (Bronze/Repeatable): Made out with Mo Yan. Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

***[Scouting Booty Call (Bronze/Repeatable): Had Penetrative Sex With Mo Yan, Parties Involved—Host, Gu Yue Mo Yan. Rewards Stored.]***

***[Serving Lips (Bronze/Repeatable): Made Out With Shen Cui. Parties Involved—Host and Shen Cui. Rewards Stored.]***

***[Master's Bitch (Bronze/Repeatable): Had Penetrative Sex With Shen Cui. Parties Involved—Host and Shen Cui. Rewards Stored.]***

Lo Jik buzzes with excitement! Forcibly calming down, he considers if he should summon the Bronze rewards.

He decides—he shouldn't.

It's not that he wants to be reckless. But he's ignored months of rewards in the name of caution! What is a few more days?

'Of course, I will use summon the Bronze reward if I'm unlucky enough to summon a real dirt as a Silver one.'

He heaves deeply before starting with the silver rewards.

'Don't be a Red Steel Relic Gu,' he prays as the light flashes in his blanket's realm. He's greatly anticipative towards Shen Cui's rewards. Being the sweet cheeks that keep giving, a blood-red orb descends on his lap. This orb differs from the Shadow Beast Gu. He can feel a jelly-like texture around the orb. It's slightly like an eyeball.

'What Gu is this?' Lo Jik scratches his head in confusion. He's never heard of Rank 2 Gu of this description.

'It must be capable enough to compete against Red Steel Relic Gu or the Shadow Beast Gu.' Lo Jik stores it inside his Aperture.

The second silver reward reveals another Gu Worm!

It's not a Red Steel Relic Gu!

'I'll be damned,' Lo Jik scoffs a chuckle. He DID rig the RNG. Using the different Beast Strength Gu and the Pink Muscles Gu has enough effect for the second reward to be an index-long creamy bone. A weak Rank 3 aura emerges from its being as Lo Jik stores it in his Aperture.

'A Rank 3 Tough Bones Gu. Only Thick Skin Gu remains. However, it's one of the most common Gu. It's not valued only due to the rarity of the former two Gu and how hard it is to find or refine them,' Lo Jik smiles. 'I'll refine it after reaching Rank 3. I'll have to forget about the Complete Smell Lock Gu since one of the components of Thick Skin Gu is the Black Mane Gu. It also means I should forget the Rank 3 Steel Mane Gu.'

He summons the third reward.

A Red Steel Relic Gu.

'It's acceptable,' he sighs. Lo Jik has three Relic Gu now! He can easily nurture a Rank 2 Peak Stage subordinate. 'It's good that the Relic Gu barely needs anything to survive.'

The fourth reward flashes, revealing a rare refinement material for a Strength Gu.

He quietly turns his gaze to the Golden Rewards.

Lo Jik summons it with a thought. Light flashes before revealing a familiar blood-red orb. It's also a Rank 2 Gu.

'Could it be?' Lo Jik instantly understands something. There have been instances where he received a low-ranked Gu that does not match the promises of Silver rewards. It's because the actual reward is never the *'outer'* shell.

He takes a deep breath. Instead of using the recently received Gu, he retrieves the Rank 2 Blood Gu from the silver rewards. He uses the Gu with slight hesitation.

The Gu consumes 20% of his Peak Stage Essence before dissolving into warm blood that seeps into his skin. Lo Jik holds back a grunt as his body shudders. It feels like a metal liquid is flowing through his veins. However, the Gu does not let him focus on the

pain as his mind almost collapses from the information getting *'smeared'* on his soul!

Hundreds of Blood recipes and facts fill his mind.

This is a Rank 2 Soul's Blood Gu. It's a one-time Gu similar to the Heart Engraved Gu. However, this Gu can carry much information, like the Bookworm, for a painful cost. Lo Jik breathes steadily as his head hurts slightly.

'I see,' he purses his lips. 'The Blood Sea Ancestor.'

The Inheritance came from a Gu Master who benefited from the Blood Sea inheritance.

Blood Sea Ancestor was a Rank 7 demonic path Gu Master who took lives as readily as cutting grass, and his evil reputation was such that it resounded throughout the world, having his name recorded in history. In the beginning, Blood Sea Ancestor was just a mortal. But through luck and destiny, Blood Sea Ancestor became a Gu Master of the demonic path. Blood Sea Ancestor started from the lowest levels and rose in the ranks before becoming an authority on the Demonic path after 800 years. Blood Sea Ancestor didn't have a high aptitude. So, Blood Sea Ancestor had limited Primeval Essence in his aperture. Therefore, he had a crazed interest in researching the fusion of worms.

Blood Sea Ancestor had invested a lot of effort in researching Gu capable of absorbing natural Primeval Essence even after being refined by a Gu Master. The righteous path Gu Masters feared Blood Sea Ancestor's experiment. The righteous path Gu Masters were extremely worried that Blood Sea Ancestor would succeed in his research. As a result, The righteous Path Gu Masters organized countless traps before moving in for the kill.

In the end, Blood Sea Ancestor wasn't able to succeed, but it wasn't a complete failure. Blood Sea Ancestor succeeded in producing the fusion recipes of Bladewing Blood Bat Gu, Blood Guillotine, and Blood Frenzy Gu. Bladewing Blood Bat Gu was his first accomplishment, Blood Frenzy Gu was the second, and Blood Guillotine was the Blood Sea Ancestor's last accomplishment. Unfortunately, after Blood Sea Ancestor created the Blood Guillotine, due to the many battles and entrapment by the righteous path Gu Master, Blood Sea Ancestor was defeated.

Blood Sea Ancestor suffered from fatal wounds that could not be healed, and Blood Sea Ancestor carved out a bloody escape from the layers of entrapment. The righteous path Gu Masters were worried about Blood Sea Ancestor's final counterattack, which could endanger themselves, so the righteous path Gu Masters didn't have any inclination to chase after Blood Sea Ancestor and looked on as Blood Sea Ancestor made his getaway. Since then, the righteous path Gu Masters would regret that moment every time they recalled it. They regretted that they let Blood Sea Ancestor get away.



Lo Jik quietly stares at the second Soul's Blood Gu. He unhesitatingly used it!

Blood Sea Ancestor knew his death was a sure thing, so Blood Sea Ancestor started setting up a large-scale inheritance. In the limited time before his death, with the strength of his Rank 7 cultivation, Blood Sea Ancestor unexpectedly set up hundreds of thousands of inheritance grounds; his inheritances extended everywhere from the Central Continent to the Southern Border and other places.

Right before his death, Blood Sea Ancestor smiled devilishly and commented, "The blood path is not alone. The legacy will continue for all eternity!"

This statement was not false, for countless Gu Masters benefited from his inheritances, and thus, the demonic path flourished greatly. Whether the Bladewing Blood Bat Gu, the Blood Frenzy Gu, or the Blood Guillotine, they were all effortless to raise and multiply. People might find two or three Gu left casually by the Blood Sea Ancestor in some unremarkable valleys, poor villages, no-man deserts, or beside some mountain paths. These Gu were easy to raise, didn't have a high demand for Primeval Essence, and could easily be used by Gu Masters with ordinary aptitudes.

Survival was difficult in the Gu World, so which Gu Master wouldn't thirst for more power? The Gu Worms left by the Blood Sea Ancestor represented a new strength! It's a strength that was a quick and easy way to rise in power, and it became more welcomed than other Gu Worms.

Power itself had no sins. It became good in the hands of good and evil in the hands of evil. But in the Gu World, how many people could have a resolute mind after a sudden increase in strength? A man who got money would often become fickle. A sudden rise in strength would certainly nourish ambitions that weren't there before. As a result, many Gu Masters that obtained the Blood Sea Ancestor's legacy would become a devil that massacred everything. Even many righteous path Gu Masters had changed their sides. The inheritances of Blood Path Gu brought great turmoil and danger to the whole Gu World. In each inheritance of the Blood Sea Ancestor, there were often only two to three Gu. However, these inheritances were like a spark of fire that could cause a prairie fire if left alone.

Lo Jik's body shakes with the pain and information smeared on his soul. Blood drips from his nostrils as veins bulge around his temples!

There would often be demonic Path Gu Masters who would come into possession of the Blood Path Gu and cause chaos. Some of them would fail, killed away in some villages. Some would succeed temporarily and become a grand figure, harming a whole region.

They would also leave behind new Blood Inheritance at the moment of their exhaustion, whether they temporarily succeeded or failed. Thus, the blood calamity continued endlessly. Not only did it not end with the death of Blood Sea Ancestor through the combined strength of the righteous path Gu Masters, it instead thrived further with the foundations left behind, unable to be eliminated as it continued for an eternity.

It was to the extent that the righteous path Gu Masters would frequently curse, "These accursed blood path Gu Masters. We have already killed waves upon waves of them. But if we become slightly careless, we will see a new one coming up from nowhere." By now, the Blood Sea Inheritances were already publicly recognized as the most popular, with the highest number of inheritances. There was no competition. The rumor said that Blood Sea Ancestor's hundreds of thousands of inheritances were diversions, and the true inheritances were only a few. In these few inheritances, Blood Sea Ancestor was said to have concealed his best Gu Worms, research insights, or fusion recipes.

Lo Jik grits his teeth! It's too much!

The crazed notion of blood, the sick sense of joy regarding mindless massacres almost taints his soul as he holds out until—

"Huaaaaa!"

He loudly inhales, feeling the metal of his blood along his tongue as his bloodshot eyes snap open!

The story of the Blood Inheritances does not end there!

He now knows!

'Crazed about the Blood Sea's goals, many Gu Masters took the mantle to research and collect more of his inheritances. The Soul's Blood Gu from the Silver Achievement came from a Gu Master called the Crazed Blood Monk! He collected these inheritances but regretted his demise since he never found a True Inheritance.'

'Those aren't rumors! Blood Sea Ancestor DID hide the best of his inheritances before passing away. There are nine such Inheritances! The Gold reward gave me one-half of it. I only got the information. I don't know where the Inheritance is and if there is an Immortal Treasure.'

'But this Golden Achievement is an Immortal's True Inheritance! It doesn't compare to the Ruined Siblings' Legacy. There's so much to unpack! But a Rank 6 Immortal Recipe? In a Rank 2 Gu? Blood Sea did his all to hide these Inheritances in plain sight! And this Blood Skull Gu is incredible. The inheritance of Blood Guillotine and Bladewing

Blood Bat Gu doesn't compare to it.'

Lo Jik knows that the public achievements of the Blood Sea Ancestor are his simplest creations. That Demonic Gu Master was on steroids when it came to killing others and researching things.

'That's the level of Gu Immortals?' Lo Jik feels awed.

He cleans his nose and rests his mind for 30 minutes. His anticipation for the second Golden Achievement peaks!

'Sigh, the Soul's Blood Gu uses a negligible fragment of one's soul to create. It's a test left by these demonic figures. The information could be shared by a Bookworm Gu. But why would Demonic Gu Masters want to take it easy on their inheritors? I'm lucky. The 'test' of the information Gu must be nothing compared to the traps set around the remaining Legacy site.

Lo Jik feels better as he sits up and summons the final reward.

He's in no position to clean or shovel shit if it emerges from his Bronzetier rewards, making him ignore it.

The light flashes as another Rank 2 Gu appears on Lo Jik's lap.

It's also round and smooth. The steel orb is without a blemish, reflecting Lo Jik's shocked face.

'A Rank 2 Polished Steel Gu.'

Everyone knows about this Gu. If the Relic Gu is fought over by others, then this Gu can cause mass murders.

Why?

Would you not kill for enhancing your Aperture's limits? What Gu Master does not want to store more Primeval Essence and get a chance to advance to a higher Rank?

'Rank 1 Polished Copper, Rank 2 Polished Steel, Rank 3 Polished Silver, Rank 4 Polished Gold, and the Rank 5 Polished Crystal Gu increases 10, 20, 30, 40, and 50% of one's limits! However, the effect of the Gu has diminishing returns for a higher-ranked Gu Master. A Rank 2 Gu Master can only gain a 5% increment in their aptitude using the Rank 1 Polished Copper. The same Gu will barely increase 0.6% of one's aptitude for a

Rank 5 Gu Master.'

Lo Jik will never leave such treasure unchecked! If the Blood Sea inheritance paved the way for his future with its knowledge about Immortals, then the Rank 2 Polished Steel Gu swept his immediate concerns. He decides to use it on the Second Aperture since it can be hidden.

The Orb dissolves into a glimmering black liquid that enters his second Aperture. When Lo Jik feels content, the Hope Gu releases a blinding light. The other Gu flying or situated around it falls in the Primeval Sea as Lo Jik pales!

'NO!' He roars in his heart. However, it's too late!

The Hope Gu consumed the black, metallic liquid.

'Calm down,' Lo Jik snarls. 'You can't destroy your Vital Gu. Calm down—'

The Hope Gu brightens again. This time, its light fills his second AND first Apertures.

'What?'

Lo Jik's shoulders feel light—as if something unimaginable heavy is lifted from his... apertures.

That's right!

Both Apertures!

The Hope Gu continues to lift the pressure from his Apertures until it neatly settles, rising from 48 to 69% Aptitude!

Too much.

The turbulent emotions in his heart are too much.

Lo Jik quietly covers his head before whispering, "I need wine."

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**Alternate Title:** Months of Wait; Leading Wolves; Covering Tracks; Preparing for the Future; Chi Cheng's Set Fate; The Kind Elder; An Upright Man; A Romantic Discussion; A Scholarly Rizz?; Why Choose?; Power Allows The Heart To Set Free; Corrupting



His smile fades as he leaves the grove. It's been four days since he summoned the Golden Rewards. One increased his aptitude, and the other gave him several hundred Blood Recipes, hints, fusion ideas, and a deep insight into the Blood Path. Blood Path is hailed as one of the most popular 'Offense' paths—like Strength Gu. However, it's a veil to hide its immeasurable value as a support path. The only Rank 6 Immortal recipe in his memory, the Blood Skull Gu, is a heaven-defying Gu capable of improving one's Aptitude!

It's so rare and valuable that it breaks the norms of the Blood Path Gu regarding the convenience of available refinement materials. He cannot even refine the Rank 1 Variant yet.

'Rewards from Shen Cui all seem geared towards Aptitude and Aperture. After all, she is a mortal. An Aperture is her greatest wish, and her husband is the village's talent. I shouldn't skim out on her other Silver Rewards. I might still get the Heavenly Essence Treasure Lotus Recipe.'

'Even if the Blood Skull is hard to refine, the same isn't the case for the other Blood Path Gu, like the Blood Claw Gu.'

He sighs. Even though he has so many options, it all boils down to time. He wishes he was a heavenly talent in refinement. However, his odds of refining the Gu are only slightly better than others. This body may adapt and learn things quickly, but it will need years, if not decades, to possess the required finesse.

'No matter how many options I have, I can only take one step at a time. I will reduce my time in the Wilds and complete missions from Shen Cui before preparing for my advancement to Rank 3. I already have several Gu Worms planned to assemble my set. It all depends on luck now.'

He leaves the village. Like usual, he sets a few traps before resting atop a tree and using his bow first thing in the morning to warm up.

"Hmm?" she stops pouring spring water from her gourd and sits attentively. Her back straightens when she hears the wolf's howl. "Another team surrounded by wolves?" She yawns. "Let's see if anything is interesting like that Xiong Clansmen's Plunder Gu."

Her body moves like a petal guided by a soft breeze. She skips from one tree to another, jumping and hanging from a few like a monkey before somersaulting to the next one. Her silky white hair flips around, entangling.

"Hup!" she exhales, crouching on a branch from another small hill, watching a

brown-haired teen use a bow and arrows against the wolves while a ring of flames surrounded him.

'A bow?' Bai Ning Bing blinks owlshly. 'And he's good, too. Why have I never heard of him? That's not a Gu. I don't sense any aura— he pierced wolves' eyes five times in a row now!' She leans forward, watching the boy eventually run out of the arrows. She doesn't move to help. Bai Ning Bing's mood slightly dims when she realizes the entertainment was short-lived.

*\*Crack\**

She stills, watching in amazement as the youth picks the nearest corpse before charging into the battle and using the dead body as a makeshift club, taking a life with every attack! As the corpse in his hand breaks and mangles beyond recognition—he picks another! The Wolves eventually escape with pitiful yelps.

'Snrrk!' She grins, almost cackling. 'That was funny!' Her eyes quiver with excitement. She sees more than a show.

'That boy dodged all the attacks and fended off a wolf pack without a single hit! Is he that newbie Fang Zheng?'

Bai Ning Bing jumps down, approaching the youth with a curious expression. The woman does not hide her presence as the boy notices her. He seems sizeable up close, at least bigger than several Xiong Clansmen.

The youth stops collecting the materials and quietly stares at her.

"You," Bai Ning Bing grins toothily. "Who are you?"

Lo Jik nods, "The good question is, what am I."

Bai Ning Bing blinks. "What are you?"

"The person's teammate standing behind you," grins Lo Jik.

Bai Ning Bing hurriedly looks back, finding nothing. Her expression instantly falls when she turns to face the man, only to see him nowhere!

"Fuck!" she curses with those perfect, pink lips of hers as she snaps her head around, looking for Lo Jik.

'Can't believe that worked,' Lo Jik snorts in amusement, still standing in the same spot without moving an inch.

Oh. Lo Jik has fucked enough 'crazy' to know that Bai Ning Bing may as well wear a crown and proclaim herself the queen of them all! But craziness with high individual prowess is a dangerous fusion he wishes to avoid.

He could possibly take her on—but why should he?

If Bai Ning Bing is so battle-hungry, she should go fight Thousand-Beast Kings.

'Mo Yan's descriptions were not enough to convey how crazy this woman is,' Lo Jik blinks as Bai Ning Bing suddenly stops. She stares right at the spot where he is. Or in her eyes, where he disappeared from.

"Hehehehe!" she cackles creepily. "You almost got me—hughkh!"

'And if you can't avoid them, beat them,' Lo Jik's fist smashes into the chuckling Bai Ning Bing's face. It would be a sin to ruin such a peerless beauty's face in his previous world. But here?

Fuck social niceties.

Blood drips from his clenched fist as his skin breaks open. However, the flesh and bones underneath are intact!

Pink Muscles; Tough Bones!

Unlike Pink Muscles, Tough Bones is an expendable Gu. Calling that Gu a painful procedure would be an understatement.

However, he survived.

Lo Jik snorts as he observes her coldly lying body from the distance. He doesn't move, coldly watching Bai Ning Bing.

"Are you waiting for me to walk over and touch you?" Lo Jik questions curiously. "Your toes are curled, you know. You're not fooling anyone."

"Ahh! Got caught!" Bai Ning Bing sits up. There's only a slight swelling near her nose, as she looks mostly alright. "I was using my healing Gu," she complains. "So?" She prompts. "What's your name?"



Lo Jik thins his lips before questioning, "Introduce yourself first."

Bai Ning Bing's gaze brightens.

"I'm Bai—"

"I know who you are. And I don't care."

"Why the fuck did you ask me for an introduction then?!" Bai Ning Bing snaps, yelling.

"Why do you attack others?" Lo Jik questions.

"Because I'm bored."

"So was I."

Bai Ning Bing grows silent. She quietly observes his deep-brown eyes. The woman notes a familiar amusement in his gaze. However, it only hides a profound indifference. He is simply good at hiding it.

"I'm Mo Yan's husband."

His gaze brightens as if that expression was an illusion, and he politely smiles. "Gu Yue Lo Jik, pleased to meet you."

Bai Ning Bing slowly stands and starts walking around him. She's 30 steps away. However, she gets as close as 15 steps while crouching and looking at Lo Jik from various angles. "How did you do it?" She questions while seemingly inspecting him for something.

"Do what?"

"Exist. How do you exist with that woman? Does she not bore you?" Bai Ning Bing inquires. "Do you think it's possible to exist with boring people?"

Lo Jik turns silent. He recalls the early morning and his interaction with Mo Yan. Knowing himself, Lo Jik knows his Trait is the primary reason he married her. However—

"We all have our moments," Lo Jik smiles flatly. "It's stupid to decide if someone is boring by a few interactions. For instance, you. Hearing about your stupid chatter about

finding excitement and life and death and seeing it up close is boring.”

Bai Ning Bing stops behind Lo Jik.

“What?” she questions icily.

Yes, he struck a nerve.

Lo Jik turns his head slightly back to look at her. Contempt seeps into his features.

“I said you’re Boring. All this childish act bores me, girl. You’d be somewhat interesting if you had the balls to face your issues aside from droning about life and death.” He smirks. “Guess what? You will make an insomniac sleep in five minutes.”

Her eyes widen. Her black pupils transition to icy blue hues as she attacks!

*\*Ting\**

Sharp icicles slam and shatter against a white light around Lo Jik’s body.

“See? Only a boring person will eventually focus on the nonsense of finding excitement and ‘color’ in life and death. I bet you think others are boring. What about you? What’s the most productive thing about you after your cultivation?”

He laughs and weaves past her ice katana.

Everyone has a hobby.

Lo Jik’s hobby is to poke someone’s issue and verbally abuse them to the extent they either sleep with him or their fathers. The result has been in his favor by 88%!

“Ooh, almost got me—something nobody ever said about you. Hah, dumb bitch!”

Lo Jik casually sidesteps and smashes her sword with a left hook. He slaps the icicle trailed for his eyes, shattering them with great strength. He has the strength of two boars and a tiger! Bai Ning Bing’s Ice Sword may be slightly threatening—only if he stops and lets her hack at him several times!

“A boring bitch would make the match more exciting by using Rank 1 Gu. Why don’t you? Don’t you want to see colors? Go on, stop using your Gu altogether, and jump off a fucking cliff! Hahahaha!”

“Shut up!” Bai Ning Bing hisses. Nobody has ever spoken to her like that. Others cursed her, yes.

But nobody *‘opened’* her like this!

“Aw, did I hurt your feelings?” Lo Jik snickers. “Bite me, you crazy bitch. See? I played with you. But you’re boring!”

Lo Jik jumps off a nearby cliff as feathers sprout from his bamboo boots. His fall stops. *‘Standing’* midair, Lo Jik glances at the seething Bai Ning Bing, who forms dozens of icicles.

“Don’t be so dull the next time we meet, girl. Read and maybe eat different food. We’ll have some stuff to talk about while you try and kill me. That should make you less boring. Oh, and drop the clown act.” Lo Jik jogs down the invisible *‘stairs,’* laughing. “Death terrifies many. No need to act cool about it.”

He disappears into a different section of the forest as Bai Ning Bing quietly touches the mark on her face before growling. Icy mist oozes from her pores as she barely controls her cultivation from slipping through its suppression.

She returns to the spot where she met Gu Yue Lo Jik. Her eyes widen when she sees something written on the ground beside his Bow and an empty quiver.

—*Bitch, Be Cool*—

“Pfft!” Her anger fizzles away as she falls to the ground, indifferent to mud and blood catching up on her robes and hair. “Hahahahahahaha!”

Her clear laughter jingles and echoes on this side of the mountain.

“—Hahaha!”

Lo Jik wipes a bead of sweat from his forehead as he hears the echoes of her melodic laughter.

‘I’d be minced meat if not for the Lotus Gu supplying me with Rank 3 essence to activate my Feathered Boots Gu. What’s with her? Almost all her Icicles predicted my moves, and her swordplay was threatening, too. I could use the Moonglow to counter it. However, it would force me to activate my Battle Instincts Gu.’

He looks at his fists.

'To think I'll encounter Bai Ning Bing... sheesh.'

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"Hmm? Do you like that?" Lo Jik whispers into Shen Cui's ear as she presses her thighs together, letting her master drive his hot rod between her cushy legs. His veiny shaft prods open her entrance and rubs her poking clit. His warm and rough hands slide into her clothes and pinch her nipples as she bites her moan. Her robe is half-open, revealing a generous swathe of her fair skin and luscious body.

"M-Master," Shen Cui mewls. "It feels good. Everything you do makes me feel good~!"

'Because it's the honeymoon phase, sweetheart. I'll have to put in more effort for half the results after a month or two.'

It's also the best time to complete his remaining objectives.

She exhales when she feels Lo Jik cumming against the fleshy cage of her thighs. His generous rewards mix with her juices sliding down her thighs as Shen Cui knowingly scoops a portion of it with her fingers before sucking them with a lurid expression. She makes a show out of it by slightly opening her mouth and letting Lo Jik see how her tongue dexterously sucks her index and middle finger.

"Good girl," Lo Jik smirks, patting her head as the girl climbs into his embrace with a happy smile.

"That I am, Master. I'm your good girl. But..."

She frowns.

"Is he pestering you?" Lo Jik smirks.

"Well," Shen Cui gulps slightly, unwilling to say anything wrong and offend Lo Jik. "He is my husband."

"He is, isn't he?" Lo Jik strokes her hair while they lie on the mattress. His other hand slides his fingers inside her moist snatch. Shen Cui stiffens before relaxing in his embrace. "And what will you do?" He whispers.

"I will find ways to deny him," Shen Cui blushes.

Lo Jik's game is simple. He will continue making Shen Cui take risks while completing the Silver Missions. His goal is to get all the Silver Achievements or stop with the fusion recipe of Heavenly Essence Treasure Lotus.

Case in point, Lo Jik eagerly climbs atop her and pushes his erect cock between her perky ass cheeks. He firmly grips her butt before moving between it!

Of course, he will stop if things become more bothersome.

Eventually, Shen Cui sleeping with Fang Zheng will be a needed excuse to detach himself from the girl. He wouldn't bluntly break her heart but gaslight her into believing there was no other option. It's to keep her from revealing their affair and making Fang Zheng go bat-shit crazy. So, he wants to get the Silver Achievements for boobjob and handjob before things go south.

Only footjob will remain—Lo Jik's accursed topic!

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"I'm back," Lo Jik beams at Mo Yan and hugs her. She sniffs for a moment before snorting and poking his forehead. "That's why you were late? That slut of ours?"

"Shen Cui? No. I did encounter Bai Ning Bing and angered her before running away. She knows I'm your husband. I would temporarily refrain from leaving the village if I were you."

He kisses her lips before walking past her.

"Ahh~! I'm tired." He stretches his limbs. "What should we eat tonight?"

"You encountered Bai Ning Bing?!" Her shocked voice echoes in their house as Lo Jik tilts his head, emphasizing, "AND pissed her off."

Mo Yan forgets Shen Cui as she questions everything about the encounter. Lo Jik keeps a few things secret but answers the rest. Mo Yan also wisely refrains from questions like—'*How did you escape?*' They shouldn't share such knowledge even if they are spouses.

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Mo Yan does not spread the news of Bai Ning Bing's encounter with Lo Jik. More than aware of Bai Ning Bing's eccentric nature, she wisely stayed inside the Village. Also,

why would Mo Yan put her husband in a tough spot? He must have some trump cards to escape Bai Ning Bing. Everyone possesses some secrets. However, it's Bai Ning Bing who started hunting Gu Yue Clansmen, grievously injuring them before questioning her victims about Gu Yue Lo Jik.

Such an event shocked others. Outraged, a Gu Yue Elder searched for Bai Ning Bing, demanding an explanation.

She soundly defeated the Elder before cutting his hand, prompting him to cough up anything he knew about Gu Yue Lo Jik.

“Did he look Bai Ning Bing the wrong way?”

“She’s too much! Does she not care about the alliance?”

“Others don’t want to find trouble with her during the Wolf Tide. Lo Jik is to blame! What did he do to her?”

“Rumors say that Bai Ning Bing suffered greatly. She wanted him after a mere glance, but Lo Jik left her to the wolves.”

“Lo Jik is already married!”

“Who cares? He’s afraid!” A Gu Master gloats. “He has to pay the daily fine for not meeting the quota!”

“Because he can! He is an Elder’s spouse! Him paying Primeval Stones doesn’t UNFUCK us!”

“Khuk!”

‘Only a foot job remains,’ Lo Jik narrows his eyes. He is unaffected by rumors of Bai Ning Bing’s threat. He stayed inside the village as a *coward* to complete his achievements. He almost did. But Bai Ning Bing’s actions pushed a spotlight atop him, forcing him to stop meeting with Shen Cui.

‘And I was slightly close to getting a foot job, too. Shen Cui does everything I ask. But foot job isn’t a mainstream kink.’

He wisely decides to call it quits. Fang Zheng is also dissatisfied with the current state of his marriage. Shen Cui will have to sleep with him, which becomes his ticket to get out of that relationship... unless she does something crazy.

He glances at the final achievements of Shen Cui. Things are getting dangerous around the village with repeated sightings of Frenzy Lightning Wolves, forcing several Elders to push the beasts back from the villages.

Lo Jik doesn't want to wait any further. But he also has to be wise about it. The timing isn't right, and he's in an awkward and 'stale' stage.

'Still, my gains are more than fair,' Lo Jik narrows his eyes. He can be considered wealthier than several Elders. The Heavenly Essence Treasure Lotus also keeps adding 50 Primeval Stones daily to his storage! He already has 8510 stones. As for Bai Ning Bing? Let the crazy bitch rage. She should forget about him and find someone else more intriguing, right?

He notes his unused Silver Achievements.

***[Itty Titty Servant (Silver): Experienced an Orgasm Through Shen Cui's Breasts. Parties Involved—Host and Shen Cui. Rewards Stored.]***

***[Hands of Satisfaction (Silver): Experienced an Orgasm Through Shen Cui's Hands. Parties Involved—Host and Shen Cui. Rewards Stored.]***

***[A Sloppy Ass (Silver): Experienced an Orgasm Through Shen Cui's Butt Cheeks. Parties Involved—Host and Shen Cui. Rewards Stored.]***

***[Grinding Carrot (Silver): Experienced an Orgasm Between Shen Cui's Thighs. Parties Involved—Host and Shen Cui. Rewards Stored.]***

Lo Jik doesn't waste time and summons the first reward.

Light flashes beside him, revealing a skull-sized brownstone. Its uneven surface and peculiar spots are shaded bright purple, and a faint fragrance fills the space under his blanket.

'A Poison Mineral Bulb. It's strangely used to refine rare Rank 4 Grass Gu.' Lo Jik nods temporarily and keeps the material aside. He would have failed to identify several materials if not for going through the various inheritances he's already received. But this is the second to last thing he wanted to see.

The worst for him is still a modestly useless Rank 2 Relic Gu.

Another light flashes, and he sees the Rank 2 Relic Gu sit on his lap.

'Great,' Lo Jik sighs. He inadvertently thinks of Bai Ning Bing. Could he form a relationship with that crazy bitch before waiting for her to become the Clan Leader and then reap the rewards? After all, Lo Jik will lose his stream of Bronze rewards after advancing to Rank 3. Conversely, Bronze-tier achievements as a Rank 3 Gu Master means moderately rare Rank 3 Gu.

'But that's too far of a thing,' he shakes his head. Who knows how long it will take for Bai Ning Bing to reach Rank 4. She's also from an Enemy clan and may kill Lo Jik after the deed.

Lo Jik recovers his focus and summons the third reward.

'Oh?'

He perks up at the sight of a weak Rank 3 Gu.

Now that's the kind of reward he likes receiving!

This Gu is similar to a dried branch with three prongs. Lo Jik picks up the fist-sized Gu with an amused expression.

'A Rank 3 Three Tasks at Once Gu? Why would I receive a treasured Gu for Enslavement and Refinement Experts?' Lo Jik muses. 'Does Shen Cui have such talents? Or Fang Zheng? That can't be right. Fang Zheng only has one Rank 3 Gu of his efforts. That's his Vital Gu. The other two are the Clan Leader and Qing Shu's gifts.'

'Still, this Gu is weak. It needs beast turd as fertilizer. I'm glad I have so much of it stored. The Smell Lock Gu is a Rank 2 Gu and would need three years to finish the high-quality Beast King shit.'

He nods. This Gu is great.

A Gu Master can effortlessly divide their attention into three tasks using this Gu! Lo Jik can already divide his attention to accomplish two processes. He also risks injury to refine three Gu at once. The addition of this Gu allows him to focus on five things!

'I can use the Black Mane and White Jade Gu with this while focusing on the offense. The result becomes better once I activate the Battle Instinct Gu.'

Lo Jik stores the Rank 3 Gu and summons the final reward. He DID have many expectations. However, he's simmered down. Getting a Rank 3 Heavenly Essence



Treasure Lotus is already wild. Shen Cui's achievements can be considered slightly more beneficial to Lo Jik than Mo Yan's since Mo Yan's rewards gave him many hard-to-feed Shadow Gu. It can be said that Shen Cui's mortal status became her most valuable trait!

The light flashes, revealing a short silhouette. Lo Jik watches a beautiful blue tulip descend onto Lo Jik's lap. It's a storage item like the Rank 1 Determined Fist Gu—Dangling Kiss Tulip Gu. Lo Jik curbs the excitement in his heart as he gently peels the blue petals. In its center lies a weak Rank 2 Heart Engraved Gu.

Lo Jik's hands quiver as he activates the Gu. The Heart Engraved Gu turns into a stream of red light and enters his body. Lo Jik closes his eyes, going through the information. His expression turns complicated. It's not what he wanted, but it's no less valuable.

Rank 1-5 Polished Gu recipe.

Such a recipe will cause outrage in society, making Lo Jik the number one target for many. Even Gu Yue Bo will attack Lo Jik and extract the information without civility. It's too precious! The Polished Gu series is more valuable than the Heavenly Essence Treasure Lotus series. However, the recipe needs several rare materials almost at the same level as Silver-tier rewards. Even if the cost is not the problem, what about availability?

Many materials are almost impossible to find!

'Heh!' Lo Jik suddenly chuckles. 'Gosh! How Greedy am I?' He exhales sharply, letting go of all his frustrations in a breath. He's earned a LOT! Heck! He doesn't even find Shen Cui a bother anymore. If she wants to fuck, all she needs to do is tell him the date and location—he'll also be willing to rock her world in Fang Zheng's room.

'Although it is a renowned saying—99% of Gamblers quit moments before making it—I must focus on my cultivation. I have a Three Tasks at Once Gu. I should use it to prepare a few Rank 3 Gu for my advancement. After all, a Rank 3 Gu Master needs a similar Gu to display their total potential.'

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**Alternate Title:** Bai Ning Bing's Terror; Attacked Mo Yan; Healed; Rest; Daily Routine; Encounter; A Curious Monkey; Approaching Interests; The Talent; Beauty?; The Crazy Queen; Oldest Trick in the Book; Lo Jik: Smash; Lo Jik's Daddy Issue Statistics; 88% is Good Odds; Opening and Humiliating Bai Ning Bing; A Fool's Bravado; Superior Might?; Evenly Matched?; Bai Bye!; Crazy Laugh!; Be Cool! \*Bai Ning Bing About to Freeze



'It's her, right? I thought I wouldn't have to deal with her since dear Batchmate Lo Jik took over my misfortune. But to think I would still encounter her.'

Fang Yuan does not lose his cool. Instead, he jumps into the bush as the air ripples around him, turning him invisible.

\*Phew\*

An icicle cuts through the bushes and stabs the ground beside Fang Yuan. An impish snicker rings from the distant branch. "I hunted another Frenzy Lightning Wolf for the Lightning Pupil Gu. You're from Gu Yue Village. You know what I want! Tell me about Gu Yue Lo Jik, and I will let you leave."

It should be another dull encounter for Bai Ning Bing. Yet, her body stills as if struck by lightning. Her black eyes meet the youth's pitch-black, abyss-like pupils. She quietly stares at him as she jumps down the branch. A wave of excitement fills her. She steps forward, wanting to inspect the black-haired teen. His eyes attracted her, like Lo Jik's. They aren't the same. In fact, they are completely opposite!

Lo Jik's gaze hid his indifference. However, she could sense a sparkle of hope and joy in the depths of those lonely brown hues. Meanwhile, the youth in front of her seems to possess a gaze that looks down on life—lonely but not desperate. A whirlpool of unending chaos hides solemn peace toward life and death! She could tell all this because she felt the same!

She wants to find joy in life. That flicker of hope has yet to run out. However, she also wants to surpass her frustration and fear of the inevitable death. Lo Jik struck correctly. She forced herself to turn a blind eye to her issues, lying to herself to feel at peace.

Yet, she was never peaceful.

Her bosom heaves as she steps forward to closely observe the youth. Yet, her opponent's calm disdain makes her recollect *'HIS'* words.

'I really am a clown,' Bai Ning Bing realizes. Did she almost inspect the youth like a plaything?

"There are two of you," Bai Ning Bing instead states, not moving from her position. And she's torn. What should she do? Unknowingly, she faces a fork of decision leading into the unknown. Hope and Peace—Both attract her. However, the depths of her being screams that she is one decision away from a path of no return.

'Two?' Fang Yuan narrows his eyes. He knows all about Bai Ning Bing. She's a pitiful child forced to face the notion of inevitable death before she could even understand joy. It made her eccentric. She might not want to realize it, but her acts of finding 'Joy' in life and death battle is her way of trying to overcome that fear.

"I'm Bai Ning Bing," she introduces herself, slightly shocking Fang Yuan. "What is your name?"

Unwilling to enter a confrontation like last time due to unfavorable conditions, Fang Yuan confesses, "Gu Yue Fang Yuan."

"Gu Yue Lo Jik... Gu Yue Fang Yuan..." Bai Ning Bing mutters under her breath.

"Tell me about Lo Jik and yourself."

Fang Yuan frowns. He's not unwilling to share information. However, the current Bai Ning Bing is several times more dangerous than the one he faced in his previous life. She was like a child standing at the entrance of the Demonic Path. The so-called Demonic Path is the world of individuals who can never fit into society. Some may be psychotic mass murderers and criminals. But most are too individualistic with an Iron Will that never bends to the System's whims. Bai Ning Bing was only at the cusp of it.

Now?

She's unknowingly walking into the foggy, danger-riddled path of a Demon.

Her approaching death twisted her morals. Why else would a talent like her, with the hopes of the clan, taught by the Clan Leader about several righteous traditions and aspects, turn out this way? Death changes a man. It's not just the death of one's body. Losing identity and hope is similar to death. Death and fatal experiences refined men like Fang Yuan to possess an Iron Will. To Fang Yuan, Righteousness or Demonism is merely a tool.

What about Bai Ning Bing? She isn't so far ahead to understand all that. She's like a cub entering a threatening and unknown world for the first time. Or so she should be.

The Bai Ning Bing in front of Fang Yuan is like an injured cub, already aware of the dangers and still pressing forward.

"It will cost you," Fang Yuan narrows his eyes. He isn't scared. Injured or healthy—she is still a cub.

“How much?” Bai Ning Bing raises her eyebrows. Conventionally, Fang Yuan should have asked for the Red Steel Relic Gu in her aperture. However, he is already close to the Peak Stage. His cultivation in this life is quicker due to the early refinement of the Four Flavors Liquor Worm Gu.

‘That’s the Bai Ning Bing I know. She doesn’t need external resources for Cultivation. As the Clan Leader’s successor, she must possess deep savings. Can’t I use her to get some Primeval Stones? The only question is, should I engage her in a negotiation or place a price she’d be willing to splurge?’

Fang Yuan decides on the latter. He would be a fool to drop a hammer on his foot by aggravating Bai Ning Bing enough to let go of her calm discussion and attack him.

“6000 Primeval Stones each,” Fang Yuan smiles. “I will tell you everything, including our childhood.”

This attracts Bai Ning Bing. One’s childhood resonates with her since she felt conflicted since her Childhood!

“Fine,” Bai Ning Bing nods. She doesn’t hand him the Primeval Stones but tells Fang Yuan to appear in a location after midnight.

She quietly leaves while Fang Yuan sighs. ‘I was expecting too much for her to just hand something in advance. She may be wealthy and a fickle spender, but she isn’t a fool. What happened between her and Lo Jik?’

As for meeting her?

Fang Yuan would never do that!

He has the confidence to escape her in the open because he knows the terrain and can turn the situation chaotic by approaching other teams. Such convenience disappears at midnight when almost all teams defend the Village’s perimeter!

As expected, he can only rely on his Clansmen.

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The lack of Fang Yuan’s presence at the appointed location and time annoyed Bai Ning Bing as she began hunting Gu Yue’s team, demanding information about Lo Jik AND Fang Yuan. Aware of her disposition and the painful fate of those who refused, almost all

Gu Masters admitted Lo Jik's relationship with Mo Yan and Fang Yuan's blood relation with Fang Zheng.

Aware of her combat strength against Bai Ning Bing, Mo Yan didn't drift far from the village. She was at peace. After all, Lo Jik holed into the Village, too. She was slightly worried that Lo Jik began revealing all the symptoms of wanting to try advancing again. However, that was better than encountering Bai Ning Bing.

As for Fang Yuan? He was no better.

He rushed the ranking in Merit Board to exchange for the Nine Step Fragrant Grass Gu. But Gu Yue Yao Ji would not let him purchase it. He also used the wolves to kill Gu Yue Jiang He—the only remaining witness of the Wang Family's murder. Fang Yuan also used the wolves to kill Chi Cheng. As expected, the power dynamics shifted instantly. The loss of Chi Faction's heir wavered many Elders' beliefs. Meanwhile, the Mo Faction thrived. However, the Elders did not dare flare the political disputes in the face of Wolf Tides.

Everything can be '*discussed*' after dealing with the Wolves.

So, Fang Yuan has no need to risk his life. In fact, he turned Bai Ning Bing into a convenient excuse and cultivated it with a single focus. The excuse of daily fines for not completing the quota allowed Fang Yuan to increase the prices of the Vitality Leaves again!

Nobody could deal with the wolf tides AND Bai Ning Bing, so her presence ran amok. Naturally, her queries dwindled since she heard almost everything others had to say about the duo.

She had to raise the quality of her inspection. So, Bai Ning Bing began silently searching for Mo Yan and Fang Zheng. Those two must know more about their Husband and twin, right? However, Mo Yan didn't leave the village.

On the other hand, Fang Zheng...

"You were looking for me?" Bai Ning Bing sounds those words against her soft pink lips while staring at the plain-faced, dark-haired youth. A white belt with a silver buckle graces his uniform. However, she feels disappointment in her heart when meeting his determined gaze. Those eyes are too bright...

Too shallow.

"I am!" Fang Zheng grits his teeth. "How dare you attack Gu Yue's Gu Masters despite the alliance? Bai Ning Bing! We're both the same! We—"

*\*Shlk\**

Fang Zheng's pupils constrict as a sharp icicle scratches his cheek. He could not even react!

"The same?" Bai Ning Bing slowly stands, tying her gourd to her waist. Her expression turns frosty. Sneering, she goads. "Ah! You tried to make me laugh before spilling the beans about your Elder Twin. We're not the same, kid. Don't mistake my amusement with kindness. Your only saving grace is sharing the same face as Fang Yuan."

Fang Zheng pales. He unconsciously takes a step back. He thought he put his past behind him since he advanced to Rank 3. However, Bai Ning Bing's biting words forced all those emotions and memories to return like a tidal wave!

"So?" Bai Ning Bing ignores Fang Zheng's internal turmoil. "How old are you two? What are your hobbies? What do you do when you're bored? Does Fang Yuan have a woman he loves? Is she boring like Mo Yan? What about Lo Jik? He's better-looking than you. Did he get any woman other than his wife? Wasn't there a rumor about him and your wife? Did Lo Jik leave you his sloppy seconds?"

Bai Ning Bing amassed several rumors about the duo. Lo Jik's conflict with Fang Zheng confuses her because she can tell beauty is not a standard the former holds dear. He must have other reasons. If a woman can acquire his intrigue, she must be quite the character—Gu Master or a Mortal.

Her barrage of swift questions is like a dagger into Fang Zheng's heart. He spent hours locating Bai Ning Bing. Yet, he cannot say a word. His breathing turns ragged. Fang Zheng could not hear the sincere inquiry in her voice. All he hears are insults!

Clenching his fist, Fang Zheng tries hard to not lose to anger. Instead, he snarls at the woman, "I'm dutybound to protect my people! You won't lay a finger on Gu Yue's Clansmen!"

Bai Ning Bing stares at the youth before releasing a sigh. 'Lo Jik was right. Just because he sounds boring to me shouldn't mean he is boring to everyone. Our interests don't align. However, why should that matter?' Her gaze sharpens. 'If he is boring to me—he's boring!'

The woman brushes her bangs behind, cocking her head sideways. "You didn't follow this idiot for a chat, right, Qing Shu?"

“What?” Fang Zheng turns around when Bai Ning Bing’s eyes turn crystal blue. Her dainty body twists and contracts like a vicious animal as she delivers a rolling side-kick to Fang Zheng’s head. The force propels Fang Zheng off the narrow cliff.

“Save Fang Zheng!” A voice screams. Three shadows leave the nearby thicket. One figure rushes to save Fang Zheng, jumping down the cliff as green vines roll out from his wrist, quickly coiling around the unconscious Fang Zheng.

Meanwhile, two Gu Yue elders under Gu Yue Bo’s faction glare at Bai Ning Bing.

“How dare you break the peace treaty, you vicious lass!” One of the elders growls. The clan wanted to end the trouble Bai Ning Bing posed to their Clan after the Wolf Tide. Her growth scared others.

“You must pay for your crimes with your life!” The other shouts.

Bai Ning Bing smiles at them, questioning, “Should we wait for Qing Shu? Hmm?” She claps her palms before forging an icy katana.

“Elder Qing Shu will keep Elder Fang from harm’s way. You should feel honored. We recognize your strength and will combine our forces to kill you. We shall return your untouched corpse—”

Lightning buzzes around Bai Ning Bing. Before others react, the ferocious lightning is already at the monologuing elder, phasing through his head and frying his brain. A scorch mark releases the scent of burnt flesh from the corpse’s forehead. Meanwhile, the other Elder’s defensive measures activate.

“That was an expendable Rank 2 Blink Lightning Gu! Y-You killed him!”

Bai Ning Bing scratches her head.

“Did you expect me to hear him drone about honor killing? I don’t want to be bored. So? Should we wait for Qing Shu?”

Bai Ning Bing enjoys the fear overlapping her would-be assassin’s expression before suddenly dashing at him. The Gu Yue Elder overcomes the intimidation with a forceful grunt. What should he be scared of? He already has his defensive means activated! He can exchange a few moves and test the waters before escaping!

<<<>>>



“—ke up!”

Fang Zheng groans. His world spins as the youth tries sitting up before feeling another sharp headache!

‘Brother... Qing Shu?’ Fang Zheng recognizes the green-haired silhouette, barely able to focus on his words. “You need to escape, Fang Zheng!”

Fang Zheng’s eyes threaten to roll into his skull when a wave of warmth allows him to regather his focus. His vision slowly returns. Qing Shu helps Fang Zheng up while constantly using his Healing Gu. Qing Shu is an attack-type Gu Master. So, his healing means are subpar. It’s barely enough to wake Fang Zheng.

Qing Shu firmly squeezes Fang Zheng’s shoulder, prompting, “You need to leave. Now! I know Bai Ning Bing’s strength. Elder Long and Ni won’t hold for long. We cannot risk you, Fang Zheng. Go—”

*\*Thud\**

*\*Thud\**

Something heavy falling on the ground echoes behind Qing Shu as he turns around. His usually compassionate features turn stern when he sees the head of the two Elders.

“I didn’t bother taking their Gu Worms,” Bai Ning Bing’s pale feet dangle as she sits on the branch. She is strangely bereft of any boots. Qing Shu notices the lightning bolt mark on her right ankle.

“Elder Long! Elder Ni!” Fang Zheng yells, sadness pervading his being! The two Elders were kind and caring, guiding him through several facts about Gu’s refinement that are otherwise closely guarded secrets.

Qing Shu nods quietly. “That was generous of you, Bai Ning Bing.”

“After all,” she trills. “You two would have escaped if I wasted time with their Gu.” Her smirk turns sickly disgusting to the duo as she crosses her legs. “So? Are you two going to tell me something new about Lo Jik and Fang Yuan? I may let you guys leave after taking an arm each.”

“You soulless monster!” Fang Zheng grits his teeth. Bai Ning Bing’s smile slowly recedes. She jumps down while recreating her ice katana.

“How did you know?” Bai Ning Bing quirks, wagging her white brows.

A thick green wall formed from vines and sharp thorns surrounds Bai Ning Bing. If one looks closely, Qing Shu’s toes stretch and pierce out from his boots as dark green vines stab into the ground.

“Go!” Qing Shu cannot move as long as the Vine Cage is active. He urges the shaken Fang Zheng. “Go get reinforcements, Fang Zheng! Hurry!”

That wakes the youth up as he bites his bottom lip before turning around, already understanding the severity of the issue. Bai Ning Bing killed their elders. The Gu Yue Clan MUST apprehend her now before the Bai Clan hears the wind of it!

*\*Chhk\**

*\*Chhk\**

The ice blade cuts through the cage, opening a path for Bai Ning Bing to step out. She stares at Qing Shu with a soft smirk. “The offer still stands.”

“Words are pointless.” Vines retract into Qing Shu’s boots, reforming into his injured toes.

Both momentarily stare at each other.

Icicle Gu!

Pin Needle Gu!

Frost swiftly forms into multiple icicles around Bai Ning Bing before shooting at Qing Shu. The latter’s green hair suddenly hardens before releasing a flurry of jade-green needles!

*\*Ting\* \*Ting\* \*Ting\* \*Ting\**

Some pin needles break an icicle or two. Meanwhile, the remaining attack is swiftly dodged by both parties or directly countered using their terrain. Icicles and needles stab into trees. Two vines descend from Qing Shu’s wrists as he whips at Bai Ning Bing. The latter avoids and cuts the vines with her Ice Blade.

They move through a dozen meters at once as Qing Shu frowns.

Is Bai Ning Bing going to keep using Rank 2 Gu?

He cares little about honor in the face of his Clan's prosperity. Willing to sacrifice everything for the clan—even honor!

If Bai Ning Bing does not want to use her Gu, it's her demise.

Their battle turns intense as Bai Ning Bing laughs. "Hahaha! Your whipping skills improved!"

Qing Shu would reciprocate and acknowledge Bai Ning Bing's swordsmanship if she didn't have the upper hand. The woman is like a wild beast stowed in a human's body. She uses her terrain as if born into it—jumping off the tree trunks to attack him from impossible angles!

Revealing her superior talent, Bai Ning Bing also forms a few icicles during the intense clash. Her ability to divert her focus to use another Gu shocks Qing Shu as he's forced into a corner. But he isn't without experience!

His vines suddenly slip past her defenses. Bai Ning Bing snorts as water vapor instantly escapes her nostrils, forming a tight spherical defense from revolving vapors. The vines hit Bai Ning Bing before losing momentum against the Water Shield Gu's ability.

Seeing a gap in Qing Shu's defense, Bai Ning Bing gulps loudly. Her throat suddenly expands like a toad midway through its croaking. She opens her mouth, revealing an icy-blue sparrow. Qing Shu's expression changes slightly!

A Rank 3 Blue Bird Ice Coffin Gu!

The bird targets Qing Shu, flying at a swift speed! Qing Shu weaves through different trees. This Gu is dangerous. Not only does it smother the target in a wave of chilling ice, instantly killing them, but it also moves locks on the target, avoiding the rest! The bird flaps its wings and flies around the trees. Qing Shu cannot break the Gu, too. It will release all the condensed frost as a dangerous explosion.

But Qing Shu isn't without means. One of the first Gu he refined as a Rank 3 Gu Master used Lo Jik's Blood Vomit Gu.

Rank 3 Corrosive Jade Spit Gu!

Qing Shu spits a ball of jade-green corrosive saliva the second the bird nears him.

*\*Tssssssss\**

The Blue Bird Ice Coffin releases thick smoke, melting away!

Bai Ning Bing's gaze brightens. She isn't deterred.

'Still, using a Rank 3 Gu with a Rank 2 Essence took a lot out of me. But Qing Shu shouldn't know that. To others, I'm still a Rank 3 Gu Master using Rank 2 Gu for fun.' Her gaze hardens. She cannot do many things while being restricted.

Their battle rages as her aperture recovers essence at a heaven-defying pace.

The good thing doesn't last forever when Bai Ning Bing hears multiple shouts.

"Stop here, you vile beast!"

"Attack!"

"How dare you kill Gu Yue Clansmen!"

"Recover Elder Long's and Ni's corpses!"

Bai Ning Bing's heart sinks as she groans. The lightning bolt pattern on her ankle crackles into life as electricity flashes around her feet.

"It was fun, Qing Shu!" She grins before turning around in a mad dash!

"Stop her!"

Qing Shu's eyes transition into jade-green as the ground near Bai Ning Bing trembles.

Another wall of vine and thorns grows around Bai Ning Bing, shocking her! 'How can a Rank 2 Gu have such a range?' She is aware of several Gu used by her competition. So, she knows about the limits of Qing Shu's Gu.

No matter.

Bai Ning Bing waves her sword when—

*\*Ting\**

She barely scratches the surface as her blade chips from the thorns.

'Fuck!' Her right arm unhesitatingly turns crystal blue. One can see the bones in her arm and hand. Frost collects near her right hand as she hacks the vines with her arm.

Rank 3 Frost Demon Gu! This is a powerful Gu with similar restrictions. It turns one's body or body parts that of a Frost Demon! However, the issues to one's joints are the least of the user's problems when using it. This Gu can freeze someone's heart if not careful, killing them!

Her hand slices past the vine. Bai Ning Bing's rank 2 Essence plunges again.

There are three other elders besides Qing Shu.

*\*Puchik\**

A sharp metal rod stabs into her left thigh from behind the second she escapes the prison vine. Bai Ning Bing almost falls over as she grits her teeth.

The situation is too dangerous!

Wait.

Was this not what she always wanted?

An exciting match?

Lightning crackles around her feet as Bai Ning Bing focuses on escaping.

'Why am I running away?' She screams internally. 'I wanted to feel the *'Colors'* during a life and death match! It's Life and Death! So, why am I running?!

Her thoughts fall into disarray.

Two pairs of eyes bore into her, seeing through her as if she were naked. The brown hues seem strangely encouraging. That's right! Lo Jik warned her how *'Boring'* she was.

How dull AND weak her thoughts were.

Meanwhile, the pools of an abyss that Fang Yuan has his eyes condescendingly glance at her.

Are you running from your dreams? Was dying your dream?

These two men made a fool out of her, and both emerged from the same batch. Bai Ning Bing cannot help but feel shallow in their presence.

But isn't running away the wisest choice?

She cannot readily unlock her cultivation. Facing four Rank 3 elders is a suicide.

'Why don't you commit suicide?' Lo Jik's voice buzzes inside her head. 'You wanted a colorful death. I'm sure your blood will complement your skin.'

'Send your savings to me,' Fang Yuan's cold voice encourages. 'Your stupidity shouldn't affect how I use your treasures.'

'Just what do I want?' Bai Ning Bing yells aloud as a corrosive spit lands on her back, instantly searing her flesh and clothes into a bloody mess! Her body tumbles and rolls against the foliage. She evades instinctively, hacking at a metal rod aimed at her head.

"Leave it to me!" An elder transforms into a hairy white ape! He snarls and pounces at Bai Ning Bing, forcing her to jump away when a moonblade slices her ankles. The Rank 2 Moonglow doesn't neatly slice her feet since Bai Ning Bing used Ice Muscle Gu to nurture Ice Muscles. Her flesh is refined by a Rank 3 Gu.

She still falls.

Her heart thumps.

'I'm going to die,' her body stops panicking when her right arm condenses into an icy one.

"I see."

Bai Ning Bing ignores the excited expression of the ape-transformed Elder smashing his fist down at her.

"No!" Qing Shu screams when he realizes something.

'Death has no color. How could I ever focus on life when fearing death? Who doesn't die?'



100%!

Bai Ning Bing is indifferent to the implications of such a change. She touches her right stump, smiling, 'I'm lucky. It only took an arm to make me realize how stupid the fear of death is.' Had her arm been sliced, the Clan Healers could effortlessly reattach her arm.

Everyone fears the unknown. Bai Ning Bing isn't different. However, death did not feel dark and covered in a hazy fog for a split second.

'Even the sun's warmth is something I missed while bitching about wanting colors like a mad woman,' Bai Ning Bing snickers. 'But it's not enough.'

The one question that continues to haunt her after the fear of death—

The meaning of her life.

Why does she exist? For what purpose?

She wants to know the purpose behind *their* gazes. What drives them?

Bai Ning Bing feels that she will have an answer after another encounter with them.

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Gu Yue Clan's morale is at its lowest. After all, three Elders died! The clan recovered their corpses. However, their plan to assassinate Bai Ning Bing burned all the bridges between the two Clans. The teams from the two clans refuse to assist each other as their losses increase. To keep the Xiong Clan from benefitting, the two Clans released the statement of working negotiations with each other and that the Clansmen must assist each other.

But the Elders know that their war with the Bai Clan is inevitable. Bai Ning Bing's actions crossed their last lines!

It doesn't affect Fang Yuan. He has continued to increase the price of his Vitality Leaf Gu in the last fifteen days—selling one leaf for a whopping 80 stones! But his heart isn't into such petty schemes.

'It was a good thing I'm prepared. I rescued Xiong Jiao Man for a Bear Enslavement Gu and 700 stones during the previous life. However, Xiong Li's team didn't die because I never met an erratic Bai Ning Bing. Even Qing Shu is alive. Since Xiong Li didn't die, he's leading a team to request reinforcement from the Clan. I was prepared and bought



a Wolf Enslavement Gu from the merit board. I also need to be aware of other changes. Zie Qi did not have fighting experience since he entered the Medicine Faction alongside Gu Yue Yao Le.'

'However, in this life, he must have gained a lot of nurturing. He won't panic against the wolves. But the Rank 3 Elder keeping him safe won't leave his side until the situation turns dire.'

"Look!"

"There's something different on the board!"

Two banners stand tall in the clan square. One is the Merit Exchange Board, and the other announces the Clan Leader's decree!

It states that every Gu Master must temporarily hand their Nine Leaf Vitality Grass Gu to the Medicine Faction for a uniform distribution of the Vitaliy Leaves in these dire times.

'Oh?' Fang Yuan raises his eyebrows. The board reveals his name among many others from Chi and Mo Faction. 'I wonder why this is the same. Was it entirely because of me increasing the prices?'

The surrounding Gu Masters gloat. This is the power of the System. Fang Yuan is compelled to hand over his grass Gu. He'll land into trouble if he doesn't obey the Clan Leader's words, who must have received compensation from Gu Yue Yao Ji. As for this being a temporary procedure?

Fang Yuan wasn't born yesterday!

The Clan and the System will have more righteous excuses to firmly control the Nine Leaf Vitality Grass Gu!

'Hehe,' Fang Yuan smirks. 'Either I succeed tonight or crash down—there are no in-betweens!'

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"Aren't you a fiery pepper, Yao Le!" Zie Qi snickers, ruffling Yao Le's hair as he pouts, blushing under Xiong Li and others' amused stares.

"S-Stop this nonsense, Qi!" Yao Le swats his hand. She crosses her arms. "Gu Yue Fang Yuan is the opposite of what Gu Yue's elite should be. He oppresses our brothers

and sisters just because he lucked into his family's inheritance? He is already a Peak Stage Rank 2 Gu Master. He should show kindness in these grieving times.”

The Bamboo Buildings near the four gates are heavily modified, and their owners have moved away. The Clan also forced the Rank 2 veterans to contribute instead of staying back safely. Gu Yue Yao Le is in one of the fortified buildings by the East Gate. Several Gu Masters of the healing faction treat the injured Gu masters as they return from the outside. Among them is Zie Qi's team. One of his teammates got hurt as the youth vented about Fang Yuan being a black-hearted trader.

Unable to bear her *'secretly'* beloved's sadness, Gu Yue Yao Le complained to her grandmother, Gu Yue Yao Ji. The Medicine Elder used this as a chance to reign the profits Fang Yuan was earning.

“It was a pleasure meeting you, Junior Sister Yao Le. Your presence in Gu Yue Clan gives me hope about our future.”

Yao Le flushes, nodding meekly as Zie Qi laughs. “Yeah, my future looks bright~!”

The girl pouts, glaring at the frivolous youth. Xiong Li laughs, too, leaving after a while. However, their departure transitions to a hurried return in 15 minutes!

“A Wolf Tide!” Xiong Li gasps. Beads of sweat run down his cheek as if he's seen something horrible. His words shock others. Loud sirens blare in the village as Zie Qi's and Yao Le's expressions change!

“This siren,” one of the Gu Masters pales. “A Large Wolf Pack is approaching the village!”

Zie Qi and his teammates rush out of the building under Yao Le's worried stare.

Two walls surround the village as Gu Masters hurriedly climb the internal walls through ladders. More Gu Masters climb the four stone towers around the gates. Zie Qi ascends the wall, sucking in a breath of cold air. He witnesses a large parade of wolves gathering outside the village from all directions! He can already count more than 20 Bold Lightning Wolves, and on the far back are the elephant-sized Frenzy Lightning Wolves resting under the pine tree's shadows.

Thousand of green wolver eyes gleam a frightening light. These wolves are hungry and have already consumed the surrounding wild animals or driven them away. A village of humans is a fatal attraction to them.

Zie Qi's hand trembles slightly as one of his teammates pats his back, smirking, "Don't get cold feet, Leader. You're young. But I've been on this team before Elder Qing Shu took over. Not one leader of this group has ever been a disappointment."

Zie Qi nods. He respects Fang Zheng. The youth almost created massive political instability for the woman he loved and gave him a helping hand. It's why Zie Qi filled Yao Le's ears with complaints against Fang Yuan.

After all, Fang Zheng is not the same since his encounter with Bai Ning Bing. Perhaps Fang Yuan's fall may ease his heart? Zie Qi isn't a boy but a grown man from a different world. He saw Fang Zheng's insecurities and wanted to help him through them!

Yao Ji acted today. However, Zie Qi must wait to see the effects. After Fang Yuan will be Lo Jik, who's been oddly silent for almost three weeks.

Long, frightening howls from the three Frenzy Lightning Wolves snap Zie Qi out of his thoughts. Other wolves howl together, charging at the settlement with unsettling vigor.

The first wave of wolves fall into bamboo-speared pitfalls. The sharp bamboo spears pierce through the wolves, killing many and leaving the injured ones whining pitifully until their partners collapse, too. However, the wolves number in thousands! The pitfalls are filled with wolf corpses as other wolves rush the East Wall. Rank 2 Gu Masters instantly use their Moonblades and other Long-range means, carving the wolves like butter!

Snarls and howls fill the village as the Rank 1 Gu Masters risk their life beside the walls, activating Rank 1 Iron Thorn and Poison Flower Gu!

Another wave of defenses attack the wolves.

Zie Qi continuously uses the Moonglow Gu. He wants to continue. However, he stops after a while. His secrets must not be known to others, including how ridiculous his Aperture's recovery speed is!

He climbs down the wall, switching with another Gu Master.

This scene is also the same on other walls, too.

The wolves may have the numbers. But the Gu Masters are intelligent, capable of using the rotation method to recover and fight at once—defending their stronghold. Meanwhile, the wolves are in the open.

Yet the situation could be more optimistic.

Bold Lightning Wolves enter the fray and use Gu Worms. Many Gu Masters get injured. Some die.

Zie Qi has already ascended the wall seven times. A Bold Lightning Wolf hits him, forcing him to be carried into the Bamboo Building where Yao Le is.

“Hurry! Lay him here!” Yao Le urges before healing Zie Qi.

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The battle continues for hours. Zie Qi cannot continue resting and often returns to the wall. The awe-inspiring might of the Frenzy Lightning Wolves is a sight to behold!

These wolves need the cooperation of three Elders! To prevent getting caught in their battles, the Gu Masters leave the area. There are many holes in the wall by now. The wolves also jump over the wall through the platform of wolf corpses inclined against the walls!

“Sister Yao Hong!” One of Zie Qi’s teammates screams as a Bold Lightning wolf gets past the defenses, biting a woman’s throat out. Zie Qi’s body trembles as his eyes turn red.

“Focus!”

A nearby Gu Master shouts as a Lightning Wolf smashes into Zie Qi, sending him tumbling down the wall. He quickly uses his defensive Gu before glaring at the wolf rushing at the medicine hall with bloodshot eyes.

“Die!”

Zie Qi shoots a moonblade, cutting at the wolf’s tail.

*\*Awooooooooooooooooooooo\**

The wolf allows a long howl as his body suddenly inflates! A neat coat of green fur glimmers under the moonlight as the fourth Frenzy Lightning Wolf suddenly turns around and snarls at Zie Qi!

His body freezes when Zie Qi hears a shout.

“You dare, beast!”

An Elder emerges from the shadows, attacking the fourth Frenzy Wolf, who managed to sneak past the wall using some Aura Hiding Gu.

“Zie Qi!” Yao Le screams as the boy charges at the girl, hurriedly grasping her hand and dragging her inside.

“Do you want to die?!” Zie Qi shouts as he slams the door shut, urging others. “Quick! Help everyone up! We need to leave the area! Senior Brother Xiong, we will need your help, too!”

Xiong Li nods. He is thankful to Zie Qi. After all, that Elder must have been sent to protect Zie Qi, an A-grade talent.

Yao Le squeaks, “My grandmother is here!”

Indeed, Gu Yue Yao Ji rushed to the Eastern Wall after noticing her Granddaughter’s predicament. She assists the Elder already dealing with the wolf, resisting its might!

*\*Awooooooooooooooooooooo\**

The bamboo building bursts apart as a formless pressure sends everyone nearby flying away. Unlike the Rank 3 Thunder Roar Gu, the Rank 3 Sound Wave Gu pushes everyone away. Some unlucky Gu Masters are flattened into the ground and turned into meat paste. Xiong Li and others are thrown into the fray of other wolves as their ears ring and their vision distorts.

Zie Qi looks around, dangerously close to the wall. Yao Le isn’t near him. He cannot focus on others as a wolf jumps at him.

Like Fang Zheng, he used the Black and White Boar Gu in the last six months. He hurriedly punches the wolf before using the Moonglow Gu at the other. But the wolves charge in like a steady stream!

*\*Crumble\**

The nearby wall crumbles, allowing Zie Qi to hurriedly leave the spot and escape the village. He slides past the wall of wolf corpses as blood and stench makes him feel a wave of disgust.

His problems aren’t over. Other wolves notice Zie Qi. Gritting his teeth, Zie Qi charges into the dark forest. He cannot risk going inside since the Eastern side is breached! A

few wolves tumble in the dark, howling! Zie Qi keeps running until he's sure he's safe—

Something hits him in the darkness as his vision turns dark.

<<<>>>

“Aaaaaghhhhh!”

A pained scream leaves Zie Qi's lips the second he wakes up! He's naked and without any arms, tied against a rock! Blood continues flowing from his arm as he glares at the person responsible for it all!

Fang Yuan! He must be Fang Yuan. After all, Fang Zheng is incapable of it!

\*Hurr\*

The wolf beside Fang Yuan snarls and pounces at Zie Qi, tearing his throat out!

Dead.

Gu Yue Village's A-grade talent died!

'However, he doesn't have an A-grade Aptitude.' Fang Yuan used the Wolf Enslavement Gu on the wolf, prompting it to consume Zie Qi, starting from his torn hands. After all, Zie Qi has the strength of two Boars. However, he cannot exert said power and break free from his bindings without his arms.

Fang Yuan recalls his previous life. He wanted Yao Le to use her as a refinement material for a Gu to advance into Rank 3—Man-Beast Life Burial Gu. This recipe was made by an ancient Demonic Path sect leader who had made painstaking efforts and invented this recipe to strengthen his subordinates' cultivation. Only those with low talent use this type of demonic Gu. During the five hundred years of his previous life, Fang Yuan had explored unknown places and coincidentally found this recipe. It had made a deep impression on him, and he had firmly kept it in mind.

It needs a virgin girl with the aptitude of a Gu Master—the higher the aptitude, the better. However, Zie Qi saved her from harm's way back then, forcing Fang Yuan to lure Zie Qi away to redeem his losses.

To Fang Yuan's shock, this Zie Qi has an Extreme Aperture!

Fang Yuan stares at the corpse, forcing the hungry Lightning Wolf to eat his organs and bones.

'There is a talent above A-grade. Such an Aptitude is called an Extreme Aperture. Not only do they have a 100% essence, but their recovery is several times more than an A-grade Gu Master. Such heaven-defying talent comes with a cost. This Zie Qi would eventually die. However, I never knew about him in my first life.'

When Fang Yuan found out about Zie Qi's talent, he made the bold decision of replacing a virgin female with a male.

The Man-Beast Life Burial Gu allows a C-grader like him to advance to Rank 3 at significant costs. Fang Yuan's talent may decrease using this Gu.

But replacing the material with a Gu Master with Extreme Aperture has no side effects! This isn't Man-Beast Life Burial Gu. It's a different Gu—something Fang Yuan discovered!

'Based on the reaction of my Autumn Spring Cicada, it is surely the Desolate Ancient Moon Physique!'

The extreme apertures are of 10 different kinds, all equally heaven-defying!

Fang Yuan snaps out of thoughts once he watches the wolf swallow Zie Qi's spine. Refining the Gu begins the moment the Beast devours the human. If Zie Qi dissolves inside the wolf, the process will fail. He points at the wolf as a Single Aperture Charcoal Gu flies into the wolf's mouth.

It cries painfully as the Gu starts burning the wolf's organ. It continues for fifteen minutes until the wolf has no strength to struggle. Noticing this, Fang Yuan tosses three Kerosene Gu into the wolf's mouth.

This is a Rank 1 expenditure Gu.

The wolf drops on the cave floor as Kerosene floods its system.

*\*Crackle\**

Sparks emerge from all his orifices, including its furry butt.

*\*Whoosh\**

The wolf combusts in the next moment! The flames should be red if Fang Yuan followed the original recipe. However, an eerie blue glow reflects on Fang Yuan's face as he stares at the Blue Flames!

He tosses several other Gu into the fire. He exchanged all these Gu from the merit board.

The fire settles as a lump of white light floats from the corpse. Fang Yuan heaves deeply and tosses the Primeval Stones into the light. After a long period and his 1000th stone, the lump of light contracts and turns into a furry white, eight-legged spider instead of the usual black. Its face is that of a wolf's, and on its back is a blue totem of a familiar face!

It's Zie Qi!

His imprint looks happy yet sad. His smile seems bright, yet not a smile. The image feels alive since Zie Qi's imprint hatefully glares at Fang Yuan!

'Huff!'

Fang Yuan takes the Gu. He doesn't bother naming his discovery.

'Things changed after I used it.'

He swallows the spider. The creature travels into his throat before turning into a wave of deep-blue water, acting as an inverted Heavenly Waterfall! The water crashes into Fang Yuan's aperture.

*\*Boom\**

A strange pressure emerges from his Aperture at the water's arrival. Fang Yuan snorts coldly. He was caught off guard last time. However, he suppresses the weak cicada floating in the center of his Aperture.

A Rank 6 Spring Autumn Cicada!

'The Gu drank most of the Gu's effect, and I was left with low benefits.'

The blue waterfall seeps into his essence and turns the Dark-Red Sea into a beautiful blue one!

Under Fang Yuan's control, the Essence crashes into the crystal wall, immediately destroying it.



Another light wall flickers and covers Fang Yuan's aperture.

'This water is not Primeval Essence. Ordinarily, keeping it in my aperture will lower my aptitude. However,' Fang Yuan grins. He feels excited as the blue essence slowly evaporates into a blue mist, allowing the White-Silver essence to recover in his aperture. Meanwhile, the Blue Mist seems unable to rise further, as if encountering a blockade.

*\*Sizzle\**

A corrosive hiss echoes in Fang Yuan's aperture as the Blue mist is rapidly consumed by something. However, the blue vapors also rise.

'It's happening!'

45%

Fang Yuan feels his aptitude rising!

'Spring Autumn Cicada consumed most of it and recovered a lot last time. I understood later that this Gu's primary purpose is to increase my Aptitude. I merely reached 47% last time.'

His Aptitude steadily climbs as the fog thins.

46...

49...

56...

74!

'A 30% increase! It's like a Rank 3 Polished Silver Gu. But this isn't the end,' Fang Yuan exhales sharply.

'Moments before my death,' Fang Yuan recalls. 'My aptitude rose from 47 to 48%. It caught me off guard. That's how Fang Zheng got a jump at me.' He smiles coldly. 'Ten Extreme Apertures are heaven-defying. Hehehe! So what if I die following this path? I have my ways. I have my plans. Ancient Desolate Physique! This new Gu transfers an Extreme Physique from one Gu Master to another. Now I need to prepare how to deal with the issues of the Extreme Aperture once my aptitude *'recovers'* to 100%!



Mo Yan's concise words tore the Medicine Faction's efforts. The Special Command Token allows a Gu Master to enter the Gu Yue Clan's secret storage and exchange a rare Gu they collected over the years. It's precious, and other Elders might not have even one of them! This token is bestowed to the Gu Master with extraordinary accomplishments. Due to their nature, the Medicine Faction holds most of this Token.

However, Lo Jik's charge at the end of the Wolf Tide surprised many. He displayed extraordinary combat prowess, holding multiple Bold Lightning Wolves at bay several times! Not only that, the use of Blood Rousing Incense supported others around him, earning him a lot of favors. When Gu Yue Yao Ji fumbled due to panic over her late Granddaughter, leaving her position vacant, Lo Jik led others to safety. He also displayed quick thinking when he realized that the Medicine Faction wasn't performing their duties. He collected the Gu Masters who owed him their lives, making them recover all the Gu worms and report in the Internal Affairs Hall!

Gu Yue Bo notes all these accomplishments. The Gu Worms Lo Jik handed back were all rare!

"Hmph!" the other Elder snorts. "How do you know your Husband didn't keep a few of these Rare Gu for himself?"

*\*Pah\**

Mo Yan suddenly slaps the Middle-aged woman, surprising her victim and Gu Yue Bo. Mo Yan snarls, "You best speak with caution, Slandering Cunt! I haven't even begun counting the losses of Gu Masters permanently crippled due to Yao Ji's unfit leadership!"

"You... You!" the woman shouts furiously as Gu Yue Bo clears his throat.

"That's enough. Elder Mo Yan is correct—"

"Reporting to Clan Leader," a knock interrupts their conclusion. "There is another Rank 3 Gu Master, Lord Clan Leader."

"What?"

Others speak simultaneously.

"Who?"

"It's... Fang Yuan."

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Mo Yan returns to her home with a tired expression. She is still shaken by confronting Frenzy Lightning Wolves' might. Although Shadow Gu is great in offense, the attack Gu she possesses is subpar. Instead, she provided more support to Qing Shu and Chi Shan. Qing Shu's extraordinary display also makes Mo Yan feel slightly inferior.

When she enters her home, her expression worsens further.

Lo Jik isn't here—again.

He's staying in his former Cabin and occasionally returns to her. Since he is always smiling and pleasant, Mo Yan doesn't believe he is giving her a cold shoulder. However, it's been almost 18 days since this started. He doesn't let her feel lonely. Every moment spent together makes her warm and happy.

But he doesn't live here.

Why?

Why won't he?

Did she do something?

Is it that Shen Cui?

What should she do?

The sound of the door opening snaps Mo Yan out of her thoughts.

"I'm back!" his voice booms, and their house already feels warm.

"Oh, there you are~!" Lo Jik snickers and sits by her side. He looks glowing. It only makes Mo Yan feel slightly worse as she grumbles. "Here."

"Hmm? What's this?" Lo Jik accepts the strange token.

"I told you the benefits of being an Elder, right?" She explains softly. "Like our weekly stipends rising from 100 to 300 stones and such. This Command Token allows a Gu Master to enter the Clan's secret storage and exchange for a Rare Gu they collected over the years. Only Elders usually get this reward. However, an Elder can also nominate another Gu Master. I nominated you."

Lo Jik grips the token tightly, muttering, "I see."

"Is that all?" She snorts.

"Here."

Mo Yan accepts the obsidian orb. She blinks in surprise before closely looking at it. Her lips gape. "This is a..."

"Rank 2 Shadow Beast Gu," Lo Jik smiles. "I chanced into some materials and exchanged the few. You told me about its refinement recipe, remember? So, I spent the last two weeks refining it. I only succeeded today and wanted to gift it to you on our anniversary a few days later."

He waves the token. "But I can't wait, can I?"

"That's why you were in the other cabin?" Mo Yan gasps. She faces him with a bright expression. "You should have told me!"

"How would that be a surprise?" Lo Jik snorts. "Here, let me help you refine it—mmgh!"

Mo Yan pounces at him at once, tearing his clothes off with utmost need and desire. His previous world had jewelry as gifts. Here? Gu Worms all the way.

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"So, Fang Yuan is an Elder?" Lo Jik mutters as Mo Yan hums softly, explaining the details of this morning's meeting. She revealed how Fang Yuan verbally stripped Gu Yue Yao Ji of her accomplishments, pointing out her indisciplined leadership. Fang Yuan also seems to be in Chi Lian's camp, which is odd. After all, the Chi Faction has declined since Chi Cheng's death. Mo Yan revealed how Mo Chen will help Mo Bei become an Elder after the Wolf Tides end. The worst one to take it was Fang Zheng.

He mourned Zie Qi's and Yao Le's loss before accusing Fang Yuan of securing some secrets that allowed him to advance to Rank 3.

Of course, Fang Yuan hid secrets!

Qin Shu had years of foundation.

Chi Shan had the Elders' support.

Mo Yan sacrificed her trump cards for the necessary resources.

And Fang Zheng had an A-grade Aptitude.

Fang Yuan had none of it! Even if one points at Chi Lian for assisting Fang Yuan, one cannot raise a C-grader into a Rank 3 Gu Master in 2 years!

So, Mo Yan casts a worried glance at Lo Jik. She consoles him. "We will find a way for you to become a Rank 3 Gu Master. If that Fang Yuan can, so can you."

Lo Jik smiles and shakes his head. "It's okay. I won't rush this matter. Besides, being an Elder's husband has its own perks."

She smiles in relief.

"Your best exchange that command token quickly. The Gu in the secret storage isn't reimbursed, so you may lose out on your preferred Gu."

"Are you sure you don't want it?" Lo Jik offers again. She smiles widely, shaking her head.

"How can I ask for more with a husband like you, Silly," Mo Yan slowly gets up. "That Shadow Beast Gu is amazing! It's crucial material for the Rank 3 Multi-Shadow Beast! Hmph, I won't tell you the recipe this time and make you leave me alone!"

Lo Jik smirks wryly. Since he shouldn't have the Shadow Beast's recipe, he indirectly made Mo Yan speak of it by asking about her most desired Gu Worms.

"I'm going to collect the materials before others exchange for them. Do you want something from the merit boards?" She questions as she dresses hurriedly.

"Nothing," Lo Jik slumps back. "I need sleep!"

"Rest well, Dear," she pecks his lips before rushing out with weird steps.

Once Mo Yan leaves, exhaustion leaves Lo Jik's body. He slowly sits up.

Oh, he refined Gu in the last 18 days. But he didn't refine the Shadow Beast Gu. It was a Silver Reward. However, the acquisition of the Command Token surprised him. After all, he didn't recover other's Gu for this Token. He used this pretense to convert his unused Gu Worms into Merit Points/Primeval Stones. He even took the chance to unload the

silver-tier materials!

Since he's self-sufficient, he cashed out most of the Merit Points! He would have a grand wealth IF he did not advance into Rank 3, prompting him to resume cultivation.

'I was lucky,' Lo Jik smiles. 'Gu Yue Yao Ji fumbled hard at her Granddaughter's death. Ordinarily, I would need to be a Rank 3 Elder to unload all those Gu. However, I used my sudden prestige and led others to recover Gu and wealth. I used my Rank 3 White-Silver Essence to have more endurance than others, containing my strength and holding multiple Bold Lightning Wolves at bay.'

After all, he could hide the cultivation of his Second Aperture.

'Even if I don't receive any rewards from my Trait, it's alright. After refining a few rank 3 Gu, I still have more than 60000 stones! The gains are crazy! The one thing I didn't sell is the Relic Gu. It will place too much attention on myself.'

There is another reason he was efficient in dealing with Bold Lightning Wolves.

His Heaven Piercing Eye Gu!

It allowed Lo Jik to locate the Gu on the wolf's body and attack them!

After dressing up, Lo Jik sits cross-legged and observes his second aperture.

A glowing light wall surrounds a sweeping place filled with a 69% glimmering Light-Silver Sea.

Green Copper for Rank 1, Red Steel for Rank 2, and White Silver Essence for Rank 3 Gu Master.

Lo Jik was always at the cusp of advancing to Rank 3. The Peak Stage White Silver essence and the increased Aptitude were akin to blessing a tiger with wings! In the empty space floats a massive sun! It shines brightly on the aperture, causing the constantly ebbing and flowing sea to refract the light and reveal beautiful colors!

Rank 3 Hope Gu! Its feeding costs rise with its advancement. Rank 3 Gu generally consume food monthly. It's also Lo Jik's most well-fed Gu since he's resumed his cultivation and will use Primeval Stones to converge the Aura of Rejection.

The strangest thing is that the Primeval Stones created by the Heavenly Treasure Lotus do not release the Aura of Rejection. His current cost of feeding Hope Gu goes upto 120

stones. But it's not an additional cost and mixes with his Cultivation.

Around Hope Gu is a terrifying blood-red python.

Rank 3 is a qualitative change for Gu Masters AND Gu Worms. Not only did Hope Gu increase in size several times, but the Blood Torrent Python did, too! It's 10 meters long with a width similar to a wild boar. Sleek, blood-red scales shimmer on its body as its terrifying purple eyes dart around. It spits its purplish tongue, filling the Aperture with long hisses while possessively coiling around the Hope Gu.

Yes, this Gu is a cheeky fucker.

Blood Python Gu is a series of Steed Gu. It allows the Gu Master to traverse different regions. Only at the Rank 3 variant does the Gu become large enough to fulfill that purpose. It also means Lo Jik cannot effortlessly reveal the Gu. Others still believe his Blood Python is a Rank 1 Gu.

This Gu is the first Lo Jik refined as a backup method to attack. After all, the Steed Gu, especially the aggressive kind as the Blood Torrent Python Gu, have physical might no different than thousand-beast Kings! As such, Lo Jik lost the Blood Qi Gu.

'Actually,' Lo Jik muses. 'There is a better way to increase the refinement chances by fusing the Gu in a blood pond. However, I cannot craft it even if I have the Blood Stream Gu. It will be too conspicuous!'

Near the Hope Gu is a mysterious Spider Nest.

The webs stick in empty space, layered with hundreds of spider webs. As if feeling Lo Jik's gaze, a furry spider with a vicious appearance crawls out.

Gu Yue Yao Ji once tried obtaining the Solar and Lunar Spider Gu to refine the Rank 3 Dawn to Dusk Spider Gu. That Gu is indeed an incredible Rank 3 Healing Gu. However, it loses its crucial advantage of being easy to feed. After all, the Solar and Lunar Spiders consume Sunlight and Moonlight! But Lo Jik knew of another precious recipe. It doesn't need any additional refinement materials. However, a Gu Master can only fuse that Gu during the twilight time of the day!

The Rank 3 Gu has midnight-black fur and eight limbs. However, its eyes are shimmering gold, and so are its mandibles. On its furry back is the totem of a '*crescent*' Sun.

Rank 3 Twilight Spider Gu!



Unlike the Rank 2 variants that possess half the might at one part of the day and Rank 3 healing effect during the other, the Twilight Spider Gu is a precious Rank 3 Gu that can heal several injuries ranging from dismemberment to fatal stab wounds. Of course, wounds that immediately kill a Gu Master cannot be relieved. As for torn limbs, one must have the other body part, even if mangled.

'Although its healing effects are nothing compared to the Rare Rank 3 Gu like the expendable Undead Grass Gu, it's unimaginably effortless to feed! I can take this Gu out at any time of the day to feed it. However, this Rank 3 Gu is a stopgap. My body is not ordinary. I have Pink flesh and thick bones. I will need to expend more Essence to heal my injuries.'

Thinking till here, Lo Jik cannot help but must.

'Should I sleep with Yao Ji?' This wouldn't be the first time he slept with a woman of significant age. 'She's also a Rank 3 Gu Master. The first-time rewards will all be Bronze, but I may get a rare Healing Gu. She also lost her Granddaughter. I could use that. But... I'm with Mo Yan. Shen Cui is fine. However, Mo Yan may use her Grandfather's forces to try and end me the second I get near Yao Ji.'

He sighs. You lose some, and you gain some. He only has the qualifications of bedding Yao Ji because he stuck with Mo Yan. But that's also the choice preventing him from rocking the old bitch's world.

Lo Jik shakes his head and continues the inspection.

The third Rank 3 Gu he refined, the most challenging one, despite its cheap nature, is a skin-colored beetle floating on the Light-Silver sea.

The Thick Skin Gu.

Lo Jik failed to refine the Gu two times, almost losing his Black Mane Gu.

This Gu is similar to Pink Muscles and Tough Bones, permanently improving the quality of his skin. Of course, Lo Jik must spend time using the Gu and refining his body.

'The initial refinement set will be accomplished once I refine my skin. I'll be able to hold more Beast Strength and attack without fearing my body getting scuffed. Of course, Skin-Flesh-Bone is merely the initial success of Body Refinement. Next comes Blood and Organs. There are different ways to achieve that, but it's complicated, and one cannot be impatient.'

Lo Jik has been using the Thick Skin Gu for the last week. His skin used to sit on his sculpted muscles, giving him a lean, chiseled appearance. Now? His skin looks healthier and slightly covers the contours of his muscles unless he flexes around those spots. This Gu is useless without Pink Muscles and Tough Bones. It's also easy to use. One needs to spend a month to complete its use. So, other Gu Masters always opt for Bronze Skin Gu, which toughens the skin and complements Iron Bones-Steel Tendons.

'There's also the combination of the Beast Hide Gu, Tiger Flesh Gu, and Elephant Bones Gu. It complements Beast Strength Gu more than my combination. However, my set is tailor-made for the human body.'

There are also other Gu like the Three Task at Once Gu or the Lightning Thoughts Gu. However, these Gu are the recent additions.

Aside from that, Lo Jik sold Gu like the Seed Communication Gu as one of the Gu he found. Its use dwindled ever since Lo Jik advanced to Rank 3. Besides, he needed the Gu to mold Shen Cui into his little plaything. Now that she is, he had no use for it.

'Sigh, eleven Rank 2 Gu and nine Rank 3 Gu. It's ridiculous. I'm not even counting the four Relic Gu! However, almost all of them are easy to feed. The only one that's problematic is the Lightning Thoughts Gu. It was a novelty at first. Using it multiple times made me realize it's not meant for me.'

A Gu Master can store Lightning Thoughts and consume them during the battle for swift reactions. However, his Battle Instincts Gu is already performing the same task. The crucial benefit of this Gu is the organization of one's thoughts into physical manifestations, allowing the Gu Master to focus on the principal objectives. However, its use does not excuse the cost of feeding it! It won't be expensive to nurture with regions catered to its needs, like the valley where the Wolf emerges from. However, Gu Masters don't enter that region.

Lo Jik planned to dump this Gu on Mo Yan or sell it.

'After all, I can eventually raise my Battle Instinct Gu to Rank 3 Mind-Body Connection Gu or the Thick Head Thoughts Gu. However, the materials needed to refine the Gu are not found in Qing Mao. I can either wait for the Caravan and take a chance or leave the Mountain to find the materials.'

The Rank Mind-Body Connection Gu permanently raises the quality of his nervous system. Meanwhile, the Thick Head Thoughts Gu produced Thick-Headed Thoughts, which are advantageous for confrontations.

Such issues increase Lo Jik's determination to leave the Village.

'Now, I should use the Blood Stream Gu and White Jade Gu to refine the Rank 3 Blood Jade Change Gu.'

Lo Jik got the recipe for the defensive Gu from Soul's Blood Gu.

'Rank 3 Blood Jade Change Gu is similar to Bai Ning Bing's Ice Blade Gu. However, the Gu is not limited to one shape and can instantly create flowing blood walls that turn solid to protect the user. It will also be my primary close-combat method besides martial arts since I can form weapons from the Gu.'

Offense and defense in one!

This is the superiority of Blood Gu.

'However,' Lo Jik exhales. 'It consumes even more Jades.' He scoffs a wry chuckle. Not every Blood Gu will be easy to feed.

'I will need to learn how to use the weapons I form,' he notes. 'I must also design and memorize an armor's blueprint to cover my body.' Fortunately, Lo Jik is from a world with several eras of advancement. He may not know everything, but designing a tactical outfit isn't challenging.

Of course, he must refine the Gu successfully before thinking of all that.

Hope Gu's superiority shines here. To others, Lo Jik is a Rank 2 Peak Stage Gu Master with extraordinary combat potential with his Moonglow Gu. However, he is secretly advancing by leaps and bounds! He is in firm control of what to reveal and what to hide.

Aside from all that, Lo Jik also prepares to leave the Clan. He needs medicine, food, clothes, and other materials. He also needs to manage the space within the Earth Hole Gu. His Primeval Stones alone fill up the space.

It's why Lo Jik decided to go all out with his cultivation and refinement of Gu Worms.

He will spend every living moment cultivating!

His cultivation speed is already heaven-defying due to the Peak Stage essence from the Lotus Gu. However, the addition of the stream of Primeval Stones makes him progress at a pace incomparable to Mo Yan or someone like Fang Zheng!

Others will pale once they realize his daily consumption.

But why should Lo Jik care?

Other Elders get a stipend of 300 Primeval Stones because it's the Wolf Tide. It's usually 100 stones otherwise. Meanwhile, Lo Jik's weakly earning is 350 stones from the Lotus Gu. Of course, Gu Masters like Fang Yuan with the Nine Leaf Vitality Grass Gu possess more earnings.

The point is that other aspects are more crucial to Lo Jik than money.

Primeval Stones exist to be spent, not saved. And advancing to Rank 3 removes all his inhibitions!

Why should he cultivate at a modest space?

What benefits does he derive?

None!

Lo Jik temporarily lost his Trait's assistance.

However, he has several gains by growing powerful.

First and foremost—Security! This Wolf Tide a few days ago killed the likes of Zie Qi, who had an Elder's protection. Even Elders are not safe now. Lo Jik needs cultivation and Gu to survive.

Second, he frees the space in the Earth Hole Gu for the essentials.

Third, his chances of survival increase in the wild.

Fourth, he wouldn't feel like an idiot who wasted the best opportunity to cultivate!

The last one is the most important.

Who would willingly decide to stay weak?

He still has 64210 stones after his recent accomplishments. His wealth is only lower than Elders with deep pockets.

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He intended to exchange the Gu for more Primeval Stones. Yes. More!

Because he predicted another use of the Lotus Gu during the battle. That's the beauty of inspiration—it strikes at the strangest moment. That night, Lo Jik returned to his former cabin and layered his floor with thousands of Primeval Stones.

His thought process was simple.

The Lotus Gu releases Primeval Essence. Can it temporarily store it?

Under Lo Jik's anticipative gaze, the floating Lotus Gu devoured thousands of Stones in a breath!

Success!

Why?

What's the difference between Lo Jik devouring the essence and the Lotus doing the same?

Time!

You see...

The saying that one's cultivation soaring with enough resources holds true at every Cultivation stage. The only difference is how long it takes for one's cultivation to 'Soar!'

As a rank 3 Gu Master, Lo J refined about three and a half primeval stones for a portion of Light-Silver Essence. It means he refined over 223 stones for 69% of his Essence. All this takes time. However, he could temporarily store the Essence into the Lotus Gu, constantly nurturing his walls without a break!

However, the window between Lotus consuming the essence for itself and providing for Lo Jik is slim.

It didn't matter. Lo Jik's cultivation sped off the charts after realizing this use. He could feed the Lotus over 200 stones at a time after exhausting his essence and resume his cultivation without losing over 20 minutes! Such shocking speed also saw Lo Jik burning through his Primeval Stones in days. He cultivated for 4 hours every night. Mo Yan was the same. Their intimacy did not diminish because of their duties because they realized it was temporary. This allowed Lo Jik to focus on himself.

It's already the middle of September, almost two weeks after the first 'Big' tide, and he feels his progress is about 20% more than usual. It would be more if he didn't have the Wolf Tide to worry about. Lo Jik isn't fighting because of his reputation. But there's a direct order from the Clan Leader compelling every Able-bodied Gu Master to fight. Those who tried crippling themselves got healed enough to move and were sent to the battlefield, too!

Still, Lo Jik felt on top of the world. The Lotus Gu's assistance to Cultivation is unimaginable! He worried the Gu Worm's effectiveness would fall short once he advanced to Rank 4. However, this use allows the Rank 3 Lotus Gu to retain its use no matter Lo Jik's rank!

So, their lives continued.

Lo Jik already had Rank 3 Movement, Defense/Offense, and Healing Gu. The Heaven Piercing Eye didn't need advancement on short notice and proved as effective as many Rank 3 recon Gu. His body was refined, and it could display his strength without hurting himself. Also, other Rank 2 Gu, like the Blood Rousing Incense and the Battle Instinct Gu, raised his combat strength by another level. Adding the Three Tasks at Once further multiplied his strength.

He believed he surpassed Mo Yan, Chi Shan, and Fang Zheng. Men like Qing Shu and Fang Yuan are wildcards. The former could compete with Bai Ning Bing, and the latter must have some fortuitous encounters, allowing him to reach Rank 3.

What mattered was that Lo Jik did not need to refine any other Rank 3 Gu and focused on his cultivation.

Lo Jik gave the Lightning Thoughts Gu to Mo Yan to reduce his cost and invest in cultivation. He could sell it. However, he planned to encourage Mo Yan to travel with him. So, he wanted Mo Yan to be safe. He did all he could, and the rest depends on fate. Instead, Lo Jik used the chaos of Wolf Tide to buy medicine, rice, and other staple products from a few surviving vendors. He also exchanged loads of food for his Gu. Since he had several Gu that didn't need specialized feed, the costs for 6 months of supply didn't amount to more than a few thousand. Of course, all this went inside Lo Jik's Earth Hole Gu. He wouldn't use the Food stored in the Gu but buy more for his current needs.

It will naturally raise suspicions.

However, Lo Jik wouldn't get a better time.

A Gu Master leaving the village is not uncommon. However, it is frowned upon by the Elders. Lo Jik was too brilliant. He represented a generation of new pawns for the Elders—like Qing Shu before him. Why would they want such a useable talent to leave? Lo Jik had no delusions that he could exit peacefully. Others would use *'righteousness'* and the Clan's system to detain him. They might forcefully strip him of his means to leave the village, which will extend to a confrontation!

His Blood Torrent Python Gu is his best bet in that regard.

Of course, things would be different if he displayed Rank 3 Cultivation. However, it would be similar to putting a fire out in one region only for a bomb to explode in another. The time wasn't right for Lo Jik to advance his first Aperture into Rank 3.

Days fly by as the Gu Yue Clan's losses accumulate.

The once beautiful clan growing within Bamboo groves is broken and worn.

The losses shake the higher-up's confidence about their survival, much less other Gu Masters.

However, all the survivors are hardened warriors. They are used to Wolf patterns. One side learns and adapts, and the other side attacks using its numbers.

The Gu Master holds off the Wolf Tide every time.

Unknowingly, it's already Autumn and the end of September. Not only did the Wolf Tide last longer than usual, but it was also fiercer!

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Fang Yuan sits in a dim cave. The soil in the cave glows red, slightly illuminating the phaseless wall ahead. Past the wall made from Moat Gu is the Gu Yue Clan's Spirit Spring. Fang Yuan observes a Rank 3 Gu within the swirling water.

The blue-white lotus looks delicate and seems to phase between material and phantom form. One of its nine petals looks injured. If Lo Jik saw this Gu, he would realize it's the same Heavenly Essence Treasure Lotus Gu he received from his Trait!

'Today is the day,' Fang Yuan exhales sharply. 'The Beast Tide today will be disastrous. Several Elders will lose their lives, including Gu Yue Chi Lian. I used that man these few weeks. Chi Cheng died, severely affecting the Chi Faction. My knowledge of Chi Cheng cheating isn't useless. Instead, Chi Lian could not risk the leak because I knew the Gu



Worms he used on Chi Cheng to muddy the results. As expected, Chi Lian was fierce in his negotiations. However, he caved. I extorted Primeval Stones and a few Gu worms.'

'I spent a lot of time these days to tackle the Divine Investigator's issue. I finalized my plan after finding the Rank 2 Aura Shoot Gu.'

'The Flower Monk Wine hated the Gu Yue Clan. The purpose of the Inheritance is to destroy the Clan. The Clan's foundation and the Spirit Spring will be exhausted once I refine and take the Gu. The Clan will chase me to the Earth's end with nothing to lose. Not only that, but the Divine Investigator will arrive shortly. He will effortlessly find and capture me. I can't do anything to a Rank 5 Gu Master.'

'My options are limited.'

Fang Yuan quietly retrieves an arrow-headed Gu. It's rustic brown and looks ancient.

Rank 2 Aura Shoot Gu.

Fang Yuan next retrieves a rare Rank 2 Distant Will Gu. This Gu is shaped like a green disk.

'Go!'

The two Gu turn into brilliant light before entering the light wall and nearing the Heavenly Lotus Gu. At Fang Yuan's command, the Aura Shoot Gu releases a soft but ancient presence. The Lotus Gu trembles, feeling weak. It closes its flower bud.

'Now!'

The Green disk releases Fang Yuan's will, similar to a curtain of Green Light.

Fang Yuan instantly feels a connection with the Heavenly Lotus Gu.

However, the Aura Shoot Gu breaks apart and turns into dust. One should never contaminate the Spirit Spring. But Fang Yuan doesn't give a damn. However, the green disk returns to Fang Yuan.

Although the act seems simple, the timing must be perfect!

'I successfully refined the Rank 3 Lotus Gu. I stored Spring Autumn Cicada's aura in the Aura Shoot Gu. I used it to suppress the Lotus's willpower before using the Rank 2 Distant Will Gu, refining it myself. However, the Aura Shoot Gu could not bear the

pressure of a Rank 6 Gu's aura and broke apart after one use.'

It's an acceptable loss.

Fang Yuan soon uses the Rank 3 Tusita Flower Gu to release his collected Primeval Stones. He quietly feeds the Lotus until it's fully repaired!

But his work isn't finished.

'The Divine Investigator will mark me with a Shared Sense Gu. I cannot return to this sight and take the Lotus Gu. However, it's already mine. Hehe, this opens more options for me.'

Fang Yuan takes out a small purple Gu.

It's the Rank 1 Son Flee Gu.

He uses the Gu as it turns into purple light and covers the Lotus Gu. The purple light flashes for a few seconds before disappearing.

'Rank 1 Mother's Embrace and Son Flee are expendable Gu. Anything marked with Son Flee will return to Mother's Embrace. The farther the distance, the more essence consumed. I must leave the Lotus Gu for now. I've done everything. Let's see how this life plays out.'

*\*Awwwoooooo\**

A long, majestic howl echoes in the underground inheritance site as Fang Yuan closes his eyes.

'I spent a long time healing the Gu. The Wolf Tide is already underway. I followed the Elders chasing after the wolf back then. It led me to another skirmish with Bai Ning Bing before the Lycan arrived. There is no need to make the same mistakes twice. I should return and assist against the Wolf Tide. Since there are several new Elders, the one charging the Myriad Beast King must be the Older Generation with better teamwork.'

He recuperates for a while before leaving the cavern.

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*Hours Ago.*

“Are you alright?” Lo Jik questions as he eats alongside Mo Yan. They are in one of the Bamboo Buildings used for mess. Mo Yan’s status as an Elder allows her to book a private room as mortals hurriedly serve the food to tired and injured Gu Masters.

Mo Yan is slightly distressed after the recent events. Her Grandfather got injured two days ago. It’s a severe injury, and he barely pulled through.

“I am,” Mo Yan sighs softly. She sips her soup before muttering, “Other Elders in the Internal Affairs Hall were asking about you.”

“Me?” Lo Jik blinks in surprise despite knowing what it’s about. She looks at him, questioning concisely.

“Are you planning on leaving the Clan?”

Lo Jik opens his mouth slightly before closing it. He lowers his gaze.

“Jik?” Mo Yan’s voice trembles as Lo Jik whispers. “I don’t think there is a way for me to advance within the Clan, Yan. I want to test my luck outside—”

“You will die!” Mo Yan hisses. “You need Rank 3 cultivation! How can you decide such things without telling me?!”

Lo Jik chuckles as he sits back. “I need Rank 3 cultivation to explore the wilderness. However, I have to explore the Wilderness to find a way to advance to Rank 3. What can I do except test my luck?” He doesn’t let Mo Yan speak, adding, “I won’t ask you to follow me. What about your family? You’re different from me, Yan. You have so many people here who look up to you. And me? I only have you.”

Mo Yan’s body trembles as Lo Jik whispers. “I will return once I find my fortunes, dear. Don’t be sad.”

“What if you don’t?” Mo Yan grunts, tears forming in her eyes. “You can’t leave me alone! I won’t let you!”

Lo Jik gently smiles as he holds her hands. “I’m not. Besides, I’m not leaving right away, am I? I want to see you safe until the Wolf Tide ends. Only then can I leave.”

“No,” she sobs. “I will come—”

“No!” Lo Jik firmly asserts. “I can’t drag you down with me.”

She chews her lips in frustration.

“Don’t cry,” Lo Jik whispers, wiping her tears away. “Come on. We shouldn’t be focusing on this for now. Let’s discuss it later.”

He kisses her forehead as she nods. Determination flickers in her eyes as Lo Jik smiles.

Loud sirens blare before they can speak further. The duo’s expression changes as Mo Yan hurriedly wipes her tears and leaves the room with Lo Jik. They leave the Bamboo Building and climb the nearby tower to see a sea of wolves emerging from the surrounding forest.

‘It’s here.’

Everyone thinks the same thing.

The deadliest Wolf Tide is here. Surviving it is of crucial importance!

Hundreds of Bold Lightning Wolves and several Frenzy Lightning Wolves move beside a hill-sized Lightning Wolf. It quietly sits, looking like a majestic sculpture before the dawn. Tufts of golden fur glimmer on his limbs and tail. Its elegance is further accentuated by tufts of fur extending as a crown on his head.

Myriad Beast King—Lightning Crown Wolf King, the beast that commands ten thousand wolves, a hundred bold lightning wolves, and ten Frenzy Lightning Wolf!

Even the Clan Leader steps out as the information hall Gu Masters move to every Elder.

“It’s the Clan Leader’s command for the Battle Elders to protect the gate at any cost.”

Mo Yan nods as Lo Jik squeezes her hand reassuringly.

The decisive battle is here.

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Lo Jik calmly grabs a Lightning Wolf before using it to sweep other wolves off the wall. He tosses the wolf and flicks his wrist. Instead of the broken wolf, the moonblade suddenly hits a Bold Lightning Wolf to the left. It leaves a gash on its right leg, successfully killing the healing Gu hidden within the fur.

The Bold Lightning Wolf quickly dies as Lo Jik doesn’t glance in that direction. With so

many moon blades flying around, others never imagined it was Lo Jik who killed the Wolf's Gu. He quickly glances at the situation ahead. All sorts of light and attack Gu confront the Lightning Crown Wolf. Such a battle is not something Lo Jik can participate in. After all, it takes one Clan Leader and 10 Elders to hold the beast at bay.

Suddenly, a massive Purple Moonblade the size of a horse cart attacks the Lightning Crown Wolf. In response, a lightning armor appears around the wolf.

*\*Boom\**

A majestic blue and alluring violet explodes as Lo Jik feels the impact on the wall. The blinding light makes others squint. However, Lo Jik uses his Eye Gu under his eyelid, quickly attacking four different Bold Lightning Wolves to reduce the strain on the Eastern Wall. These wolves are near a Frenzy Lightning Wolf that Mo Yan and three other Elders are holding back.

The light quickly flashes away as the Lightning Wolf's assault momentarily weakens. After all, their eyesight is their advantage! Their sensitive eyes tear up as they whine loudly.

The Gu Masters won't leave such a weak spot.

As the Elders successfully kill the Frenzy Lightning Wolf, Lo Jik observes a Gu Master hurrying to the three Elders and informing something.

They nod and quickly leave. Mo Yan glances at Lo Jik, nodding before following other Elders.

These three aren't alone. Other Elders, including Qing Shu and Chi Shan, leave their posts after dealing with their respective wolves, reinforcing the Clan Leader.

The battle rages for almost 20 minutes when the Myriad Wolf howls loudly. He tears a path past the Elders, severely injuring several Gu Masters. However, the Clan Leader successfully binds it before retreating into the Village Square.

'Oh?' Lo Jik frowns. 'I only heard about this from Mo Yan. The Clan does have a life-saving measure.'

*\*Buzz\* \*Buzz\* \*Buzz\**

Lo Jik's expression changes as he suddenly jumps from the wall, letting another Gu Master take his position. He gazes at the sky as the dark clouds part, revealing a group

of Blood-red insects descending upon the Gu Yue Village. The insects look like ferocious locusts!

'It's really the Blood Guillotine!' Lo Jik's heart thrums. 'A Gu Master feeds and uses the Gu at once. It consumes the heart blood of Gu Masters, using the Primeval Essence to rapidly multiply. This Rank 5 Gu is similar to a Blood Disaster. If the Clan can summon its use, they must have prepared some sacrifices.'

As expected, the small lump of insects turned into a massive cloud of death that entered the battle, consuming Lightning Wolves in the blink of an eye. Other Gu Masters stop as these worms don't attack them.

The Blood Guillotine does not multiply after feeding on the wolves since they need the Primeval Energy of one's heart blood. The Gu Masters, stupefied, watch the blood fog of death and buzzing insects surround the Lightning Crown Wolf! The Myriad Wolf howls, prompting the Gu on its body to attack the Blood Gu.

The lightning chars thousands of the Blood Gu as their number thin from a bloody fog to a small tornado. However, hundreds of Blood Guillotine already feast on the Myriad Wolf's body. It howls, showering itself with liquified plasma to deal with the locust Gu. However, it also injured itself, cooking its flesh.

Under the Gu Master's surprised gazes, the Myriad Wolf escapes!

Already killed to such an extent, the other wolves quickly run away, too.

They won!

All the Gu Masters watch with complicated emotions.

They won... but at what cost?

Unwilling to let the Myriad Wolf escape since it will recover and attack the village with greater hatred, Gu Yue Bo leads a team of Elders after the Wolf. Meanwhile, others assist in cleaning up the battlefield.

Hundreds of survivors mourned the loss of their loved ones—including Lo Jik.

He quietly stepped into one of the craters, hugging a mangled corpse in his arms.

'Damn,' He sighs. 'We never even got to bid farewell, Yan.'

He didn't think much of Shen Cui. But he valued Mo Yan. He didn't love her, that he knew. The only woman he came close to loving didn't exist in this world. So, how can Lo Jik understand what love is? He only knows the trait one exhibits when in love.

"A-Ah, Lord Lo Jik! We are sorry for your loss. But please let the Internal Affairs Hall and the Medicine Hall note the losses. We will bring Elder Mo Yan's inheritance—"

"Do what you need to do," Lo Jik sits down cross-legged, gently brushing Mo Yan's muddied hair away. The act reveals her half-chewed face as he smiles sadly. "But I'll be by her side for now."

The afternoon sun shines on the couple, leaving a hauntingly beautiful image in the female Gu Master's mind. Lo Jik may never know when the acting stops and the truth emerges. However, a mere bystander seems to see a whole lot more.

Unfortunately, Lo Jik isn't destined to converse with the woman as she quietly extracts the Gu Worms in Mo Yan's aperture. She doesn't move the corpse and instead relays when to bring the body to the Funeral site as Lo Jik nods.

Just then—

\*—ooooooooooooooooo\*

A terrifying wolf howl echoes in the distance.

"T-The Lightning Crown Wolf!" The Female Gu Master gasps.

\*Tuc\*

\*Tuc\*

Lo Jik doesn't move. Instead, he looks at the duo emerging from the Eastern Gate. They wear bronze masks and neat steel-grey uniforms. A purple belt graces the tall man, while the woman wears a white belt.

Rank 3 and Rank 5!

"Please get inside the gates, Juniors. I shall check the situation," The Rank 5 expert speaks in a clear, deep voice.

He gazes at the gently smiling Lo Jik, who slowly stands without letting Mo Yan's corpse go.





Wine to welcome their savior.

Several Individuals sit in the Clan Pavilion's Hall. The Gu Yue Clan used to have dozens of Elders. Now? Many of them died. Chi Shan, Chi Lian, Mo Yan, Jia Shing, and more! The recent Battle Elders like Fang Zheng and Fang Yuan survived. There are also injured Elders like Mo Chen or Gu Yue Yao Ji. Mo Chen still isn't healed. Meanwhile, Gu Yue Yao Ji merely had a broken arm—something she healed others off of before sending them to battle.

Gu Yue Yao Ji feels embarrassed and pressured by other Elders. However, she chose to sacrifice her arm for her life. The tearful Fang Zheng tries hard to contain his tears as Qing Shu consoles the youth.

Gu Yue Bo sits in the main seat. Tie Xue Leng and his daughter, the Rank 3 Tie Ruo Nan, sit beside him.

He starts the banquet by toasting Tie Xue Leng. The scent of fragrant meat and wine fills the hall. Gu Yue Bo's eyes turn red when he speaks of the sacrifice, prompting Tie Xue Leng to console the Clan Leader.

"R-Reporting to Clan Leader," A Gu Master meekly introduces his presence. "A Gu Master advanced to Rank 3."

"What?"

Other Elders' eyes jump. Although mourning, the remaining veteran elders are also anticipative for the future. After all, prominent Elders like Chi Lian controlled several resource points. With the Chi Faction's demise, other Clan Elders stand to gain the most.

The addition of another Elder meant a lost share of their future growth!

"Who is it?" Gu Yue Bo questions.

"It's," the Gu Master hesitates. "It's Gu Yue Lo Jik, Clan Leader. I asked him to come with me. But he said..."

"What did he say?" Gu Yue Bo snorts in annoyance.

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Lo Jik sits beside a grave with a peaceful expression. Bleeding Gu Masters lies beside

him, knocked out cold. He quietly gazes at the setting sun as Rank 3 aura escapes his being. Advancing to Rank 3 in his first Aperture was as easy as snapping a finger.

"I said—the Clan is dead for me," Lo Jik drinks wine from his gourd. He slowly turns to look at the grave before tilting the gourd and letting the wine flow down on it. Satisfied, Lo Jik drinks from the gourd again.

"Gu Yue Lo Jik!" Yao Ji screams, pointing a trembling finger at him. "How dare you harm my Medicine Faction's Gu Masters? This is open treachery!"

Gu Yue Bo's expression changes as he shouts, "Shut up now, Elder Yao!"

Yao Ji grows silent, sneering inwardly. She wished to plant some ideas in other's heads to escape the consequences of hiding from the battle. Lo Jik just advanced to Rank 3. He has no backing since even the Mo Faction is finished. Mo Yan and Mo Bei died in the battle. She could not let a newcomer rise and assist Mo Faction!

The Tie Father-Daughter duo are also present beside the Clan Elders.

"It's hard to accept losses, Lo Jik," Qing Shu approaches Lo Jik, firmly patting his head. "Mo Yan was a fierce woman who loved you dearly. I'm sorry."

Lo Jik doesn't say a thing. He quietly drinks.

No, he wasn't mourning.

He mourned Mo Yan's loss before. But death isn't new to Lo Jik. He moved on.

He always does.

But how could he let go of this grave opportunity? Mo Yan's death can explain his sudden advancement and desire to leave the Village. He can put every explanation on Mo Yan! The Clan will have to accept all of it because he's a grieving husband and cannot revive Mo Yan.

Mo Chen is the next to move. He quietly pats Lo Jik's shoulder before sighing, "It will get better, Son. I loved Mo Yan and Mo Bei dearly. We'll get through this together."

Mo Chen turns around, bowing to others, "Please forgive Lo Jik's words and actions. He is grieving for his wife, my granddaughter."

Understanding flickers in the Tie Father-Daughter Duo as they recall the sight of Lo Jik

quietly holding a mangled corpse.

“It’s understandable,” Gu Yue Bo sighs. “Please raise your head, Elder Mo. Many wounds are still fresh, and we are all too tense. Elder Yao, heal these Gu Masters.”

Gu Yue Yao Ji reveals an embarrassed expression. She cannot heal others, or she will implicate herself. So she makes an excuse, “I lost my Gu during a fusion accident, Clan Leader. That’s why I could not heal my injuries either.”

“I see,” Gu Yue Bo narrows his eyes. Other Gu Masters move the unconscious men as the masked girl speaks up. “Shouldn’t the new Elder receive a similar status? My wine will feel tasteless knowing there’s a grieving Elder without anyone near him.”

‘Bruh, let me act stoic!’ Lo Jik internally rolls his eyes. He corks the gourd before tossing it back. It accurately lands at the girl’s feet as he mutters. “There, drink that. It should taste better. Now leave me alone.”

Embarrassed, the girl’s eyes dart around. She was merely trying to help.

“Let me,” Qing Shu smiles. Reputation and benefits mattered little to the Green-haired man as he picked up the wine bottle before offering it to Tie Ruo Nan.

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“These are the Gu Worms left behind by Yan’er,” Mo Chen reveals three Rank 3 Gu and one Rank 2 Gu. Mo Yan possessed five Gu. However, her vital Gu, the True Mind’s Eye, perished after her demise.

Across him is Lo Jik as they sit in the spacious courtyard under the beautiful full moon.

“According to Clan Laws, a wife’s possession passes to her husband after death. These Gu belong to you. You two were husband and wife. Mo Yan’s remnant Will in these Gu should recognize you and let you refine them.”

Lo Jik wordlessly stares at the Gu. He appears distraught. However, he is calculating inside.

‘Now both my Apertures produce Rank 3 essence. My efficiency for Cultivation doubled since I could recover lost essence using the Lotus Gu. I’m already down to 40000-something stones. I should reach Middle-stage soon. I don’t need more Gu. I also still have the Command Token. I should check the secret room now since many Gu Masters and Elders lost their loves. Those without inheritors, like Chi Lian, will have their

Gu stored in that unit.'

'So, I don't need Gu. Mo Yan's Shadow Gu doesn't suit me either. I need Primeval Stones!'

"Please sell them," Lo Jik whispers.

"I understand," Mo Chen nods. A Gu Master cannot feed so many Gu. Mo Chen would probably blow his top off if he realizes the number of Gu in Lo Jik's aperture.

The duo falls silent as Mo Chen sighs.

"I won't lie, Lo Jik," Mo Chen sighs. "My injury caused my cultivation to drop to Rank 2. I'm currently using my remaining essence to fake my aura. Others will soon see through it. The Mo Faction is done without proper support. You're part of my family by law, Lo Jik. You are young and a rare Combat Genius. If not for me, then Mo Yan—don't let her memories drift away alongside our family."

Lo Jik's body shudders. He lowers his head.

"F-For Mo Yan," He sobs while almost jumping for joy internally!

'Holy Shit!'

Mo Chen smiles in gratification, unaware of Lo Jik's thoughts, as he pats the boy. "You're an Elder. You must learn to control these tears, Son. Come. Let me introduce you to the benefits of being an Elder. Mo Yan must have told you many things. Sigh, let's drink, too."

Lo Jik nods.

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"Hmph! To think I pitied him!" Tie Ruo Nan snorts in annoyance at the recollection of the evening banquet. She stores her Gu, commenting. "But the room is nice and clean."

The '*clean*' she refers to is the surveillance Gu in their room. Gu Yue Clan cannot feel at ease without peculiar measures. After all, Tie Xue Leng is a Rank 5 Gu Master! But their methods aren't overly provocative, making the Tie Father-Daughter Duo nod.

"Sigh, Ruo Nan," Xue Leng shakes his head.

"I understand, Dad," Tie Ruo Nan mutters. Even she understood and empathized with one's loss. Tie Ruo Nan moves on and questions, "Are you sure you want me to lead the investigation?"

"Are you afraid?" Xue Leng chuckles as the girl crosses her arms. "No!"

"So?" Xue Leng continues. "How do you start an investigation?"

Tie Ruo Nan thinks before giggling, "The moon is so beautiful tonight, Dad. May I bring you around the Gu Yue Village? I would love to spend more time with you."

The Father nods with a gratified smile.

They leave the Clan Leader's pavilion, strolling in the streets and enjoying the sights of Bamboo groves. Although the Clan's infrastructure is riddled with holes and battle scars, the people pull through, working without delay.

Although the Gu Masters rest, the mortals also do their part.

"Ah!" Tie Ruo Nan notes with surprise as a tall figure walks the street leading to Clan Pavilion. Noticing them, Lo Jik bows, "This junior greets Senior Divine Investigator." His voice retains its monotone as he continues, "And I also ask for forgiveness from Little Divine Investigator. I didn't mean my earlier words."

"We're all understanding, Little Brother," Tie Xue Leng begins as he quickly gestures to Lo Jik to stand straight. Meanwhile, Tie Ruo Nan's tawny-brown eyes light up.

"Little Divine Investigator?"

Lo Jik stands straight, nodding plainly. "Elder Mo Chen explained you are here to investigate some murder, but Lord Tie Xue Leng asked you to investigate it."

Ruo Nan nods, prompting, "And that makes me the Little Divine Investigator?"

"Ruo Nao!" Tie Xue Leng interjects with a stern tone. The girl forgets in her excitement that the person she's fishing compliments from is a recently widowed man.

Ruo Nan blinks in realization before guilt overtakes her features past her copper mask.

"Indeed, it does," Lo Jik nods. "A pleasant evening to both of you. Elder Mo Chen instructed me to accomplish other tasks."

"Hmm?" Ruo Nan mutters as she watches Lo Jik's back. "Didn't Elder Qing Shu reveal

that Lo Jik, Fang Yuan, and Fang Zheng are from the same batch? It means the trio are 17-year-old like me. But two of them have C-grade Aptitudes. How are they Rank 3 Gu Masters?"

"You should focus on the investigation of Jia Jin Sheng's murder, my Little Divine Investigator," Xue Leng dotingly pokes his daughter's mask as she toothily grins, "Yes!"

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'I did everything I could to organically ignore the Tie duo,' Fang Yuan stares at the night sky from his inn. 'To lower attention on her, Yao Ji implicated me in my last life. However, she targeted Lo Jik today.'

He sips his wine.

'To think Lo Jik will become an Elder. Mo Yan must have left something important to him.'

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As Lo Jik expected, the addition to the Gu room is massive!

Lo Jik can take a Rank 3 Gu from the less precious collection as an Elder. He also has the right to look through the clan recipes for 15 minutes daily.

The same night, he used the Command Token to peruse the Rare Gu in the Clan's collection. He didn't find anything to his liking before. But now? After several Elder's death?

Lo Jik soon discovers another Beast Strength Gu among them.

'Rank 3 White Ape Strength Gu.'

Lo Jik recalls the Elder Bai Ning Bing killed. This Gu must have been taken by another Elder before landing here. Now that Lo Jik has finished using the Body Refining Gu set, he can possess 10 Beast Strength Gu instead of the conventional 8. He already has the strength of two Boars and a Tiger. The Ape will be his fourth Strength Gu. However, the limit refers to ten Rank 3 Beast Strength Gu! Lo Jik will have to find ways to advance his strength further.

By the next day, Lo Jik is also 24300 Primeval Stones richer once Mo Chen sends him the premium price for Mo Yan's Gu Worms.

Lo Jik stares at the Rank 3 Gu in his palm. It's a translucent Crystal Ball with white mist and fog forming a realistic silhouette of an Old Man. The Old Man is hunched back as he stares at Lo Jik no matter how he moves the ball, showing a bitter expression.

Rank 3 Primeval Elder Gu.

This Gu is a storage-type Gu for Primeval Stones alone! As one says, professionals have standards. Unlike other Storage Gu, this Gu can store upto a million Primeval Stones!

This Gu is intriguing. When stored to the brim, it reveals a happy and sincere smile. The Old Man looks plain and indifferent when the Primeval Stones amount to half its limits. Its expression turns bitter and sad, constantly frowning and worried once the amount falls past a threshold.

This is the Gu he chose from the other room. It was Chi Lian's Gu.

Like the Lotus Gu, it also feeds on Primeval Essence.

Lo Jik chose this to store his wealth of 66100 Stones to free up the remaining space in his Earth Hold Gu.

'Hehe! Mo Chen wants to use me to protect his Faction. He had the nerve to bring Mo Yan up? I must take your due, too, right, Yan? I don't believe Mo Chen possesses a million stones. But his years of savings are nothing to scoff at either.'

Lo Jik's need for Primeval Stones after discovering the use of Lotus Gu is at an all-time high!

'If Mo Chen didn't focus on saving and spending freely, he might be several times stronger by now. Chi Lian was the same. They chose to become misers for some fortuitous encounter with a Gu. However, they paid for that risk with time. Does spent time return? No. But spent wealth can be recovered. So, Time is more valuable. I can't waste time. I must squeeze every benefit I can from Mo Chen before leaving this place for good.'

Lo Jik wished to use the excuse of finding fortune in the wild and leave the Clan with Mo Yan. Her death means his inability to exit the Clan. So, Lo Jik chose the timing and broke through his cultivation and future troubles in one go!

One must be careful about hiding and revealing strength. Had Lo Jik exposed it before,

he might have been the one to die. Any later and Mo Faction might have been done for! However, he also opened himself to some issues.

Gu Yue Bo would not want an Elder to leave in such a sensitive time. Both clans suffered unimaginable losses due to the Lightning Lycan. However, it's also the best time to attack each other. Bai Clan and Gu Yue Clan are only civil for the time being due to Tie Xue Leng's presence.

Lo Jik sighs before taking out the White Ape Gu and working to refine it. He refined the Primeval Elder Gu using 180% Peak Stage essence and almost 800 stones.

He must refine them properly since they aren't summoned from his Trait.

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Last night's stroll wasn't as fruitful as Tie Ruo Nan wished. She and her father arrived at an awkward stage where the Clan Elders were busy with repairs and restructuring their Clan Order. They must devise several policies to divide the resources opened for others and encourage the Gu Masters to return to their duties.

After all, the Wolf Tide still remains. Surviving the harshest period allows them to regrow. But they also must clean the remaining wolves in the area! Now is no time to rest but to recover their resource points!

The entire clan is in a buzz come the morning. Tie Ruo Nan thinks for a moment before glancing at her meditating father.

"I want to do things my way, Dad," she musters. "I know you told me not to rely on Intuition Gu. But I thought about it during the night. Man is the spirit of all living beings, and the Gu is the essence of Heaven and Earth. Gu are tools. I won't rely on my Gu, but not using it is also inappropriate."

Tie Xue Leng slowly opens his eyes. Visscitudes of life flash in his experienced gaze as he notices his reflection beside his daughter.

"And?" Tie Xue Leng smiles, not offering any advice or rebuttal.

"I'm fortunate that I have you near me, Dad. You made a name for yourself, experiencing such hardships alone. I don't envy that. I'm glad that I don't have to suffer such loneliness. However, I wish to solve this case at my merit. I have learned a lot from you. But I'm not the Divine Investigator. The only way to grow is by walking my path and taking reference from yours."



Tie Xue Leng chuckles.

“Your mother would be proud of you, Nan. Here.”

He hands a letter to Tie Ruo Nan, adding, “This is Junior Jia Fu’s letter. He noted everything curious and suspicious about the Gu Yue Clan from his investigative resources. I planned to give it to you once you made some headway into the investigation. However, you can read it on your own when convenient.”

Tie Ruo Nan quietly stows the letter into her robes, nodding. “I won’t let you down, Dad.”

She walks out of the room, leaving Xue Leng sighing.

“Silly Daughter. You never could.”

The man shakes his head before slowly getting up.

‘I was like you, Ruo Nan. Stubborn and aspiring in my way of Justice. Like you, I only believed in Black and White till I met my first grey—your mother. Only by experiencing life can you understand the unspoken realities not shared in our Clan. As you said. You have your path, Daughter. And I have mine.’

His soft gaze regains its resolute sharpness as Xue Leng quietly takes out a Gu.

‘I’m sorry, Nan’er. There are things I cannot tell you because of high danger. Father wants you to grow. How can I willingly put you at extreme risk? Stay here and solve your case. Meanwhile, I will solve mine.’

Unaware of her Father’s thoughts and motives, Ruo Nan leaves the Clan Leader’s pavilion. She starts questioning the mortals. Since Fang Yuan is the primary suspect, her question centers around his past.

Jia Jin Sheng’s corpse was never recovered. After so long and such a fierce tide, finding Jia Jin Sheng’s traces is a fool’s task. The first thing an Investigator must learn is which leads to follow and discard. She soon identifies Fang Yuan’s surviving batchmates. Although she knows about Fang Zheng and Lo Jik, she doesn’t approach them yet. Those two have Rank 3 cultivation and an Elder’s status. They can choose to cooperate with her or not. However, their batchmates will cave under her pressure and reveal crucial hints.

But her investigation promptly ends!

“What? You already found Jia Jin Sheng’s killer?”

Tie Ruo Nan is shaken.

This is her first solo gig. Will it end before even taking off?

She soon returns to a graveyard near the one Lo Jik was grieving—

Ruo Nan blinks.

‘He is here again?’

Her gaze softens, seeing Lo Jik standing beside Mo Yan’s grave. As if feeling her gaze, Lo Jik turns to look at her before approaching her quietly.

“Little Divine Investigator,” Lo Jik nods as Tie Ruo Nan clears her throat. Once is fine. But she isn’t thrilled by the thought of a boy her age calling her *‘little.’*

“Tie Ruo Nan is also acceptable,” she clears her throat, nodding. “I’m sorry for disturbing you.”

“You shouldn’t be,” Lo Jik smiles slightly. “I can’t stay by her side. I was merely reliving some memories. After all, an Elder can’t be seen sulking.”

The Truth?

It was an act. Lo Jik must perform with all his heart. So he visited Mo Yan’s grave early again when others *‘could not’* notice him.

Pondering, Tie Ruo Nan requests, “If it’s not too much, could I take some of your time? The investigation will pace if someone from the Gu Yue Clan is there to…” She struggles to find the right word without offending the first possible support as Lo Jik tilts his head.

“—Chauffeur you around?” Lo Jik completes her sentence as she almost chokes on air. That’s the last thing she will say. Tie Ruo Nan swiftly shakes her head, “No! I didn’t mean that.”

“Lighten up, Miss Tie,” Lo Jik shakes his head. “You should expect some humor from me. It eases my nerves.”

Tie Ruo Nan slowly nods before explaining the situation.

“Oh?” Lo Jik walks beside her. “I know whom you’re speaking of. But…”

He trails his words as Ruo Nan’s eyes wildly twitch. She comes across a flat ground without a single grave. Lo Jik explains, “A Frenzy Lightning Wolf with flying and speed Gu rushed here. An Elder sacrificed himself to preserve the remains of our Clansmen, pushing the self-detonating Wolf onto the graves of our enemies. It destroyed this grave, and we’ve covered it since then.”

Tie Ruo Nan thins her lips. What should she do now?

“You should look for Elder Fang Zheng. The Demonic Gu Master tried assassinating him during our half-yearly assessment. Perhaps Fang Zheng might know something.”

Her gaze brightens.

“Thank you. Can you lead me to Elder Fang Zheng’s house?”

“No,” Lo Jik shakes his head. “We aren’t on best terms. I can direct you. But going near his house may make Elder Fang anxious.”

Tie Ruo Nan accepts all the help she can get before leaving the spot. However, she doesn’t meet Fang Zheng immediately. Ruo Nan must collect some information about Fang Zheng to have a base. Since Lo Jik has a strained relationship with Fang Zheng, she cannot trust his assessment.

‘I see. Lo Jik and Fang Yuan firmly suppressed the classroom and extorted their Primeval Stones. From a logical standpoint, it’s the classic representation of the strong getting better. Fang Zheng could thrive regardless due to his A-grade Aptitude. However, the story doesn’t end here. Fang Zheng has had troubles with Fang Yuan for their inheritance claim and Lo Jik for his current wife.’

Calling their relationship strained will be an understatement. However, after counting the timeline, Tie Ruo Nan cannot help but feel something wrong.

‘That’s right. Based on all the descriptions, Lo Jik should be with Elder Mo Yan. But he also had some mysterious relationship with Shen Cui. While Fang Zheng’s wife blamed all of it on Lo Jik, why would she still return to the Bazaar?’

Tie Ruo Nan refrains from using her intuition Gu. But years of accompanying her father already refined her instincts to detect bullshit from far!

'I already have enough data. Let's meet Fang Zheng.'

As things are, Fang Zheng is the person closest to Fang Yuan.

"Ah!" Shen Cui gasps when she opens the door for their visitor. Their house's servant already died during the Wolf Tide, so it's the couple alone.

"Good Morning, Miss Shen Cui," Tie Ruo Nan greets warmly. "I'm here to meet Elder Fang Zheng. I apologize for my unannounced visit."

"Well," Shen Cui nods before revealing a look of hesitation. "Please come inside. I will call my husband."

Ruo Nan as she enters their home and sits on a chair in the living room. Shen Cui promptly leaves. Unknown to Shen Cui, Tie Ruo Nan activates her investigation Gu. The soft murmuring voices turn sharp.

"The Clan's guest is here to visit you, Dear," Shen Cui prompts gently.

"I'll be down in a minute." A gloomy voice echoes beside her. Shen Cui consoles. "Everything will be alright. Should I prepare some tea for you?"

"It's fine, Cui!" Fang Zheng snaps.

"Zheng," Shen Cui whispers as the youth snorts. "Just leave me. I'm sorry. I'm not angry at you but myself. I... it's back again. Everything is back ever since I confronted Bai Ning Bing. I'm sorry, I couldn't perform my duties last night—"

That's Tie Ruo Nan's hint to stop eavesdropping. However, she already understands a few things.

Erectile dysfunction is more common amongst the higher-ups than one might believe due to political stress and emotional turbulence. That snippet in the couple's conversation allows Tie Ruo Nan to conclude that their marriage isn't faring well. Fang Zheng's past was not easy, too.

Fang Zheng soon appears in the Living Room as Shen Cui offers tea. Before she could leave, Tie Ruo Nan requested Shen Cui to join them, much to their confusion.

Accepting the tea, Tie Ruo Nan sips it through the hole in her mask for her mouth. She praises, "The fragrant bamboo tea is quite refreshing. Thank you, Miss Shen Cui."

Shen Cui hurriedly nods, humbly accepting the praise.

“I’m here to ask about the Demonic Gu master who tried assassinating you, Elder Fang Zheng.”

Fang Zheng blinks.

“Me?” Fang Zheng blinks innocently. “I don’t know much. I was unconscious for seven days after the attack.”

“Please, Elder Fang Zheng. No matter how unimportant, anything might be a hint for the investigation. The body of the Demonic Gu Master is already destroyed. Did you do something that unintentionally caused such an intense reaction?”

Fang Zheng shakes his head again.

“I was busy cultivating that time. Others believed that the Xiong Clan hired a Demonic Gu Master to assassinate me. It’s not the first time they did it. They assassinated the A-grade talent before me.”

Tie Ruo Nan nods. Such conflicts are plentiful in the *‘Righteous’* path. However, she is too young and weak to impose righteousness upon the murdering Clans.

“I believe the talent in the next batch also died. Gu Yue Zie Qi?”

Fang Zheng’s gaze dims as he nods.

“Zie Qi died in the Wolf Tide. We never recovered his body.”

Tie Ruo Nan continues questioning several things, from his time in the academy to his relationship with other Gu Masters. Time passes quickly. Ruo Nan realizes there are no findings from Fang Zheng. But she is here for Fang Zheng AND Shen Cui. Mortals are quick-witted and know more about the daily life of the Clan than some Gu Masters. They have their own network present in every household in the form of servants.

Her gaze darts around before she decisively cuts Fang Zheng loose.

“I would like to know more about your relationship with Elder Fang Yuan. You said he was brilliant, and your wife was once his servant.”

Fang Zheng frowns and nods.

“So, did you try challenging Fang Yuan for his rightful inheritance for your emotions or at your Adoptive Father and Mother’s encouragement?”

“What?!”

Fang Zheng snaps.

Tie Ruo Nan puts her cup down, smiling. “I’m not slandering you, Elder Fang. But it is a crucial difference. I traveled to different clans with my father. I saw how siblings are torn apart by their distant relatives for inheritance. According to your testimony, your Adoptive Father possessed the Nine Leaf Vitality Grass Gu. His earnings weren’t lower than an Elder’s. Yet he put you and Elder Fang Yuan in such poor conditions. He favored Fang Yuan over you. However, Fang Yuan shared all his gains with you. That was until the Awakening Ceremony. You became the talented one, and your Adoptive Father favored you.”

“The situation changed. But Elder Fang Yuan was the sole inheritor after you accepted your Uncle as your Adoptive Father. Were you told about the magnitude of your Inheritance?”

“No!” Fang Zheng grits his teeth.

“Then why did you challenge Elder Fang Yuan, who looked after you for years?” Tie Ruo Nan pursues. “Were you jealous of Elder Fang Yuan?”

“No!” He was. But he will never admit that. Tie Ruo Nan already has some understanding of Fang Zheng’s insecurities. However, she doesn’t poke them. She gently guides him to an answer Ruo Nan wants him to see.

“I challenged Elder Brother because Father and Mother were left with nothing—”

Fang Zheng’s expression freezes as Ruo Nan narrows her eyes.

“How could they have nothing with savings from Three Bamboo Building, a Tavern, and the constant production of Vitality Leafs?”

Fang Zheng pales.

“N-No!” he stammers. “They wouldn’t.”

Fang Zheng suddenly turns and stares at Shen Cui.

“Is that the truth?!”

Shen Cui lowers her head, unable to speak.

The Elder suddenly stands and rushes out of the house.

“Zheng—” Shen Cui stands when Tie Ruo Nan clears her throat.

“Please stay, Miss Shen Cui.”

“It’s all your fault!” Shen Cui glares at Tie Ruo Nan as the woman mutters.

“Shouldn’t you be grateful? I didn’t reveal your affair to Elder Fang Zheng.”

Shen Cui’s pupils shrink, and color drains from her face.

“You’re wrong!” Shen Cui shouts while Tie Ruo Nan smiles. “I’m not here to prove your affair, Miss Shen Cui. I’m here to find a murderer. So, I won’t bother finding the proof of your unfaithfulness. Please cooperate, and I will leave at once.”

Tie Ruo Nan’s tone turns sharp.

As the law states—It’s not blackmail until written.

Shen Cui grits her teeth before sitting down.

“I understand you were Elder Fang Yuan’s former maid. Please tell me everything about him.”

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**Alternate Title:** Magnificent Losses; The Clan is Dead; Banquet; Mourning Elder; The Performance Beyond Life and Death; Surely, Mo Yan Will Support His Choices; Yao Ji Fumbles Again; Drink The Wine; The Settling Duo; Mo Chen Lets a Wolf Inside; Turning in the Token; Ape Strength; Primeval Elder; More Space; Wealthier; Mo Chen’s Inheritor; The Need to Make the Primeval Elder Happy; Midnight Stroll; One’s Path; Growing Daughter; A Man’s Grey; The Investigation Ends?; Taking Correct Routes; Defusing Schemes; Fang Zheng’s PP Issue; The Destroyed Graveyard; All Leads End; Meeting Lo Jik; Little Divine Investigator; Fishing for Compliments?; Fang Zheng’s Past; Showing Truth; Shen Cui Rages; Unfaithful?; Onto Fang Yuan

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depart? The political upheavals are often more ruthless than Beast Tides. As others hesitate, Gu Yue Yao Ji suddenly comments.

“For negotiations, we must pick an Elder with enough reputation and means to fight for the Clan’s benefits. I nominate Elder Mo Chen for the task.”

Mo Chen’s expression turns cold as he snorts.

“My reputation and seniority is nothing compared to yours, Elder Yao Ji. If anything, you are the most favorable candidate.”

One of the other eight elders hums. “I believe Elder Mo Chen is the better choice.”

Another one speaks Yao Ji’s name.

Gu Yue Bo watches coldly without interfering. Only the Battle Elders and the Secret Hall Elder stay silent since the latter is loyal to Gu Yue Bo and wouldn’t enter another elder’s conflict. Gu Yue Yao Ji was once under the Clan Leader’s authority. However, she struck swiftly and absorbed the majority of the Chi Faction. The remaining Elders fell under Mo Chen.

However, many Elders favor Mo Chen.

Unlike Yao Ji, who is Old and lacks a successor, Mo Chen has an inheritor—Lo Jik. He is part of the Mo Family by law!

Gu Yue Yao Ji grits her teeth.

‘Mo Chen went to negotiate in my last life. However, Lo Jik’s marriage to Mo Yan changed several things. The current factions are without proper inheritors. I wanted to leave the Clan and volunteered for the task. However, the Tie duo stopped me. Hehe. What about now, Tie Ruo Nan? Did you find any corpses? Did you find a Jiang He?’ Fang Yuan smiles internally. He ruthlessly cut down every piece of evidence!

‘But why is Fang Zheng looking at me like that? He isn’t angry but guilty.’

Things are different.

Before others could continue, Lo Jik suddenly spoke.

“May I say something, Clan Leader?”

Gu Yue Bo blinks before stating gently, "Of course, Elder Lo Jik."

Lo Jik nods.

"I don't think it should be Elder Yao Ji." His words stun others. Is he not part of Mo Faction? Is he siding with Yao Ji?

Mo Chen's expression turns ugly as Lo Jik continues.

"Elder Yao Ji is old and unfit. She lost her Gu and cannot even heal her arm. She is a disgrace to the Gu Yue name."

Yao Ji pales as Lo Jik's soft voice rings in the hall. Other Elder's expression flickers as Yao Ji shouts.

"Junior! How dare you slander my name? Sit down before you force my hand?!"

Lo Jik smiles coldly.

"Force your hand? And what would that be? Are you going to hit me with your mattress? What Gu are you going to use? You're halfway dead. Your only use in Medicine Faction was to help others. But you lost your nerve when your granddaughter died, and the Clan suffered for it. Where were you on the battlefield? You wrinkled cunt!"

Lo Jik suddenly thunders, shocking Yao Ji.

"My wife died because of you! Slander you? You should feel lucky I'm leaving your demise to fate! That's right!" He stands. "You're unfit! You will make our clan suffer further losses in negotiations! Anybody can go! I dislike Elder Fang Zheng. But he will be a better choice than you!"

Yao Ji's body trembles as she feels everyone's gaze concentrate on her. Her injured arm became her weakness. Her lies strangled her path.

And Lo Jik?

He just pulled the trigger of the gun Yao Ji unintentionally pressed against her head, didn't he?

"You... You..."

Yao Ji stammers.

Oh, Lo Jik still would have wanted to fuck her for some rare Healing Gu. But time is not on his side. If the situation stabilizes, he won't be able to steal from Mo Chen and escape from the clan. There isn't enough time to lay the groundwork. So? Lo Jik decisively ends that lead and sides with Mo Chen.

He tears open her weaknesses. Other Elders might worry about Yao Ji's backlash. But Lo Jik does not share their worries.

"What 'You?' You killed my wife! What do you have to say for yourself?!" Lo Jik snarls. "Bark, you weary bitch!"

"That's enough!" Mo Chen hurriedly dissuades the situation. Lo Jik may be angry. But he *'unintentionally'* opened everyone's eyes.

Lo Jik hesitates before snorting and sitting down.

'That's right. Yao Ji is a lost cause. Why do I want to work with her?'

'It's just a medicine faction. Yao Ji will die eventually. The Clan Leader might strip her titles for her recent failures.'

Mo Chen and Gu Yue Bo are more than pleased. However, the latter will want to keep the two factions intact rather than letting one rise and contend with the Clan Leader's position.

So, Gu Yue Bo simultaneously suppresses the Mo Faction, too.

"We all understand your loss, Elder Lo Jik. But this is no display of your title. Still, your words are wise. The Gu Yue Clan must show a fierce disposition instead of sending Old Elders. I hope Elder Lo Jik accepts this task and directs his anger at the enemy who made the Clan suffer these losses."

Mo Chen sighs bitterly.

Although Lo Jik firmly suppressed Yao Ji, it also put him on the chopping board. However, Lo Jik merely narrows his eyes, demanding coldly, "When do I leave?"

"Good!" Gu Yue Bo praises. "You will leave tomorrow."

Lo Jik nods.

As the Elders slowly disperse, Lo Jik leaves with Mo Chen, ignoring Yao Ji's hateful glare. Meanwhile, Fang Zheng surprisingly approaches Fang Yuan, softly speaking a few words before leaving.

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"Sigh," Mo Chen covers his forehead. "You cannot lose your composure, Lo Jik. Yao Ji is an old ginger. She may look weak, but we can only imagine her foundations."

"Which she is wasting for no reason," Lo Jik mutters gloomily. "I'm only at this stage because of Mo Yan's last gift. The sight of that Old Bitch scheming while my Yan is dead is infuriating!"

Mo Chen's gaze sparkles as he questions, "This gift... what was it?"

Lo Jik hesitates before sighing. "I won't lie to you, Grandfather. You trusted me, and I must trust you. You're Mo Yan's last living relative." He reveals a pained look. "Yan'er found a Rank 2 Polished Steel Gu a few days before her death. There was a letter on the Gu."

Tears slowly stream down Lo Jik's cheek as Mo Chen's heart trembles.

Polished Steel Gu?

A 20% limit increase for Rank 2 Gu Masters!

"She said it was a gift for me." Lo Jik cries. "She wrote how she always believed we could be together and how Heaven answered her faith by allowing her to retrieve this Gu from a Bold Lightning Wolf."

Mo Chen sighs deeply. He hesitates before firmly patting Lo Jik.

'This means Lo Jik has a B-grade Aperture. He even has the qualifications to advance to Rank 4! I owe you so much, dear Granddaughter. I won't let you down anymore!'

"Lo Jik," Gu Yue Mo Chen speaks gravely. "This mission is riddled with danger. I want you to have some of my Gu. Refine them for yourself."

"What?"

Lo Jik shakes his head.

“Not only will you refine them,” Gu Yue Mo Chen states sternly, like an Elder disciplining their child, “You will also accept more Primeval Stones from the Mo Family’s warehouse. You will have to grease a few hands in tomorrow’s negotiations. Remember. You cannot lose your cool! These Gu and wealth are useless to me. You are our Mo Family’s future and must survive at all costs!”

Lo Jik earned Mo Chen’s trust by verbally abusing Yao Ji and telling the *‘truth’* about his advancement to Rank 3! Mo Chen willingly puts faith in Lo Jik.

After all, Faith shines the brightest in uncertain darkness.

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According to Legends:

Ren Zu could not endure the heart of loneliness. Thus, he dug out both eyes, turning them into a Son and Daughter. This alleviated his sense of loneliness.

But good things do not last, for his children started to crave the scenery of the outside world, forgetting all about their father, Ren Zu, and always going out to play until they forgot the time. They even forgot to take care of Ren Zu.

Ren Zu could not see anything. It was total darkness.

But at times, he could see a little bit of light.

To this, he felt perturbed and asked the Attitude Gu.

Attitude Gu told him, "Oh, this is the eternal light given out by the Faith Gu."

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Lo Jik returned home slightly after midnight. He opens the door before stopping.

‘Someone came here.’ He narrows his eyes. The images of the Tie duo flash in his mind. His left eye glimmers nine colors before he releases a soft grunt.

‘The fuck?’

He closes the door before entering his room, staring at a naked Shen Cui lying on his bed. It’s already Autumn. However, the girl lies without a blanket on, shivering. The tear stains on her cheeks dried long ago.

“What are you doing?” Lo Jik narrows his eyes, questioning with an icy tone.

Shen Cui bites her bottom lip, refusing to speak. Snorting, Lo Jik approaches her. “You’re aware of what I said. You slept with Fang Zheng. We are done. Now, get out.”

The girl’s body trembles. Her pale pink nipples stand erect, shivering. She interlocks her fingers near her stomach, not moving in the slightest.

“Do you really think I won’t kill you?” He smirks as he gazes at the only decoration on her body, the red clips on her hair.

“You won’t,” Shen Cui whispers with clattering teeth. “Fang Zheng will attack you.”

“For an unfaithful slut like you?” Lo Jik demands as he strokes the clips on her hair.

She bites her bottom lip before nodding, “He will attack you. If you kill me, I won’t be at home on time to stop Fang Zheng from reading the letter I wrote.”

“Oh?” Lo Jik chuckles. “And Fang Zheng isn’t home? Did he get tired of you?”

Her gaze turns sad as tears slowly form again in her eyes. “Please,” she whispers. “Please take me back. I will do anything. I want to feel you, Master. I could replace Mistress—”

A cold hand grips her throat. Shen Cui’s eyes widen. She stares at Lo Jik as moonlight illuminates the bedroom, reflecting on her pale, healthy skin. Her expression eases as she stares at Lo Jik with a look of acceptance.

“You cannot replace Mo Yan,” Lo Jik gently smiles as he loosens his hand, causing Shen Cui to breathe loudly. “After all, you’re not Mo Yan. And Mo Yan couldn’t replace Shen Cui either.”

The girl’s eyes widen. She sweetly smiles as tears start streaming down her cheeks. “I love you,” she moves, grabbing his clothes. “I love you, Master. I promise to be yours. I won’t let anyone else touch me!” She possessively hugs Lo Jik, feeling his warmth soothe her. Yet, the moonlight reflects against his indifferent gaze.

‘I still have the foot job mission. Why send her away when I have the convenience to complete it now? However, it will only be a Bronze-tier achievement.’

Lo Jik firmly coils his arm around Shen Cui. If anything, her initiative surprised Lo Jik.

Shen Cui's grown fangs, too. And she wants to dig those new fangs into Lo Jik.

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"So, I told Shen Cui I won't return home for a few days. I can't look at her."

Fang Zheng detailed how he confronted his Father and Mother about how they treated him before shifting sides. He slowly saw the truth between their lies. He couldn't see them before. However, Tie Ruo Nan pulled the blindfolds of affection out from his gaze, allowing Fang Zheng to see the disgusting lies hiding behind their excuses. He then confronted the tearful Shen Cui, who admitted her desire to leave her status by marrying him. But she also claimed her love for Fang Zheng.

"I want to believe Shen Cui," Fang Zheng utters. "But... sigh. I'm sorry for everything."

On the moonlight cliff, Fang Zheng's supporter is not Qing Shu.

A pale hand stretches from Fang Zheng's shadow, patting him. A similar face emerges as the figure gently smiles. However, no affection or warmth flickers in his gaze.

"Everyone makes mistakes, Little Brother. However, don't expect me to forgive you just because of a few words."

Fang Yuan's *'candid'* words soothe Fang Zheng instead.

'To think Ruo Nan would crack the relationship between Uncle and Fang Zheng. What is she playing at here? Her investigation is different from last time. Tie Xue Leng does not accompany her. Is Tie Xue Leng following me? If not, where is he? Why did he come to the Qing Mao Mountain?'

Fang Zheng turns around, nodding with determination.

"I won't disappoint you, Elder Brother. That said," he sheepishly questions. "Can I stay the night with you?"

"Hehehe," Fang Yuan chuckles. "For 80 Primeval Stones, sure."

Fang Zheng smiles bitterly.

Some things never change, do they?

'Had it been the first timeline, I would have probably forgiven him. I would have raised. I would have corrupted him, too. We both would have been demonic heads! However,

that Fang Zheng died.'

Fang Yuan sighs as they walk away.

'This Fang Zheng is not my brother. I have no one in this world. My path is lonely, and I must walk alone.'

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"So, I took the day to understand everyone's characters," Tie Ruo Nan explains as Xue Leng listens patiently.

"The prime suspect, Fang Yuan, changed and became cold after falling from his grace. But he was always wise and cunning. He saw through his Uncle's schemes about inheritance. He's also ruthless enough to hurt a woman by grabbing her breast till they hurt." She doesn't feel embarrassed sharing such revelations with her father. They have seen too much.

"Shen Cui also revealed that a Gu Master of Fang Yuan's description killed an innocent hunter's family. She found that from other hunters, and the Gu Masters don't know that. Since they are twins, Fang Zheng could be behind the murders. However, his character doesn't match such cold-hearted assault."

Tie Ruo Nan calms her nerves.

"I hate how this revelation won't change a thing! How can Fang Yuan kill innocents? Just because they are mortals?!" She clenches her fists while continuing. "However, Fang Yuan also suffered injustice due to his uncle and younger brother."

Tie Xue Leng's eyelids jump in surprise. Before he can say anything, Ruo Nan rolls her eyes.

"No, Dad! I still don't think the world is grey. It's just filled with a lot of HETEROGENOUS Black and White." She emphasizes as Xue Leng snickers, letting her continue.

"Just because Fang Yuan suffered injustice should not allow him to commit crimes! Hmph! Anyway! I further interrogated- ehm questioned Shen Cui. She also revealed that Fang Yuan became a drunk after falling from grace. Although there aren't any concrete clues, Fang Yuan's character fits the description of a cold-blooded murderer."

"And?" Xue Leng smiles. "What would any of that prove?"



“Nothing!” Ruo Nan snickers as she takes out the letter. “I have no clues for now. The only way to proceed is with new information. All I have is possible suspects who killed Jia Jin Sheng. I wanted to read the letter after meeting you. Oh! That’s right! How did you spend your day, Dad?”

Xue Leng smiles mysteriously, “I spend my day watching the beautiful Spear Bamboos. What else are my Old bones good for?”

Tie Xue Leng never lied in his life. However, he speaks half-truths aplenty.

Tie Ruo Nan shoots her father a flat glare before opening the letter.

“Hmm, let’s see. Oh, the Gambling Stones? So much useless information about others. Wait? A Cleansing Water Gu? Chi Lian’s dead grandson must have cheated his Aptitude and used his grandfather’s essence to nourish his aperture. Wow! Does Fang Yuan have talent in business, too? And Lo Jik bought the Solar and Lunar Spiders. For Mo Faction?”

Jia Fu collected all the proceedings with the Gu Yue Clan for the last two years, sending it to Tie Xue Leng.

Tie Ruo Nan reads everything before rereading it.

“Sleep, Nan,” Tie Xue Leng smiles. “Our mind needs rest for efficient investigation and decision-making.”

Tie Ruo Nan frowns harder before closing her eyes and counting her fingers.

“Although you don’t gamble, what do you think is the Essence requirement for opening Gambling Rocks?”

She suddenly smiles.

“I would have been confused before. But such a scheme will fall under Fang Yuan’s profile—cunning and deceiving.”

She ignores Xue Leng, promptly lying on her bed and closing her eyes.

“Hehehehe.”

Creepy giggles escape her lips as Tie Xue Leng thins his lips.

'Is this girl at another phase? Sigh. Raising a girl is harder than escaping from an assault of two Rank 5 Gu Masters!'

The Divine Investigator shakes his head.

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Hot cum now feels cold on her toes and calves as Shen Cui shouts and begs.

"More! More!" She slightly twists her upper body, coiling one arm around Lo Jik's neck behind her and feeling him shut her up with his lips as his hand seizes her jaws. Shen Cui's back arches slightly as her soft breasts bounce with each forceful thrust, sending ripples against her ass cheeks. Her body feels like a hot putty in his hands. Lo Jik's other hand plays with her clit, making her insides clamp down on him. Her eyes pop open as he furiously thrusts against her womb.

She whimpers in his mouth, climaxing for the umpteenth time.

The cold does not bother her now.

Her body feels complete as Lo Jik ejaculates inside her. He must have been holding back a lot since she felt stuffed!

She weakly rests her thin back against his broad chest.

Lo Jik grunts and slowly pulls out.

He doesn't let Shen Cui rest here. No. He doesn't even let her clean herself here.

Shen Cui's tired body buzzes excitedly as sticky liquid dribbles down her thighs while she limps out of Lo Jik's house. It's already dawn. So, she must hurry back quickly to freshen up and destroy the letter she left for Fang Zheng.

However, Shen Cui's expression freezes when she finds a familiar figure entering the same grove.

"Hmph!" Shen Cui snorts, walking past the shocked figure as a fishy scent assails the newcomer.

Meanwhile, Lo Jik smiles in contentment.

***[Foot Masseur (Bronze): Experienced an Orgasm Through Shen Cui's Feet.***

***Parties Involved—Host and Shen Cui. Rewards Stored.]***

A slow knock snaps Lo Jik out. He blinks before dressing up and opening the door.

“Miss Tie—”

“You are having an affair with Shen Cui?” Tie Ruo Nan coldly interrupts. Her icy, tawny stare judges Lo Jik in the worst way possible.

“I am,” Lo Jik nods plainly. Shen Cui already told him how Ruo Nan rattled her yesterday.

“What about your wife? Was that all an act?” Tie Ruo Nan clenches her fists.

“Yan’er knew it,” Lo Jik narrows his eyes. “It wasn’t me alone, Miss Tie. My wife AND I found Shen Cui pleasing. Does that please you? Or do you want me to explain why Shen Cui would think I needed company?”

Tie Ruo Nan’s gaze flickers slightly. She suddenly put two and two together.

“You didn’t mingle with Shen Cui to ‘*motivate*’ Fang Zheng.”

“Motivate him?” Lo Jik sneers. “I liked Shen Cui. Mo Yan did, too. However, Fang Zheng was too eager to marry Shen Cui. How would my pursuing a partner relate to motivating Fang Zheng?”

Tie Ruo Nan feels speechless before she appears stern.

“However, affair—”

“Miss Tie, before you read me Gu Yue Clan’s laws, I know the consequences should Fang Zheng find out. Now! Why are you here?”

Tie Ruo Nan feels uncomfortable before admitting, “I would like to know more about Elder Fang Yuan. You two were partners in crime.”

Lo Jik stares at her before questioning.

“And does your dignified self deign to enter my affair-riddled house? It’s small but accommodating.”

Tie Ruo Nan snaps back, “Why? Did you and Shen Cui sleep around at every corner of

the house?”

She didn't expect a reply.

But Lo Jik replied.

“Shen Cui? No. But Mo Yan and I could not keep our hands off each other.”

The dark-haired girl bristles as Lo Jik sidesteps, inviting her inside.

“It's alright!” She snorts. “I can ask the necessary questions here.”

“I see,” Lo Jik nods. “Please. What would you like to know?”

Tie Ruo Nan calms down. She considers her words carefully, “How was Elder Fang Yuan during the academy?”

“Him? Brilliant,” Lo Jik praises without missing a beat.

“How?”

“He slept during the classes. But he always had the correct answers when the Academy Elder questioned him. Did you read his poems? He's an academic and combat talent!”

Fang Yuan scared Lo Jik. So, Lo Jik pushes Fang Yuan to the Tie Daughter by admitting, “But he was a drunkard. He even asked servants of the tavern to deliver several vats of Bamboo Wine.”

“Which tavern?” Tie Ruo Nan questions.

“That place was destroyed during the Wolf Tide,” Lo Jik shrugs.

Tie Ruo Nan's lips open before she closes them.

The damn Wolf Tide again!

“Did you notice other peculiarities?” She persists.

“Like?”

Tie Ruo Nan questions several things. Lo Jik answers truthfully before admitting, “I'm



looked quite sharp and chiseled. However, his features have some fat now. He didn't look like a medical student's study subject whenever he moved his body, causing several muscle groups to contract and flex.

He is also taller. Almost as tall as he was in the previous world. He's currently 180 centimeters tall.

Lo Jik quietly sits on the peak of the stone tower hosting him, another Bai Clan Elder and a few Gu Masters of their clans sent by their Leaders for negotiations.

The negotiations?

The Bai Clan wanted a three-way tournament. Lo Jik agreed without issues.

The winner takes all the reparations.

Of course, he handed the Xiong Clan Leader a secret letter Gu from Gu Yue Bo. As if understanding something, Xiong Clan Leader did the same. Now Lo Jik must return the letter to Gu Yue Bo.

The '*negotiations*' are just a way for the Clan Leaders to contact each other. Diplomats like Lo Jik are the risk bearers for conveying such messages. Ordinarily, there wouldn't be any issues. But these are extraordinary times. The messages are exchanged.

Now?

Lo Jik must depart and return safely, expecting Bai or Xiong Clan's attack. The Elders are the targets. The three clans want to weaken the other. So, they will ignore ordinary Gu Masters and aim for the Elders.

"Hmm?"

Lo Jik narrows his eyes as a white specter stands out amongst the thicket near a cliff. The Xiong Clan is situated on the mountain base, using several rock structures and a fort to protect against the Wild Beasts.

So, Xiong Clan's terrain keeps them safe from one side through several cliffs.

The specter directs her almost glowing crystal blue eyes in his direction. Her lone arm waves at him before beckoning him.

'What is she doing here?'

Lo Jik looks around.

The evening sun lowers further, casting shadows of other towers onto Lo Jik as he inspects his surroundings before spurning his Feathered Boots Gu. Without anyone's knowledge, Lo Jik *'jogs'* in the air as palm-sized white wings glow from his heels.

He lands on the cliff with a soft tap before quietly staring at Bai Ning Bing.

"I heard you were the diplomat from the Gu Yue Clan and came rushing," She grins. "We meet again, Gu Yue Lo Jik."

"I heard about your arm," he glances at her right stump.

She smirks. "I heard about your wife."

The duo grows silent until Bai Ning Bing shakes her head. "I want to know something. I believe you already know it. So, tell me. The meaning of my existence."

"A philosophical conversation?" Lo Jik quirks. "I know I told you to read more. But that's slightly much."

She snorts, promptly sitting cross-legged on the ground while retrieving her Gourd. She drinks spring water as Lo Jik observes the water, releasing the crisp noise of turning into crystalline. Bai Ning Bing exhales loudly as her breath condenses into frosty snowflakes.

Lo Jik's eyes twitch as he comments, "So, you have the Northern Dark Ice Soul Physique."

"Oh, you could tell?" Bai Ning Bing snickers as her right stump grows at a pace visible to the naked eye. The stump grows as crystal ice before taking the form of her skin, bones, and flesh. "I wanted to surprise you. Huff! I've been cutting my right arm for days since my cultivation began to increase. Do you know how entertaining a fight with Myriad Wolf with one arm is?"

"Clearly not enough since you're alive," Lo Jik smirks.

"Hah!" Bai Ning Bing snorts. "That was the old me! I've felt death. Although it doesn't scare me, I'm still lost about the meaning of existence. Why do I cling to life? What purpose am I here to serve? I thought battles would help me understand that. But it didn't."

“Well, you always struck me as the chatty one,” Lo Jik shrugs as he sits down. “But why did you come here? How does your existential crisis affect me?”

“Because your answer might help me understand if I should fight against my fate,” Bai Ning Bing appears solemn. She reveals a Gu in her palm. It’s a solid grey-white cube.

“Do you know what this Gu is?”

“Stone Aperture Gu,” Lo Jik replies.

“Then you must understand what my intentions are.”

Unfortunately, Lo Jik does.

Although originating from myths, the Legends of Ren Zu hints at the reality of Gu Cultivation. Ren Zu had ten children. One of these was the Northern Dark Ice Soul. However, Ren Zu’s children led a short and depressing life. It hints at the demise of every Extreme Physique!

Extreme Physique is too heaven-defying! It’s a provocation to the just Heaven. So, such talents are born with a limited lifespan. As a Gu Master cultivates, their advancement speed slows down. The Extreme Physique has opposite properties. As the Gu Master progresses, their cultivation speed will increase until their strained aperture cannot handle the load and explode! Moments before their demise, a Gu Master with an Extreme Aperture will display its monstrous might, sweeping any enemy ahead!

Bai Ning Bing is on such a path.

No wonder she was obsessed with life and death. She must have been young when she realized her fate and felt a need to live the best life possible before dying. However, it turned into an obsession that blinded her to the fear of death.

Although that fear is removed, the meaning of life eludes her.

She is like a lost animal, unable to return home.

On the other hand, the Stone Aperture is a Rank 3 Gu used by desperate Gu Masters who have no other method to progress their cultivation. This Gu squeezes all the potential out of the Aperture, turning its wall grey stone, and increases the Gu Master’s cultivation to their corresponding Rank’s peak. Bai Ning Bing wants to delay her inevitable death by turning her Extreme Aperture into the Stone Aperture.



Lo Jik narrows his eyes as he realizes something.

“So, you weren’t just crazy to use Rank 2 Gu back then. Did you do something to your Aperture?”

Bai Ning Bing shrugs. “I used the Undying Grass Gu to revert my Cultivation to Rank 2 Peak Stage. However, the Extreme Physique adapts. Although the Undying Grass Gu will heal me, it won’t drop my cultivation again.”

Undying Grass Gu is a Rank 3 expendable Gu that prolongs life until other healing methods are used to preserve the Gu Master’s life. There are several instances where a Gu Master dies before being fully healed. However, this life-preserving trump card costs a Gu Master a Major realm of their cultivation! Mo Chen revealed he secretly used this Gu to live through his injuries!

Lo Jik sighs deeply.

“I don’t know what to tell you, Bai Ning Bing.”

“Purpose of life,” she kindly repeats.

“I heard you the first time,” Lo Jik deadpans before smirking. “You’re mixing up goals with reasons to live. Tell me, do you need a reason to win?”

“No!” Bai Ning Bing responds sharply. “I want to win at everything!”

“But what does it matter?” Lo Jik questions. “Whether you win or lose, who cares? Why don’t you need a reason for such a meager concept but desire a cause for your existence?”

Bai Ning Bing grows silent. She opens her mouth to say something before remaining quiet. Her expression turns uncertain. The next second, she looks enlightened. This cycle continues for a few minutes. Lo Jik observes her. Reason dictates he should take this chance to kill her. But her life and death do not matter.

Lo Jik died twice. He still doesn’t understand the meaning of his existence.

Maybe it’s to sleep with the baddest Gu Masters to exist.

Perhaps to cuck the strongest.

Or reach the peak?

“You see,” Lo Jik’s voice echoes despite the howling wind. Trees and bushes rustle while the sun descends, allowing a dusky sky to reign in Heaven.

Bai Ning Bing’s eyes widen as she watches in mysterious mesmerization. His robes and hair sway to his left while his smile broadens.

“Life is just a ride that ends with death. I know it will end. So? Why cut it short? I will enjoy the sights and see where it leads me.”

Bai Ning Bing’s lips open. Her core shudders, and she lets out a trembling breath.

“You’re worried about your Aperture, but millions die daily! Do they have an Extreme Physique? How you live your life is upto you. What path your experiences take depends on you, Bai Ning Bing. I can’t enjoy your ride, and you can’t do the same for me.”

Lo Jik tilts his head, using his Eye Gu to glance if others already noticed his departure. However, an accidental glance at the dusky sky makes him shudder. He hurriedly looks down while turning to Bai Ning Bing.

*\*Shing\**

He avoids the Ice Blade. Unlike before, this Ice Blade is 2 meters long as a frosty air swirls around it! This is the power of the Northern Dark Ice Soul Physique. This Extreme Physique can enhance the use of Ice and Water-Type Gu by a level! Bai Ning Bing can use Rank 2 Gu to decimate Rank 3 Gu Masters. A step forward, she can use Rank 4 Gu to contend and defeat Rank 5 Gu Masters. However, she may not live to see the day!

“Hahahaha!”

Bai Ning Bing laughs loudly. “I get it! I get it!”

She cheers while hacking at Lo Jik. He avoids all her attacks, promptly activating the Battle Instinct Gu.

He had an idea when he saw Bai Ning Bing. Lo Jik almost tossed that idea when he knew about her physique. However, her hopeful expression lets Lo Jik think of something. So he doesn’t run away.

“I want to enjoy my ride. You’re right! Everyone dies. What makes my Extreme Aperture so unique? It’s not the death. It’s every other benefit! I know.”

Tens of Icicles bigger and sharper than before form in the air before shooting at Lo Jik as he punches them down, crushing them with minimal scratches!

His body is already refined by Rank 3 Gu.

Bai Ning Bing's crystalline pupils glow.

"I will survive and use all my talents!" she licks her lips. "Thank you, Lo Jik."

"You have a funny way of showing gratitude," Lo Jik grins.

"That's the only way I know," she retorts and straightens her back. "Also, I want to experience the benefits of my Aperture before I temporarily seal it with Stone Aperture."

She swipes her left hand across her chipped katana. Cold wind blows around her as the ice blade returns to its former sharpness.

"Good for you," Lo Jik laughs. "I'll gladly accompany you for a few hours before leaving."

"You're leaving?" Bai Ning Bing snaps. "Why?"

Lo Jik gives a crooked grin. He wants a partner since the wilds are unforgiving. His bait is immaculate as he tosses a reason that resonates with the depths of Bai Ning Bing's being.

"I'm bored, Bing," Lo Jik tilts his head. "And I have nothing in Qing Mao Mountain."

She clenches her sword, frowning, "I promised Clan Leader to deal with the competition. He doesn't know about my physique. But I'll be free later."

"Pfft—HAHAHAHAHAHAHA!" Lo Jik holds his stomach and laughs loudly.

"Who the fuck invited you, Bitch!" He smacks his thighs as red litters Bai Ning Bing's frosty features before she snarls out of embarrassment. "Fuck off! Nobody's coming with you! DIE!"

"They're here!"

"Bai Ning Bing? She is attacking Lo Jik?"

"It's our chance! Attack and kill them both!"

Five Gu Masters surround the duo. However, Lo Jik and Bai Ning Bing rush each other. A blood-red mist appears around Lo Jik. He inhales it as the red smoke works his body's activity and adrenaline by another notch—The Blood Rousing Incense Gu!

Surprising Bai Ning Bing, blood seeps from his pores before hardening into strange gauntlets that cover his hands and forearm. There are even different sections of his fingers to let them effortlessly clench and unfurl!

The Blood Jade Change! Offense and Defense!

*\*Ting\* \*Ting\**

Lo Jik shatters her Ice Blade in two swift jabs before dropping and sweeping at her legs. She scoffs, jumping and creating two icicles under her feet to move out of the way as a few stabs into Lo Jik's back, only for him to snort and roll forward.

"Die!"

A Xiong Elder suddenly inflates, transforming into a massive bear the size of an Elephant.

"No, you!" Lo Jik laughs as he avoids the palm strike!

*\*Roar\**

A phantom of a black bear erupts behind the Xiong Elder. His attack turns faster and fiercer as the Bear Phantom follows the attack pattern, silently roaring.

His fist knocks into the bear's forehead. Lo Jik uses his small size as an advantage. Such a creature killed him once. However, he readily makes the Xiong Elder dizzy.

Lo Jik grins as he suddenly rolls and kicks his heel. His boot tears apart as a cold Moonblade blinds the Bear.

The Bear howls in pain as Lo Jik turns his attention to Bai Ning Bing. A sphere of water vapor keeps one Elder's Jade Pin Gu at bay while she darts around, avoiding the other three elders' melee.

Feeling Lo Jik's stare, she grins proudly, shouting. "Do you see this? I'm more valued than you!"

"Crazy fucker," Lo Jik smirks.

Already crazy and unable to see, the Xiong Elder transformed into the Bear begins thrashing. At this moment, one of the gauntlets turns liquid and enters his skin.

Others already took the attention of Lo Jik at Bai Ning Bing's words.

Shocked at their comrade's state, one of the Elders rushed forward.

"Stay your hand!" Xiong Li roars. He recently advanced to Rank 3 through other Clansmen's help.

His body inflates and turns muscular once he uses the Rank 3 Strongman Gu!

"As if," Lo Jik flicks his hand as a golden Moonblade shoots out from his palm. It's the Rank 3 Golden Moon Gu! Its attack power is a notch higher than Moonglow as it cuts open the cliffside, causing the Bear Transformed Elder to fall off.

"No!" Xiong Li roars!

Not all Gu Battles are about brawns. Why wouldn't Lo Jik use his terrains?

Blood Gauntlet covers his free hand as he takes his usual boxing stance.

\*Shhk\*

He gently flicks his ankle as Xiong Li's expression changes. He hurriedly steps back and avoids the Golden Moonblade by rolling to the side.

"Fight fairly!" Xiong Li growls, cutting a pathetic figure.

Lo Jik snorts and doesn't say a thing. Xiong Li isn't worth the effort for his verbal persuasions. The other four Elders are stunned beyond belief as Bai Ning Bing alone countered them. However, the death of one Elder changed things for the worse.

And worst of all, Bai Ning Bing isn't going all out.

"Too noisy!"

She suddenly snorts.

Bai Ning Bing stands on one leg with her other folded like a martial arts stance. She holds her Ice Blade horizontally before her body starts rotating on the spot.

*\*Huhuhuhuhu\**

The fierce wind swirls around her as white-colored frost gales cover her in a few breaths. Others' expressions change. Even Lo Jik's gaze turns serious.

'Shit!'

Other Elders curse in their hearts. The Clan Leader sent them to silently assassinate Lo Jik. Who knew there would also be Bai Ning Bing?

Her actions and Lo Jik cutting off a small cliff must have already alerted others.

"Retreat!"

The leading Elder isn't stupid. They have a chance to retreat now. But if they are found here, the Bai and Gu Yue Clan will definitely band together later!

Xiong Li retreats unwillingly before the wind quickens. However, Bai Ning Bing doesn't stop.

Trees begin to uproot and fly toward the tornado before being cut open and splintering into thousands of parts! Dust, dirt, rock, flowers, leaves—Everything.

The fierce tornado begins moving in Lo Jik's direction. His body suddenly flies into the tornado.

A sick fate awaits him—

Feathered Boots Gu!

Lo Jik kicks the air with all his strength. His body shoots into the air before fiercer wind seizes his momentum, dragging him into the tornado. The Rank 3 Bamboo Armor Gu forms around him. Lo Jik creates a transparent red protective shade around his eyes before diving into the tornado! Blood-red Jade covers his feet in a thick exoskeleton as he enters the eye of the storm. His body rotates while falling.

His heel smashes into Bai Ning Bing's head.

*\*Crack\**

A sick, bone-crushing noise echoes as Lo Jik caves Bai Ning Bing's skull in.

He hopes she doesn't die.

But if she does—

She will live in his memories.

The gale disappears as Bai Ning Bing's corpse collapses on the ground. Half her head is smashed in. Just when others will believe Bai Ning Bing is dead—

Bai Ning Bing suddenly looks up with inflated cheeks. It's a frightening sight!

She opens her mouth, revealing the Rank 3 Blue Bird Ice Coffin Gu—

*\*Smash\**

Lo Jik coldly plants his foot atop Bai Ning Bing, burying her face into the ground as a strange blood-red armor covers the bamboo armor.

***{A/N: Imagine the Master Chief's Armor.}***

Bai Ning Bing's head explodes as icy mist coats and swirls around the duo.

*\*Crack\**

The beautiful blue ice cracks apart as Bai Ning Bing's head is healed—a heaven-defying physique!

"Fuck!" she spits grass from her mouth, glaring at Lo Jik as he revoked his armor. The Blood Change Gu is injured, and the Bamboo Armor is no better.

Lo Jik sharply exhales as vapors collect in his breath.

"Your move was easy to counter with my set," Lo Jik shrugs. "It was fun. But we won't be doing it again."

One must realize that Lo Jik almost expended his two Apertures for the reckless performance. However, he also had the backup from the Lotus Gu.

Bai Ning Bing's expression changes as Lo Jik continues softly. He speaks something that makes her sink in contemplation.

<<<>>>

'Fuck, fuck, fuck, FUCK!'

Lo Jik isn't readily rattled—but he is.

He saw it!

He saw ten thousand cranes hiding in the clouds!

The clouds cannot stop his see-through vision.

'I also noticed the frame of a Gu Master. Who is he? Why is he *'perched'* near Qing Mao Mountain? I've seen the sky through my Eye Gu before out of curiosity. However, there was no Crane Tide! It only appeared now, after the...'

The Tie Father-Daughter Duo.

Is the Crane Tide an enemy or a friend?

Lo Jik may adopt risks against Bai Ning Bing. But a Crane Tide with a Myriad Crane King?

No!

'Mo Chen gifted me the Bamboo Armor, Golden Moon, and an Undying Grass Gu. He also gave me 50000 stones. There are several Rank 3 Gu in his warehouse. However, I can't take them all. But I can try and take the Primeval Stones!'

He ignores his Clansmen in the Xiong Clan. Lo Jik has a legitimate reason to escape—Xiong Clan's assassination attempt. He wants to return to the clan, take what he can, and get the fuck out!

Bai Ning Bing's companionship be damned!

If she agrees, they will meet up. If not—whatever. Lo Jik only wants to increase his survival by partnering with someone reasonable. Yes, Bai Ning Bing is more rational compared to Fang Yuan. Others may not leave with him but report him to the Clan Leader.

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Fang Yuan meditates in his room. He opens his eyes.

'Lo Jik returned. Although almost assassinated, it's the face of politics. Like before, the Bai Clan suggested a three-way competition two days later. Tomorrow is the preliminary competition to determine the qualifications. Anyone under the age of 30 years can participate. That's the best time to leave the village!'

He briefly thinks before willing a purple fea Gu in his palm. His gaze turns brilliant.

The Light-Silver Essence in Fang Yuan's aperture drops by 35% as the Purple Gu explodes into a purple fog!

The smoke converges and returns to nothingness.

Fang Yuan narrows his eyes. Realizing something and feeling the Lotus Gu through their connection, he grabs ahead.

The Lotus becomes material and falls in Fang Yuan's hand.

The Rank 3 Heavenly Essence Treasure Gu!

'It's mine!'

Fang Yuan's heart trembles.

"Fang Yuan! Come outside!"

Tie Ruo Nan's loud shout echoes from the outside as Fang Yuan's expression changes.

<<<>>>

*\*Glub\* \*Glub\**

*\*Glub\* \*Glub\**

*\*Glub\* \*Glub\**

*\*Glub\* \*Glub\**

Vortices of pure Primeval Energy stop within the Gu Yue Clan's Natural Spring. The Gu

Yue Clan's foundation is ruined!

*\*Fhsssss\**

A blood-red fog emerges from the waters. It condenses near the vacant spot of the Heavenly Essence Treasure Lotus Gu. Unable to find it, the fog bubbles as blood seeps into the spring before corroding the Moat Gu's light and entering the cavern!

A bloody stench fills the cavern.

*\*Step\**

*\*Step\**

A figure steps from the cave's entrance. The man avoids stepping into the blood water. His sharp, brown eyes observe something moving *INSIDE* the water. His exposed lips purse as one can imagine the grave expression behind his Copper mask.

'This entrance is corrupted by the Blood Frenzy Gu,' he steps away. 'I must find another entrance. But who destroyed Gu Yue's Nature Spring?'

Suspicion emerges in Tie Xue Leng's mind. The two cases related to Qing Mao Mountain are strange.

'All suspicions about Jia Jin Sheng's murder point to Fang Yuan. However, he didn't make any suspicious movements. There is also no evidence. And the other case...'

Tie Xue Leng's back straightens.

'Qing Mao Mountain hides a Blood Calamity! I've sent a request for reinforcement from the Clan. Others should appear in a few days. However, I cannot wait. The Blood Frenzy Gu belongs to someone. But the owner must be unconscious. The Gu is acting instinctively, finding who destroyed the Natural Spring.'

Such cases are ordinary. Many Gu follow a set of commands. After all, a Gu Worm possesses a Gu Master's will. Even if the Gu Master is unconscious, the Will inside the Gu Worm isn't.

Xue Leng grits his teeth.

'I'm injured, but I can't depend on reinforcements. This Blood Tide will hurt thousands of innocents!'

He leaves the inheritance site before finding another way in.

<<<>>

“Records show Elder Fang Yuan opened five gambling rocks on the spot. A Rank 1 Initial Stage Gu Master with 44% Essence can’t achieve that. Elder Fang Yuan also took to wine after the awakening ceremony. I have reasons to believe Elder Fang Yuan possessed the Rank 1 Liquor Worm before the caravan and used the Gambling Rocks as a convenient explanation to reveal it.”

It’s almost midnight, and other Elders frown. They are tired and must prepare for tomorrow’s preliminary competition. So, they can’t give a rat’s ass about Jia Jin Sheng’s murder.

Elder Chi Zong sighs.

“Miss Tie, there is no evidence. You cannot blame Elder Fang Yuan for his alcohol addiction and luck. Everyone knows Elder Fang Yuan was hailed as a genius before his awakening ceremony. Such a fall to an addiction is common.”

Fang Zheng lowers his head again.

Tie Ruo Nan nods.

“Indeed, I have no evidence. But I request the Clan Leader to detain Elder Fang Yuan in the Village premises before the investigation is complete!”

Everyone’s expression changes as one of the Elders snorts.

“This is plain bullying! To think the righteous Tie Clan nurtures such juniors!”

Tie Ruo Nan smiles instead, displaying outstanding confidence.

“Clan Leader, Elders,” she slightly bends her waist. “I’m not here with my Father or the Tie Clan. I’m alone as an investigator hired by Senior Jia Fu. I understand your thoughts. Tomorrow’s competition is crucial for the Gu Yue Clan. I can’t stop you from using Elder Fang Yuan’s strength. However, I will also have to reveal in my report to Senior Jia Fu that you let Fang Yuan enter the competition—should he escape.”

Gu Yue Bo’s expression turns grave.

Their trade with the Jia Caravan is vital.

Tie Ruo Nan is not lowering her Clan's name but using Jia Fu's cooperative relationship! How can other elders not worry?

"What are you going to write?" Qing Shu suddenly smiles. He doesn't know if Fang Yuan is the killer. However, he will protect his comrades until proven guilty! "Will you write how you tried strongarming the Gu Yue Clan based on conjectures? Any Investigator will know not to waste their employer's time. If Elder Fang Yuan disappears tomorrow, it can be for any reason. There is no blame without evidence."

Others nod as Tie Ruo Nan accepts this.

"Indeed. But may I inquire something, Elder Qing Shu?"

"Yes?"

"How long does it take for the Moonshard Crystal to form?"

Qing Shu blinks before answering, "At least 8 years."

Tie Ruo Nan nods. "Where did you learn this?"

"In the academy."

Tie Ruo Nan turns to Fang Zheng.

"How do you harvest the Smelly Green Bamboo Soil, Elder Fang Zheng?"

The youth blinks before answering.

"And did you learn this in the academy?"

"Yes."

Tie Ruo Nan asks similar questions to others. She spent her day learning from Fang Yuan's batchmates. Once she questions every Elder, including the Clan Leader, she turns to Fang Yuan.

Fang Yuan's expression shows nothing as Tie Ruo Nan smiles.

"All these questions are taught in the Academy. Others did not know these answers until

the Academy Elder and other teachers nurtured them. Yet, Elder Fang Yuan, how did you have this knowledge from before?”

Others grow silent as Tie Ruo Nan continues. “You say you were addicted to alcohol and slept during the classes. However, you always answered correctly when the Academy Elder questioned you. Did you not?”

Fang Yuan sighs internally.

‘To think I would leave such an opening.’

Tie Ruo Nan doesn’t wait for his answer.

“So, did you drink all night? Did you cultivate? Did you feed a liquor worm? Did you sleep during the classes or pay attention? Indeed, I have no evidence! I have nothing, Elder Fang Yuan. You should feel relieved.”

Others turn grave once they realize what Ruo Nan is trying to convey.

“Anything can be true or false. The Bamboo Gentleman Gu did not change inside your aperture. Perhaps you had another Gu. Maybe you didn’t.”

She turns to the Clan Leader.

“That’s what I will report. I will write that Elder Fang Yuan was so talented that he knew the answers to things he wasn’t taught or slept when informed. I will convey my admiration for his Cultivation talent that refined a Vital Gu before the A-grade Aptitude of Elder Fang Zheng. Also, I will express my solemn regret for not being able to solve the case since every lead is wiped off! Such cleanliness makes my heart burst with admiration.”

The hall is silent as others slowly look at Fang Yuan. Uncertainty fills their expression. They only saw Fang Yuan’s brilliance. The light hid many suspicious points. Indeed, when did Fang Yuan learn the curriculum? And if he acted about his alcohol addiction, what else did he lie about?

‘Damn, I didn’t think she would use my words like that,’ Lo Jik almost whistled for Ruo Nan. But he didn’t. He is a grieving widower!

Gu Yue Bo breaks the silence with a soft smile that doesn’t quite reach his eyes.

“I understand Young Miss Tie. Although I cannot keep Elder Fang Yuan from



He turns his body to look at Lo Jik. However, he feels the intense wind pressure a moment too late!

*\*Splat\**

Blood and gore explode as Lo Jik's hands smash against Mo Chen's skull. Shards of Mo Chen's skull stick into Lo Jik's skin, unable to break the defenses of his flesh as blood and brain matter splatter over Lo Jik and the surroundings.

The loud voice echoes as Lo Jik quietly activates his Heaven Piercing Eye Gu. He looks around, finding nothing out of the ordinary.

A white light emerges from his Aperture. This light branches and covers every part of Mo Chen, including every drop of his blood. It even covers the bone shards in Lo Jik's calloused palms before collecting over the corpse. This light does not touch Mo Chen's clothes. Lo Jik bends down and tears the corpse's robes away.

In a moment, the light divides the corpse into a pile of clean skin, flesh, bones, and organs. In another pile is Gu Worms.

Rank 2 Dismemberment Gu!

Lo Jik quickly picks the six Gu. Two of them are Rank 3 Gu. One of which is Mo Chen's storage Gu!

He looks at the pile of organs before releasing a red light.

The half-burnt, index-long blood-red incense shoots out and enters the pile of organs. It sucks away all the blood, even *'licking'* the organs until there is nothing left.

Lo Jik carefully carries Mo Chen's remains and enters the secret room. It's an unadorned room with a small futon. Lo Jik closes the door before revealing a pale blue orb of light around his palm.

The Moonglow Gu!

Lo Jik picks up Mo Chen's remains and turns them into dust. Organs are shredded and sliced several times. Lo Jik unzips the futon's cover before stuffing the robes, bone powder, and flesh paste inside the futon.

Exhaling sharply, Lo Jik walks out and closes the door. He doesn't lock the door from the outside.

He walks further inside the hall. The light from the lamps dims as he walks. Soon, he stands across the thick iron door. Lo Jik fishes out a Gu from his pocket. It's a tadpole—Rank 1 Lock-Key Gu.

There is a keyhole in the door. However, this Gu will raise an alarm if any other method is used to open the door.

Lo Jik extends his finger. He places it against the keyhole as blood seeps from his tip. It fills the keyhole before taking the shape of an odd spiral key. Filling molds and shapes like this is effortless for the Rank 3 Blood Jade Change Gu. And it's more efficient than spending time to refine Mo Chen's Gu. Since Lo Jik killed Mo Chen, the remnant Will inside his Gu is uncooperative and hateful against the youth.

Lo Jik twists his finger and—

*\*Kacha\**

The sound of iron giving way echoes in the hall. The tadpole turns bright red. Before it can release a noise, Lo Jik pinches it between his index and thumb.

Mo Chen's temporary '*inheritance*' is down to five Gu.

Lo Jik pushes the iron gate, entering the warehouse. This warehouse is twice the size of the Clan's Secret Gu Room. After all, the Mo Faction stores everything here. Meanwhile, the Clan has different areas to store various items.

Since Lo Jik killed the Rank 1 Gu, the keyhole in the door is now unable to lock. He can freely close the door. If he had killed the Gu before unlocking the door, it would have remained locked and unable to be budged by the Blood Jade Change Gu.

His gaze instantly falls on a '*wall*' of wooden chests. Lo Jik's gaze brightens as he walks and picks one chest from the top. Opening it reveals neatly placed oval Primeval Stones!

'A Chest for 10000 stones. There are 1... 2... 5... 48 chests here!'

Lo Jik retrieves his Primeval Elder Gu and swiftly '*borrows*' the Mo Faction's entire Primeval Essence reserves!

'There must also be more things inside Mo Chen's Storage Gu.'

Lo Jik thinks.



It takes time for Lo Jik to store all of it. Once done, the Primeval Elder's bitter expression changes. It looks slightly indifferent, with hints of joy escaping his gaze.

594210 Stones!

Lo Jik then turns and looks around. There are various Gu and booklets on different shelves. Lo Jik locates six dragonflies. Two have golden bodies, while the other four have silver carapaces.

These six are the Rank 2 Digital Shade Gu. This Gu can record and replay videos. One step further, and it will be Photo-Audio Gu. The Silver Dragonflies possess Rank 3 recipes, and the Golden Dragonflies contain Rank 4 Gu recipes. These Gu are staple products for any Clan. An Elder can enter the Clan's secret chamber and look through these Gu for 15 minutes. However, Lo Jik cannot steal the Digital Shade Gu in the Clan's underground storage.

'The most valuable possession of the Gu Yue Village is the recipe for Rank 1 Moonlight Gu. It's an artificial Gu, and most of the Clan's advancement Recipe is based on this Gu. Only the Clan Leader and the Secret Hall Leader possess this recipe. Aside from that, it should be the Rank 5 fusion recipe.'

However, Lo Jik isn't greedy for them. He likes the Moonglow Gu due to its versatility with his martial arts, but it is challenging to feed once Lo Jik leaves the village. After all, the Moon Orchids are the Gu Yue Clan's specialty. Other Villages might grow the Moon Orchids, but the prices may increase due to regional rarity.

Lo Jik sets his sights on other material after the Digital Shade Gu. He looks at chests of rare materials and the Storage Gu filled with Gu Food. All these Gu are the Rank 2 Hemp Sac Gu. The Gu is an index-long bag of hemp. Beside the Gu are tags with the names of materials stored.

This Gu is easy to use, without unique restrictions like the Earth Hole Gu. However, it cannot keep things fresh.

Lo Jik stuffs them in a money bag around his waist. Most of the materials will be used in feeding Mo Chen's Gu.

That's all there is in the secret room.

'Is it?' Lo Jik narrows his eyes. Mo Chen is an Old Player. Does a cat teach the tiger all its tricks?

No!

The irides of Lo Jik's left eye discreetly sparkle nine colors!

Heaven Piercing Eye Gu!

Lo Jik locates a small, hidden room.

He walks to the left corner of the room before pushing his finger against the slight wooden protrusion that could be chalked to the building getting old.

A wooden lid flips open from the wall, revealing a strange Rank 4 Gu.

'Mo Chen, you sly dog!'

Lo Jik smirks.

This Gu is very special. It looks like a stick insect. Its yellow body's length is equal to an infant's skull. It crouches and keeps its eyes closed. There are four sections on its body.

This is a storage Gu—Rank 4 Kindling Will Gu.

It stores Gu Worms. But it's more specialized than that! This Gu's feeding and use is combined. It can stow wild Gu Worms in its body before consuming a Gu Master's *'Will'* and essence, using it to slowly refine the Gu inside its space! So, its feeding pattern is unusual, and it consumes at the same interval as a Rank 1 Gu is in use.

Rank 1 stores 10, Rank 2 stores 20, Rank 3 stores 30, and Rank 4 stores 40 Gu!  
However, the speed of refining so many Gu simultaneously is painfully slow.

'Mo Yan's Gu must be stored inside the Gu.' Lo Jik narrows his eyes. Even though this method is slow, he has a space to store all the unrefined Gu Worms. 'I can also actively refine other Gu. The priority shifts from Mo Chen's storage Gu to this. Besides, I have food for all the Gu. These Gu will surely go hungry. It will be an opportune time to refine them.'

'Especially the Kindling Will Gu. Its eyes are closed. It's refining the Gu inside its body using Mo Chen's remaining will. I can only see the other Gu inside it after making it mine. However, all the food in the Hemp Sac Gu should be tailored for the Gu in the storage unit.'

Lo Jik gently picks the Kindling Will Gu. He hides it inside his clothes.

He turns around and looks at the remaining scrolls and rare materials not inside any Gu. These materials are not perishable.

Lo Jik crouches on the floor before pressing his hand against the wood.

Blood-Red blade slices out the wooden floor, opening a panel to the ground. Lo Jik stands and collects all the items in one spot before pressing his left hand on the ground. On his palm is a mark of an earthen ring.

The Earth Hole Gu opens its mouth as Lo Jik tosses everything inside the Gu.

He smiles and gives himself a sniff. Noting nothing out of the extraordinary, Lo Jik closes the warehouse's door before informing the security guards outside that Mo Chen's old injuries are acting, and he is meditating inside the secret room. Nobody is authorized to enter until Mo Chen says so.

Then, after a shower, Lo Jik temporarily stores his Gu in his room with the protective and silent Blood Torrent Python before visiting the Clan Leader's Pavilion.

Lo Jik sincerely apologized for his Grandfather's inability to make it to the competition tomorrow. Gu Yue Bo revealed an understanding demeanor before encouraging Lo Jik to do his best in the competition.

<<<>>>

Lo Jik doesn't plan to sleep the night. It's not his first all-nighter, and Gu, like the Battle Instincts and Blood Rousing Incense, assures his peak power during combat.

Instead, he must plan and organize. Anyone who makes a dangerous trip without any plan is a fool. Lo Jik wanted to stay and cultivate longer. But he kept checking the Crane Tide from his house, and it didn't plan to move. Even if it's nothing, Lo Jik must prepare for the worst.

Of course, the trip organization involved the journey, destination, and Gu.

Lo Jik planned to travel to the Shang Clan. It's a Super-sized Clan no worse than the Tie Clan. However, Shang Clan is the only place in the Southern Border where outsiders can improve by leaps and bounds compared to the other Super Clans.

Such a trip could take him months, if not a year. He wanted to travel by the Bai Gu and

Fei Hou Mountains. His desire to entire the Bai Gu Mountain stems from an inheritance's hint. He needs two people for the Inheritance. Lo Jik's first choice was Mo Yan. Should Bai Ning Bing join him, he will have to reconsider. Bai Ning Bing may attack him after discovering the inheritance or not. He must spend some time before judging the book—Bai Ning Bing. And Fei Hou Mountain? The Soul's Blood Gu from the Blood Crazy Monk revealed intriguing knowledge about that mountain.

As for the rest of the journey?

Well, they will have to get by in some manner.

Of course, all this is based on the assumption the Crane Tide is aggressive.

Finally—Gu!

First is the staple Gu of the Clan—Moonlight.

Lo Jik has its Rank 2 and 3 variants, the Moonglow and Golden Moon. The Rank 3 Golden Moon Gu consumes a whopping 370 Moon Orchid Petals a month compared to the 240 Petals a month for the Moonglow Gu. Moon Orchid Petals perish in 4 days. Nobody believed Lo Jik purchased a year's worth of stock of the petals to store it. There are two reasons for that. First, nobody knows about the Earth Hole Gu. Second, Lo Jik continued purchasing Moon Petals for his Gu, not touching his reserves.

'Golden Moon will survive for a little over 7.5 months. I can extend it to 9 months if I skimp on some of its meals. The disadvantage of choosing the Gu is that it lasts 3 months less than the Rank 2 Gu. However, Moonglow's and Golden Moon's range of 10 meters does not change. The increased attack power may also be necessary to survive. The two Gu aren't destined to last long in my hands. I might as well pick the superior option.'

Lo Jik doesn't kill the Moonglow Gu. It's useable for now. However, he won't feed the Gu.

He always wanted to refine a Bow Gu for his long-ranged methods. However, he never got the time.

He shakes his head and thinks of the defensive means. Lo Jik possesses the Blood Jade Change and Bamboo Armor Gu. The latter does not compare in versatility. However, the Rank 3 Blood Jade was injured during his battle with Bai Ning Bing.

'Blood Jade Change offers offense and defense in one Gu. It's precious and cannot be

given up. Although I have a year's supply for the Gu, it's injured and will feed more during its healing. But the Jade supply in the Hemp Sac Gu will last me another year! It should be for this Gu.'

Lo Jik takes out a familiar Gu. It was on Mo Chen. It's like a rock, stable and quiet—the White Jade Gu. This must be Mo Chen's emergency defensive measures.

'It's useless.'

Again, Lo Jik won't feed it. But he won't kill it. What if he needs it?

'Actually, I don't have any food for Bamboo Armor Gu. It's also not fed by Mo Chen for a while. This Gu consumes bamboo. Other mountains may not have such a wealthy supply of Bamboo. I can only hope the Crane Tide passes.'

Its defenses are weaker than the Blood Jade Change Gu. But he can always use them together!

The third gift from Mo Chen is an Undying Grass Gu. Lo Jik got its food from the storage.

He shifts his attention to the other Gu he picked from Mo Chen's corpse aside from White Jade Gu.

There are two Rank 3 Gu, one Rank 2 Gu, and one Rank 1 Gu.

Rank 3 Phoenix Butterfly Wings Gu.

Rank 3 Eight-Sectioned Gourd Gu.

Rank 2 Red Steel Relic Gu.

And Rank 1 Liquor Worm.

Rank 3 Phoenix Butterfly Wings Gu sprouts beautiful, feathered butterfly wings, allowing a Gu Masters to fly. However, a Gu Master must learn how to fly. Fortunately, Lo Jik's Feathered Boots Gu pairs nicely with this Gu.

Rank 3 Eight-Sectioned Gourd Gu is an eight-colored gourd that sucks and spits the items. It's Mo Chen's storage Gu.

As for the Red Steel Relic Gu...

'Gu Yue Mo Chen had two. One was given to Mo Bei. The useless lad died after advancing to Rank 2 Peak Stage. It should be my 5th Relic Gu. Just... sigh.'

He shakes his head.

Lo Jik's gaze falls on the Liquor Worm.

It's the Gu Fang Yuan used to rise the ranks. But why does Mo Chen have it?

Yao Ji's image flash in his mind.

'No eternal enemies; Only eternal benefits. He must have purchased this from Yao Ji after her granddaughter's death.'

Lo Jik can't be sure what the plan was. But he had no liquor to feed the Gu.

Then comes the six Rank 2 Digital Shade Gu and 18 Rank 2 Hemp Sac Gu!

'There must also be Gu inside the Kindling Will Gu.'

Lo Jik exhales sharply.

He earned a lot!

However, it will take some to digest and organize the gains. The useless and expensive-to-feed Gu will die. Freeing Lo Jik's thoughts.

There is already an invisible pressure on him. Even if the Crane Tide doesn't attack, he cannot stay!

He's beyond the point of return!

After organizing everything, Lo Jik thinks of something. He quietly summons a light.

He might as well summon his bronze reward.

Shadows dance, and a Gu Worm descends on his lap. There is a strange look in Lo Jik's eye as he picks the Rank 1 Heart Engraved Gu.

'Could this be...'

He calms himself before using the Gu.

It turns into a red light before engraving knowledge in his heart.

'It's not the Heavenly Essence Treasure Lotus Recipe. Sigh. It's the same as the Polished Series Gu recipe. I can't even be mad.'

Rank 1-4 Liquor Worm series.

Lo Jik knows about the Rank 1 Liquor Worm and Rank 3 Seven Fragrances Liquor Worm. However, it's the first time he's read about the Rank 2 Four Flavors Liquor Worm and the Rank 4 Nine Eyes Liquor Worm.

Seeing the Kindling Will Gu open its eyes and reveal a weak expression, Lo Jik sighs.

'Back to work. I can use the combined pressure of all my Gu and one use of Heavenly Essence Treasure Gu to work on the Kindling Gu. It's weak and hungry. Mo Chen must have entered the Warehouse after escorting me to the Secret Room. Only by giving my all to refine this Gu can I begin digesting Mo Chen's wealth.'

Lo Jik had the confidence to do that.

Why?

Unlike cultivation, where the Aperture Walls accept slight essence with every interaction, he can bulldoze his way into refining a Gu! He has hundreds and thousands of Primeval Stones! The Lotus Gu can refine them all and unleash an unending stream of essence!

This Kindling Will Gu can be considered the core of the Mo Family's wealth!

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"Here," Tie Xue Leng's gaze brightens. He cannot help but feel slightly shocked as he enters the cave.

'This Qing Mao Mountain is a massive underground arena, heavily modified. However, Gu Worms that inspect Earth Qi are rare. There are only a few in the Clan who can do that.'

He explores the cave. Unsurprisingly, remnants of Lightning Wolf occupy the cave. Xue Leng does not kill the small wolf pack but drives them away. Defending against a wolf tide and massacring a wolf pack are different concepts. Since there is no need for it, Xue

Leng avoids shedding blood.

The cave ends eventually.

Momentarily stopping, Xue Leng uses a few one-time Gu before picking a direction and creating a new path.

*\*Crumble\**

He opens a path until the rock crumbles, allowing him to step on soft red soil. Xue Leng crouches to touch the soil. A fistful of it swiftly crumbles away. Briefly contemplating, Xue Leng returns to the exit. He takes his copper mask off. The face revealed is that of a middle-aged man with greying sideburns. Tie Xue Leng is tanned and straight-jawed, a picture of grit, experience, and determination. He carefully embeds the copper mask into a rock wall.

Purplish smoky essence flows from Xue Leng's hand into the copper mask. This mask is unexpectedly a Gu! The Divine Investigator feeds the Gu for a few minutes before entering the cave again. Even he is unwilling to enter without proper preparations.

He steps on the glowing red soil.

Xue Leng's tall figure enters the gloomy, dark cavern surrounded by an eerie blood glow.

<<<>>>

*Dawn.*

Gu Masters collect in the mountain forest. On the Cliff stands the three Clan Leaders and their aids. There is also Tie Ruo Nan.

Gu Yue Bo smiles at the girl, questioning, "Will Lord Divine Investigator join us?"

Tie Ruo Nan shakes her head. She doesn't know where her father is. However, Ruo Nan didn't make the same vows as her father. So, she lies, "Father's injuries are acting again."

Gu Yue Bo nods in understanding. It was merely a political move. Tie Xue Leng's name slightly suppressed the Bai and Xiong Clan Leader as the latter steps forward.

"Everyone, today is the preliminary contest to determine who enters tomorrow's tournament! Everyone has a token. Those who collect 30 tokens qualify! Although there



are no rules against life and death, I hope you can be lenient to your comrades.”

One can see how the Xiong Clansmen outnumber Bai and Gu Yue Clansmen. However, Gu Yue Clan has the most Rank 3 Gu Masters under 30 years. Meanwhile, the Bai Clan has Bai Ning Bing. Also, the survivors of the two clans are elites and veterans. But the Xiong Clan still possesses weak Gu Masters.

Despite possessing heavy eyebags, Lo Jik’s gaze is sharp. He gave his all to refine the Kindling Will Gu. There were 7 Gu inside it. Four belonged to Mo Yan, and the Mo Faction must have collected the other three for Mo Chen to refine. Lo Jik stowed the remaining 28 Gu inside the Rank 4 Kindling Will Gu. It can be said that the initial period of digesting Mo Chen’s wealth has passed.

However, he feels tense.

Lo Jik doesn’t dare glance at the sky. All the clouds above the Qing Mao Mountain hide Cranes.

Fang Yuan narrows his eyes. He stands beside Fang Zheng and Qing Shu. Tie Ruo Nan’s act last night planted doubt in everyone’s mind. However, Fang Zheng wishes to pay him back. He can use Fang Zheng as a cover before escaping.

‘I have the Thunder Wings Gu. Other Gu Masters also have flying-type Gu. However, they cannot match my experience. But I should be sufficiently away from the Clan Leader before escaping.’

The truth is, Fang Yuan should have died yesterday at Fang Zheng’s hands. However, Fang Zheng is his ally in this life.

‘Fate works in mysterious ways.’

Fang Yuan sighs.

Bai Ning Bing wishes she could focus on Fang Yuan. He was intriguing to her like Lo Jik. She no longer feared the inevitability of her death, and Lo Jik’s words cleared her confusion, too. She is a young talent. Why would Bai Ning Bing waste her life?

She already used the Stone Aperture Gu. The cost of the Gu is her Aperture wall’s petrification and inability to regenerate essence naturally.

‘Hehe, so I must be careful in using my essence. Extreme Aperture had a heaven-defying 60% recovery rate per hour. However, I lost one of my best advantages.

Let's see how I fare now. Only...'

She discreetly glances at the sky.

'Was Lo Jik lying or telling the truth? Regardless, I already brought that Gu. This preliminary is my last act of repayment to the clan and the Clan Leader. I won't stay here any longer.'

Tie Ruo Nan keeps a close look at Fang Yuan.

'I must not let him escape my sights.'

Fang Yuan is her first case. The lack of evidence does not mean she cannot use mystical Gu to locate different things. Tie Ruo Nan already made a firm step forward last night. She will soon crack this case!

"The Competition begins!"

<<<>>>

Tie Xue Leng uses the Rank 5 Righteous Gu to float. It's a mind-type Gu that creates formless waves. It can only be used by Gu Masters possessing a just, righteous heart!

He looks around as several streams fall into a large pond in the massive cavern with an open height of 15 meters, excluding the deep blood pond. These streams are made from beast blood, absorbed by Qing Mao Mountain, and let inside this spacious arena. The blood's heavy stench assaults Xue Leng's senses. He gazes in the center of the pool.

Xue Leng's presence elicits a reaction.

A humongous shadow swims underneath the Blood Pond. Small shadows darken before flying out of the water. These figures are not fish. They are bats! They are blood-red and possess two pairs of wings.

Rank 3 Bladewing Blood Bat Gu!

"Won't you come out and greet me, Gu Yue First Gen Patriarch?"

Xue Leng's voice seems to carry a formless weight that suddenly paralyzes the thousands of chittering bats flying his way.

This is the effect of Rank 5 Heaven Earth Magnificent Sound Gu! This Gu attacks using

sound waves. However, Tie Xue Leng controlled the Gu's effects.

The sound of water bursting apart echoes as a terrifying 40-meter-long blood-red python with golden bones sticking on its head like a crown hisses at Tie Xue Leng.

Rank 5 Blood River Python Gu!

Lo Jik's Blood Torrent Gu is childish compared to this Gu!

The records of the Gu Yue Clan state that a Rank 5 Blood River Python attacked the mountain once. Gu Yue First Gen fought it off and secured peace for everyone!

Tie Xue Leng snorts as massive pressure explodes from his body. It causes the bats to fall down while the Blood River Python feels momentarily suppressed.

It lets out a hateful screech before pouncing at Tie Xue Leng. However, he uses a Rank 4 Oil Dragon Gu.

A pitch-black dragon made from natural oil shoots out, entangling with the Blood River Python. The Oil Dragon does not have a solid body and cannot hold the python. It splashes oil all over the python's skin.

As the python destroys and weakens the Rank 4 Oil Dragon Gu, Xue Leng uses the Rank 4 Fire Dragon Gu!

The Blood River Python hisses in pain as the Fire Dragon expands after combusting the oil around the python's body!

The situation continues for a while. The terrifying flame spills and burns the surrounding Bladewing Blood Bats as the River Python's body chars.

The python suddenly hisses and enters the blood pond, instantly losing its aggression.

The Bats also uniformly line themselves.

'Finally here.' Tie Xue Leng narrows his eyes after noticing the change.

A jet of blood rises from the pond's center. It alleviates a coffin to Tie Xue Leng's altitude as the lid shoots open. Within the coffin is a terrifying corpse. There is no skin on its body. Sharp fangs protrude as its blood-red flesh twitches. Its thin eyelids open, revealing a bloodshot gaze.

The First Gen Gu Yue Leader!

Unexpectedly, he survived for 1000 years by transforming into a Blood Wight using the rank 5 Blood Wight Zombie Gu!

The First Gen Gu Yue leader opens its mouth.

“Thou art poisoned, Junior. Yet thou dare—”

*\*Drrrrrrr\**

The zombie stops speaking as a giant hand made of rocks tears into the cavern, instantly smashing its mountainous fist into the coffin and cratering the Zombie a few meters into the red wall!

Surprisingly, this mountain creature has an unadorned metal face—Tie Xue Leng’s Mask!

The Rank 5 Giant Mountain Puppet Gu.

A Gu Master can cover oneself in the puppet or use it as a puppet. Fortunately, Xue Leng left the mask outside, converging hard rocks to form the puppets instead of the soft ones made from the red soil.

Xue Leng floats near the puppet as rocks part for him to enter.

‘It’s good that you came,’ Xue Leng snorts. ‘Swiftly ending it is the way to go.’

As righteous as he is, Xue Leng isn’t the kind to show respect and courtesy to someone brewing a Blood Calamity!

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**Alternate Title:** Sherlock Holmes: I Said Discombobulate! Not Kill!; Splat; Another Tribute to Mo Yan; Skillful Cleaning; Blood and Gore; Dark Night and Dark Hearts; Accepting Mo Chen’s Legacy; The Warehouse; The Versatile Blood Jade Change; Hitting Rich!; Half a Millionaire!; The Collection; Old Cat Never Reveals the Complete Truth; Mo Family’s Treasure; Rank 4; Amazing Gu; Planning; Preparing for the Worst; Path and Destination; Darting in the Night; Preparations; Dawn; Digesting Gains; Shen Cui’s Final Gift; A New Recipe; Plans; The Dangerous Sky; Competition Begins!; Gu Yue First Gen: I am— \*Tie Xue Leng: Don’t Care. Proceeds to Sucker Punch\*



“Hah!”

Lo Jik already steps sideways with a fistful of sand flying at Bai Ning Bing.

“Hmph!”

Both use cheap tactics. No.

They came prepared WITH such tactics.

“Did you bring the Gu?” Lo Jik questions, weaving the fatal Ice blade in the nick of time.

“Defeat me and find out,” she snorts.

“Is there ever a simple answer with you?” He rolls his eyes.

“Defeat me and find out,” she smirks.

<<<>>>

Oil and Fire Dragon coil around the rock arms like celestial armors. Xue Leng’s meticulous control of his Gu cannot keep the Gu Yue First Gen’s might at bay. The Blood Guillotine, the Bladewing Blood Bat Gu, and the Blood River Python chip at him.

Suddenly, the Puppet lets out an earth-shaking howl!

The sound crashes into the Guillotine and the Bats, reducing them by half. The Snake trembles as the blood pond spreads apart from the puppet, leaving an opening in the shape of a bowl.

“Naive!”

Gu Yue First Gen snorts. Blood Wight Zombies possess leathery wings. He unfurls his wings when the space ripples. A titanic iron hand flies out from the empty space before smacking the First Gen Gu Yue again!

His annoyed snarl echoes in the Blood Arena!

Their battle continues for hours! The two Gu Masters try to get an upper hand. The First Gen Gu Yue has the terrain advantage where the Blood River Python can heal extremely fast in the Blood Pond. Meanwhile, Tie Xue Leng has a Super Clan’s backing and different Gu to form an impeccable set!

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Gu Masters pant raggedly. While many killed each other, some allowed others to submit and accept defeat. Tie Ruo Nan and others soon saw how the Xiong and Gu Yue Clansmen banded together to eliminate most of the Bai Clan's Gu Masters. The situation shocked and angered the Bai Clan Leader. He instantly understood the next target would be Bai Ning Bing!

However, Bai Ning Bing has been tackling Lo Jik since early afternoon!

It's already evening!

The duo would fight each other, destroying a section of forest, before retreating to recover their essence.

They followed the cycle eight times now!

'Such amazing battle talent,' Tie Ruo Nan admits she hasn't seen such intense combat potential from the young masters of her Clan. However, her gaze quickly returns to Fang Yuan.

"Surrender, Bai Ning Bing!"

Several Gu Master corner Bai Ning Bing on a cliff.

Qing Shu stands brilliant among the assaulters. He singlehandedly took care of 43 Gu Masters from the Bai Clan! However, everyone feared Bai Ning Bing more.

"Hehehe," Bai Ning Bing snickers. The evening sun taints everyone blood-red.

"Surrender?" her gaze falls on Fang Yuan before returning to Lo Jik.

"What do you think?" She questions Lo Jik while briefly glancing at the sky.

"You know what I believe," Lo Jik snorts.

Bai Ning Bing is all in to leave the Mountain. However, she does not believe Lo Jik's claim of a Myriad Crane Calamity in the clouds.

"Wait!" Tie Ruo Nan shouts. Her body jolts.

“Where did Fang Yuan disappear to?” Her shout alerts Gu Yue Bo. Indeed, Fang Yuan is nowhere to be found.

Before Tie Ruo Nan can do anything, a green light shoots at her with the massive pressure of a Rank 5 Gu Worm!

Tie Ruo Nan’s eyelids jump when she sees her father’s mask drenched in blood. Before she can say anything. A mountainous metal hand ripples from the space before grabbing Ruo Nan and flying away.

The perfect distraction!

Thunder Wings sprout behind Fang Yuan as he takes to the sky!

“No! Don’t!”

Fang Yuan hears Lo Jik’s hurried shout. As if he can stop!

How can Fang Yuan let go of such an—

His pupils shrink.

Not only Fang Yuan.

Everyone hears a ghastly buzzing noise!

It’s not the cranes Lo Jik expected.

The Rank 5 Blood Guillotine!

<<<>>>

*20 Minutes Ago.*

“Die!”

Tie Xue Leng roars as the voice disarrays the remaining Bladewing Bats. However, his throat is strained, too. His rock puppet is broken from various spots. Xue Leng reforged the puppet using the surrounding blood soil. However, it is soft and breaks effortlessly. The terrain’s advantage began to accumulate. Even the Gu Yue First Gen was hard to deal with since a Blood Wight’s body is more durable than metal. However, it cannot recover essence naturally. Xue Leng’s enemy’s body is dead. His aperture is the same!



Tie Xue Leng manages to find an opening—

*\*Shiing\**

Gu Yue First Gen straightens his wings and flies around the arm, slicing it open! His bloody visage stabs into the puppet through that weakness before tearing out from the other side with a sturdy man in his arm.

The Blood Wight grips Xue Leng's throat, commenting, "Thou art admirable, Junior."

He lost. Xue Leng's old injuries acted at the last moment.

As his last breath leaves his body, Xue Leng recalls his memories.

He roamed the Southern Border and imprisoned every Demoning Gu Master with extreme prejudice until that fateful day!

"What are you doing?!" The mortal woman sternly shouted at him, a Rank 4 Gu Master, as he captured a thieving Gu Master.

"Imposing justice," Xue Leng replied then.

"You fool! Open your eyes! He stole from me because he wanted to feed his sick mother. He is a Gu Master, but his life has been more pathetic than us villagers. If anything, he deserves his mother's slaps and berates than your useless justice!"

The first grey of Xue Leng's life was when he not only let go of a thief but also helped and guided him. She opened his eyes to many new things.

She gave him a daughter.

'Ruo Nan... sorry. Father is going ahead.'

Xue Leng's gaze dims as he slowly reaches for the Gu Yue First Gen. He gently taps the Blood Wight before his body turns cold.

Gu Yue First Gen watches as the mask breaks down and flies away. He doesn't stop the Gu. Even Gu Yue First Gen knows the Tie Clan and must leave the mountain. But he is unwilling to let his schemes go to waste!

First, the Zombie must put great effort into containing the Rank 5 Gu. Secondly, the Tie

Clan might track the Gu. Third, he smells of conspiracy.

Briefly thinking, the Gu Yue First Gen takes out a Gu. It's incredibly mysterious. This Gu is like the taijin light sphere with a white and black *'light'* chasing each other in a circle.

Rank 4 Yin Yang Rotation Gu!

This Gu is a set. It can completely heal a target. This Gu can also revert a permanent Zombie into a human. The First Gen Gu Yue sighs.

He rouses the white Yang Gu. A blinding glare fills the arena!

Sometime later, blood water erupts from the Clan's square! The Gu Yue Village is in poor shape due to the vibrations and tremors from the earlier conflict. The sudden eruption of blood water shocks the Gu Yue villagers!

"Y-You! Who are you?!"

A Gu Master shouts at an Old Man. His white hair and mustache flow like an immortal deity as he laughs.

"Fret not, Junior. Thou art my blood. I'm the First Leader. Hurry. Gather around. A great calamity seeks to destroy the Gu Yue's Foundation."

Others could not refute his claim as the First Gen Leader since Yao Ji saw the man's portrait. Everyone hurriedly gathered around him. Several Gu Masters have questions. However, they don't fear standing in the Blood Water since their Clan Ancestor did. Gu Yue Ancestor's disposition gave the Gu Masters the fantasies of mythical Immortals.

"Is that all?" Gu Yue First Gen frowns.

"Reporting to Ancestor," Yao Ji steps forward. "Other Gu Masters are in the nearby competition against the other two clans. Both these Clans are vile and aim to usurp the Gu Yue's foundations!"

Shen Cui watches everything with a shocked expression.

Suddenly, she feels something pinch her.

"Good!" The Gu Yue First Gen smiles.

"Ow!"

“What was that?”

“A fish?”

“Wait? A bat—”

Shen Cui is already pale as she notices hundreds of bats almost perfectly hidden in the Blood Water, staring at her as a delicacy.

Shouts echo as these bats pounce and attack everyone.

Shen Cui doesn't survive for moments when hundreds of bats feast on her flesh!

“Hmph!”

Gu Yue First Gen takes out a Crystal Skull from his aperture. It flies around and collects Gu from all the Gu Yue Clansmen, extracting it from the Blood Water. The Skull turns blood-red and flies atop the Gu Yue First Gen before opening its mouth and spouting a shower of blood.

Surprisingly, this blood is fragrant!

Such a strange sight.

\*Fssshhhh\*

The blood water rises as the Rank 5 Blood River Python reveals itself.

Gu Yue First Gen jumps atop the Python as Rank 5 Blood Guillotine flies out.

‘Competition? So, there must be more Gu Masters!’

Thousands of bats and locusts create the first wave of Blood Calamity!

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Fang Yuan drops to the ground. His body breaks into cold sweat as he rushes down the slope. Two other individuals are the same—Lo Jik and Bai Ning Bing!

‘What is going on?’ Gu Yue Bo is flabbergasted. However, the expression of the Clan

Leaders changes when they hear a majestic Crane's cry! As if a domino effect, thousands of cranes cry at once!

A group of migrating birds?

They look at the sky, turning pale!

One... two...

Ten Thousand cranes fly past the clouds like a descend of immortal creatures. However, nobody has the heart to enjoy the sight as two loud voices boom.

"Greetings, Senior Brother."

"It was indeed thou, Junior Brother."

<<<>>>

"You were right," Bai Ning Bing hisses as she dodges one crane before meeting her blade against the beak of another crane! These cranes dive to attack the Gu Masters with their sharp beaks. Dozens of Gu Masters are already dead!

"You think?!" Lo Jik sighs as he is on the defensive. It's not just the crane they need to worry about. A green bamboo armor covers his body as he keeps a lookout for the Blood Guillotine Gu.

They cannot move!

The pressure of the attacks is too much!

"Gu Yue juniors, collect near me!" One of the men on a grand Blood River Python laughs.

"No!" The other Elder on the Myriad Crane, the cause of so many deaths, has the cheek to blame—"Your ancestor is the wanted criminal of the Immortal Crane Sect from the Central Continent! He stole a Blood Sea Ancestor's Inheritance from me and intends to kill you all!"

Such knowledge shocks everyone.

"Let's stay and watch Rank 5 Leaders duke it out!" Bai Ning Bing grins as Lo Jik runs down the second he watches the Blood Water spread down.

Thousands of Blood Guillotines consume other Gu Masters and multiply in number, making others fearful and furious! Before the Gu Yue Members could gloat at their enemy's weakness, the Blood River Python suddenly lunges down at them!

It opens its mouth and crushes a dozen men. From its mouth flies a Crystal Skull.

"My Blood Skull!" The Elder on the crane cries aloud!

Everyone's hope dashes seeing the Gu Yue First Gen attacking his own blood before showering in their blood!

When others despaired, long shadows erupted from Gu Yue's body before tightly binding him!

The what, why, how, who—all of it is ignored!

A chance!

That's what Gu Masters like Lo Jik, Fang Yuan, Qing Shu, and others think. Not a chance to attack—but escape!

One must be sufficiently strong to find gains in another's conflict.

Qing Shu grabs the dazed Fang Zheng and escapes in one direction. Fang Yuan flies at a low altitude, leaving Qing Mao Mountain!

Bai Clan Leader turns to look for Bai Ning Bing before realizing she is already gone!

"Hahaha! Where art thou running? The Qing Mao Mountain is done for!"

The tied Gu Yue First Gen laughs crazily. He can still control his forces as the dangerous Blood Guillotine, bats, and the Blood River Python attack the Elder on the crane.

Gu Yue Bo and the Bai Clan Leader glance at each other. They nod before trying to carve a path, only to die trying. After all, the duo missed the golden chance to escape!

Blood floods the Qing Mao Mountain as corpses of birds, animals, and men litter the ground.

A humongous python and a hill-sized crane battle.

The clash of two disciples from a distant land ravages three Clans.

They destroy everyone and everything—except a few.

<<<>>>

“It’s fucking tight and smells! I should kill you, asshole!”

“Sorry for having a fucking biological function! It’s just a fart. Everyone has it.”

“I don’t!”

\*Prt\*

“You were saying?”

“Shut up! I have a body and biological function, too!”

“Wait! What the fuck? Do you eat flowers?”

“No?”

“Then why does it smell like it?”

“Stop sniffing it!”

“I’m not intentionally doing that! Your ass is near my face!”

“As if yours isn’t? I’m gagging! I should have left you out there to die!”

“You would be the one dead without me realizing the truth!”

“Hmph!”

“Oh? Wait! Hurry! Lend me the Plunder Gu!”

“Why?”

“Just do it!”

“Only if I get half of the share!”

“Naturally! You get half! Now fucking hurry!”

“Here! Do you have a see-through vision?”

“Nope. It’s a Shadow Gu. Now let me focus.”

“Is it that Gu Worm?”

“I’m trying to take both!”

“Fucking amazing! Hehehehe! I didn’t make a loss saving you!”

<<<>>>

Blood drenches Qing Mao’s soil, and corpses litter the ground. Wild beasts and humans fall to the Blood Calamity. The Blood Guillotine consumed thousands of Gu Masters in the three Villages before multiplying beyond belief, ravaging the Crane Tide. An entire section of Qing Mao forest is carpeted with dried husks of once beautiful and elegant cranes. The state of the mountain changed in two days!

Its beautiful forest is broken. The three settlements are deserted as the corpses of Gu Masters trying to escape the mountain lie not far from their homes. Children and livestock—the Blood Calamity sees no difference.

Even Heaven weeps as autumn rain descends on Qing Mao Mountain.

The sound of rain dropping on the feathered cranes fills an entire section of the forest with muffled noise.

If one looks closely, the body of one hundred-crane King twitches. This crane has multiple holes through his defensive feathers. Its wolf-sized body tries shifting before its weight presses the soil inside. Suddenly, two creatures emerge from the shadows of the corpses.

These creatures look canine enough. However, they have no fur. Instead, they look like projected silhouettes of lightning wolves. The two ‘beasts’ trot soundlessly, biting into the crane’s body and moving it away. However, this crane is merely a ‘layer’ on a pile of corpses! The two shadowy wolves meticulously remove the crane corpses from the pile. This continues till they reach the expansive base of a giant thousand-crane king. The two wolves struggle to move it. However, the weight of the crane is too massive. Even if

the Blood Guillotine drank its blood, its flesh and bones are relatively heavier!

A light-silver mist flashes around the beasts as another shadowy wolf splits out from them.

The three wolves then merge.

Three streams of shadow swirl until forming an elephant-sized Lightning Frenzy Wolf's silhouette!

This is how amazing Multi-Shadow Gu is! The shadows can continue multiplying and fusing as long as the Gu Master has primeval essence! Its speed of creating shadow creatures is also a notch above the Gu, like the Grass Puppet Gu that forms Grass Puppets for the Gu Master to control.

However, the disadvantage of the Gu is that the shadow sentries cannot move farther than 100 meters from the user and don't have outstanding attack power. Also, a Gu Master must be able to divide their consciousness into different perspectives since all the Shadow Creatures' senses are connected with the user.

The Elephant-sized Wolf moves the crane's body before imploding into an inky splash and disappearing from the material plane.

Under the crane corpse is a weak shoot of a plant. This tendril is brown and crystal-like. Feeling the weight disappear, it tries surging again.

Blood-drenched soil breaks around it again as a plant spouts. The tender shoot grows at a pace visible to the naked eye. 1... 3... 5... 20 meters high!

For a moment, the plant's height surpasses the forest. It stands alone like a grim tower surrounded by corpses! The surface of the plant is brown and uneven. It looks like rock, but touching it will reveal the texture of a tree's bark.

*\*Pop\**

The one-meter-wide '*pencil*' tower struggles to rise as if stuck. More soil breaks loose, and a bulbous shape '*fruit*' emerges, connected to the towering shoot! This bulbous fruit is brown and smooth.

*\*Pucch\**

A pale hand stabs out of the fruit's skin from inside, frantically tearing open a space.



*\*Puaahhh\**

A beautiful figure suddenly pushes herself out of the fruit, gasping for fresh air. Rain falls on her head as she takes another deep breath. Her looks can mesmerize any man at a glance. A heavenly beauty with a knack of excitement. She looks at the dark clouds, sighing with a smile. She rises like an immortal fairy born by Heaven and Earth—

*\*Bam\**

A rough foot plants into her ass, sending her flying into the corpses as Lo Jik shouts, “Move your fruity ass! Damn!”

He gasps for fresh air, hurriedly climbing down the plant.

These two are Bai Ning Bing and Gu Yue Lo Jik.

Bai Ning Bing doesn't care. Instead, she spreads her arms on the carpet of the snowy white corpses as rain cleans everything. The woman enjoys the rain on her skin. She inhales deeply before laughing loudly!

“We actually survived!”

Her melodic voice echoes in the lonely mountain alongside the rainfall.

Lo Jik shares her smirk.

“Barely,” he shakes his head before looking around. His body moves swiftly. Bai Ning Bing's gaze brightens as she notices this. She gets up and follows Lo Jik before inspecting a hill-sized crane corpse in the distance.

“A myriad king beast corpse!” The duo's gaze reveals a greedy light. They start inspecting the crane. However, Despite using the Heaven Piercing Eye Gu, Lo Jik doesn't find any Gu Worm on the Crane. So, it's either inside the crane's body or the Gu Worms flew away.

“Step back,” Lo Jik comments as a white light emerges from his aperture. The white light covers the Crane King's corpse. The Dismemberment Gu is only a Rank 2 Gu. It can readily deal with ordinary creatures or hundred-and-thousand-beast kings. But it takes several minutes to dissect the Crane King's corpse.

The hill-sized corpse turns neat pills of organs, bones, flesh, and feathers!

Lo Jik uses his Eye Gu while Bai Ning Bing searches, too. Both of them soon reveal a disappointed look.

“There’s no Gu,” Bai Ning Bing sighs.

“Yeah,” Lo Jik mutters. “I want the Eyes of Crane King. How do you want to divide the rest of the share?”

Such a candid display makes Bai Ning Bing grin. She is the most-talented Gu Master in the Bai Clan’s history. She likes such conversation more than haggling over small gains.

“I don’t have a storage Gu,” she admits. “Although not usable to me now, I want the feathers. Next.”

“Flesh,” Lo Jik smiles.

“Bones for me,” she snickers.

Lo Jik takes out an eight-sectioned Gourd from his aperture before sucking in the divided corpse. The quality of myriad-beast king allows its remains to retain their quality for years. This Rank 3 Gu belonged to Mo Chen. It belongs to Lo Jik now after two days.

The two look at each other before Bai Ning Bing states, “I want the Yin Gu. You can keep the Blood Skull Gu.”

Lo Jik snorts. “Blood Skull Gu is a true inheritance. Why don’t you keep it? I’m happy with the Yin Gu.”

They both narrow their eyes.

“I’m all up for fighting for it,” Bai Ning Bing smirks. “But we are against time.”

“It was my idea. That’s why we survived. I get the priority,” Lo Jik shrugs.

“I brought the Turnip Womb House Gu!” she points at the tall tower. “That Gu allowed us to breathe and survive underground for two days! I pick first!”

“I had the Multi-Shadow Beast Gu. We won’t have the Blood Skull Gu or the Yin Gu.”

“Because of my Plunder Gu. And don’t forget! I’m the one with infinite foresight to bring some Clean Colon Gu! Do you know the horror we would have had to live through?”

Lo Jik sneers.

“Everyone shits their pants. Were you born a woman grown?”

Bai Ning Bing grows furious.

“We were squeezed together! We would have had each other’s shit on our faces!”

Lo Jik cringes internally but doesn’t reveal anything in his expression. He looks at Bai Ning Bing, questioning, “So?”

“You degenerate!” Bai Ning Bing pales. So?

Did he have the nerve to say that?

SO?!

She grits her teeth as Lo Jik suddenly mutters. “I have a refinement recipe for this Gu. We have one Yin Gu. I can create another Yang Gu.”

Bai Ning Bing’s gaze glitters before she grins, “Why didn’t you start with that? You keep one Blood Skull and One Yin Gu. In return, you refine two Yang Gu for me.”

Lo Jik contemplates before nodding.

“Let’s search for their corpses,” he suggests, already knowing where they are.

The woman rolls her eyes.

“Let’s be quick. We also have our Clan Storage to sweep. Hehehehe!”

Three Clans.

All dead.

Only two thieves survived.

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**Alternate Title:** The Competition; Enacting a Play; Cultured Conversation; The Battle

Underneath; The Tremendous Battle of Rank 5 Gu Masters; Not Crane But Blood, Too; A Conspiracy; The Blood Inheritance?; The Man's First Gray; Fierce Mortal; Justice is Blind, Not Heartless; Tie Xue Leng's Disciplined Justice; A Father's Demise; The Devil Emerges; Culling Ancestor; The Crane Tide; Junior and Elder Brother; The Blood Calamity Devours Qing Mao; Running Away; The Survivors; Unwilling to Seek Benefits; The Bold and the Bold; Biological Reactions; Fruity Ass Indeed; Weeping; The Beautiful Rain; Mountain of Corpses; Changed Qing Mao; Digesting Gains