

Old Gods 151

Chapter 151: old acquaintances only

"Where am I going?" Lu Ran stuffed the bamboo basket into Hao Tian's arms. "I'm going to live well!"

"What's going on?" Hao Tian hurriedly stopped Lu Ran.

"Your sister has such a fiery temper. Who digs out someone's eyes the moment they meet!" Lu Ran said irritably.

"What?" Not just Hao Tian, everyone in the room was taken aback.

Lu Ran immediately repeated the two sentences that Li Rouyin had said.

"Brother Lu, you're confused!" Hao Tian said helplessly. "Rouyin is blind. How could she know whether your eyes are beautiful or not?"

"Huh?" Lu Ran was suddenly taken aback.

She's blind?

Lu Ran was highly suspicious!

Just now, when the girl stood in front of the window, those empty eyes had filled Lu Ran's heart with unease.

Hao Tian apologized, "Rouyin has been alone for a long time, and indeed she has a peculiar temperament.

She was playing a prank, having some fun now that someone showed up."

Everyone: "..."

Lu Ran was even more suspicious!

Just based on the temperament that Li Rouyin had shown, she seemed colder than the disciples of Sword One!

Does she seem like someone who enjoys joking?

"She's just teasing you," Hao Tian stuffed the bamboo basket back into Lu Ran's arms. "She drinks bamboo leaf tea every day and occasionally nibbles some pastries.

If this continues, she'll surely fall ill from hunger. Why not get her to eat some meat."

Lu Ran: "..."

You, as a brother, are truly magical!

A sister's word, like a royal decree, has to be obeyed by me without any disobedience?

And you call yourself an East Thunder believer.

"Just help out, Brother Lu. Please," Hao Tian urged, pushing and shoving Lu Ran back to the steps.

"You're scared." The faint voice came again from the building.

This time, Hao Tian also heard his sister's voice.

Lu Ran looked up and said gravely, "I'm scared that I won't be able to stop myself from stabbing you!"

"Don't!" Hao Tian quickly covered Lu Ran's mouth.

However, Lu Ran's words were effective, and there was no response from upstairs.

"Hmph." Lu Ran snorted and, under Hao Tian's pleading gaze, stepped onto the stairs.

The hall on the first floor was not small, and naturally, the second floor was the same.

Several screens made of bamboo and wood partitioned the room simply, concealing the room behind them.

And that string of copper coins hanging on the screen had caught Lu Ran's gaze for a moment.

That string of copper coins...

Why does it feel off?

"That's my bedroom," Li Rouyin said softly.

Lu Ran immediately withdrew his gaze, looking towards the window.

He saw a young woman sitting at a small bamboo table.

Her ancient style was apparent; she wore a long black gown that exuded a classic charm.

Those empty eyes looked out the window, as though admiring the beauty of the Bamboo Sea.

"Put it on the table?" Lu Ran stepped forward.

The woman held a bamboo cup in her plain, untouched hand; a plate of pastries sat beside her.

It made Lu Ran a bit hungry.

It should be osmanthus cake, right?

"Your brother said to supervise you eating meat," Lu Ran took out the duck from the bamboo basket and placed it on the bamboo table.

And as he pulled his hand back, he swiped a piece of osmanthus cake.

Can't help it—in this Demon Cave?Bamboo Sea, eating bamboo shoot stir-fry, cold bamboo shoots, scrambled eggs with bamboo shoots, bamboo shoot tofu soup every day...

Lu Ran craved everything he saw~

Li Rouyin slowly turned her head to face Lu Ran.

Lu Ran, holding the osmanthus cake, paused at his lips.

Awkward!

After hesitating for a moment, Lu Ran asked, "Your brother says you're blind?"

Li Rouyin silently stood up, her empty eyes directly staring into Lu Ran's eyes, slowly raising her palm.

Lu Ran's body tensed, watching the woman's slender fingers approach, getting closer to his eyes...

"No, are you really going to dig them out?" Lu Ran stepped back.

"Unpleasant." Li Rouyin looked somewhat disheartened, her pale palm slowly dropping. "Isn't 'pluck' a prettier word?"

Lu Ran: ?

My eyes are almost gone, and you care whether it's 'dig' or 'pluck'?

Li Rouyin sighed softly, "They really are beautiful."

Lu Ran said gravely, "So, you can see?"

Li Rouyin suddenly smiled, her smile stunningly beautiful, "You can see too, can't you?"

Lu Ran was baffled, "I'm not blind; I can naturally see."

"No." Li Rouyin raised a hand toward the distant screen, "I mean that string of copper coins."

Lu Ran's heart sank.

Li Rouyin took steps toward Lu Ran, speaking softly, "Why can you see it?"

Lu Ran stepped back, "Isn't it just an ordinary string of copper coins?"

"Your eyes...heh..." Li Rouyin's speech stopped abruptly, suddenly looking up with a long sigh.

A fierce wave of Divine Power surged from within her.

A residual image followed closely, spreading out from her body!

Lu Ran's expression turned to shock, and he stepped back several steps.

It was a woman's residual image.

She also had a classic charm, dressed in an ornate pitch-black gown, her long hair fastened up with golden ornaments.

Her slightly blurred face bore divinity not possessed by the Human Clan.

Those eyes were cold and indifferent, high above, gazing down at Lu Ran.

As if viewing ants, or perhaps slightly interested by this ant, so she deigned to cast her gaze upon a mortal.

"Where do your eyes come from?" The woman in the black gown spoke faintly, her way of speaking identical to Li Rouyin.

Could this be...

Lord Wang Quan?

The woman in black shrouded Li Rouyin, prompting the girl to step forward slowly.

"Gulp." Lu Ran's expression was incredibly rigid.

The vast residual image, with its overwhelming pressure, sent chills down Lu Ran's spine!

Such a terrifying aura crushed the helpless Human Clan, pinning them in place!

"Open your eyes."

Suddenly, a deep, husky voice entered Lu Ran's mind.

"Lord Immortal Goat?"

"Open your eyes."

"Yes!" Determined, Lu Ran's eyes swirled with energy, quickly transforming into horizontal pupils.

In an instant, the fear in his eyes vanished.

Instead, there was only a deathly stillness.

Lord Wang Quan appeared taken aback, halting her advancing momentum:

"You... you are..."

Wang Quan's eyes widened slightly.

This lofty, aloof deity's expression changed, revealing a trace of astonishment.

At the same time, Lu Ran was stunned too!

With the help of "Divine Technique-Pupil of the Netherworld," he activated a different dimensional perspective.

Lu Ran suddenly noticed that peculiar copper coins existed everywhere in the house.

They were either strung up or scattered around windows and corners.

Each coin was entwined with faint souls, seemingly imprisoned within.

Lu Ran's scalp tingled!

This wasn't a quaint bamboo house?

This was a hall of spirits!

"You are a grave..."

"Baa." Suddenly, a sheep's bleat came from within Lu Ran.

Not from his mouth, but from within his body.

The bleating sound arose, and Wang Quan fell silent.

The room turned eerily quiet, the atmosphere was terrifyingly stifling.

"Heh." Hearing the sheep's bleat, Wang Quan suddenly bowed her head and laughed.

Her smile was bitter, then somewhat resigned, murmuring:

"Never mind, never mind..."

"Baa." The sheep's bleat sounded again, faint yet imposing.

Lord Wang Quan, head bowed, her massive eyes silently watching Lu Ran's horizontal pupils.

Her gaze was complex.

So complex that...Lu Ran couldn't decipher the emotions within.

"Huh~"

Wang Quan's figure quietly shattered, vanishing without a trace.

Only Lu Ran stood, his eyes dead as a sheep's, facing Li Rouyin.

"Brother Lu?"

"Rouyin?" Voices came from downstairs.

Originally, they had been worshipping outside in the backyard.

As the terrifying energy surged from the main hall, they hurried back.

"It's nothing," Lu Ran held his forehead with one hand, following the guidance of Lord Immortal Goat's transmission, "It's nothing, don't come up."

Li Rouyin also spoke softly, "Go down."

The cluttered footsteps immediately stopped.

Lu Ran tried to calm his churning emotions, his expression solemn, muttering in his mind, "Sorry, Lord Immortal Goat.

It was reckless of me to enter this place, causing you trouble."

The deity was silent, and guilt grew within Lu Ran.

Lord Immortal Goat was known for being "lazy," always showing a gentle, friendly side, deceiving all beings.

But just now, Lord Immortal Goat's protective demeanor even frightened Lu Ran himself!

And Lord Wang Quan had clearly recognized this Immortal Sheep, hence the severe emotional fluctuations.

"It's alright." A deep, hoarse voice suddenly surged into Lu Ran's mind.

"Is it okay?"

"You wander this world, encountering accidents is inevitable. I commanded you to open your eyes, and I had my reasons."

Lu Ran felt a stir in his heart, "Lord Immortal Goat, you and this deity, Wang Quan..."

"Old acquaintances."

Hearing the deity's words, Lu Ran's thoughts whirled.

Lord Immortal Goat treated members of the God Demon Clan and the Evil Demon Clan equally.

It had clearly stated its evaluation: nothing more than a pile of stones.

The contempt in its words was one thing, but what mattered was that Lord Immortal Goat's actions undermined the very foundation of the existence of the twin clans.

But with Lord Wang Quan, it seemed there was a slight shift in attitude?

Old acquaintances.

What kind of relationship and past events supported Lord Immortal Goat in using this term?

And considering Lord Wang Quan's reaction just now, that complex smile of bitterness followed by resignation, it was far too intricate.

"Huh!!"

Outside, a gale suddenly arose, shaking the bamboo violently as if heralding a storm.

At Youhuang Crossing's grand mansion, a group of soldiers immediately halted, not daring to step inside.

"Go, send them away," Li Rouyin instructed softly. "Lord Wang Quan dislikes being disturbed."

"Oh, I'll go right away," Hao Tian's voice rose from below.

Li Rouyin faced Lu Ran, silent for a long time, then said softly, "Mysterious fellow."

From her tone, it was apparent that Li Rouyin had no intention of probing further.

Perhaps she was constrained by the deity?

She took a step forward, not to approach Lu Ran, but heading towards the staircase: "Follow me."

Lu Ran stood still, not moving.

Li Rouyin was indeed blind.

She groped her way to the staircase railing and picked up a blind cane: "Lord Wang Quan said to give you a welcome gift."

"A welcome gift?" Lu Ran looked skeptical.

He still vividly remembered the sensation of being crushed by Wang Quan's aura.

Li Rouyin tapped the steps lightly with her cane, walking downstairs: "To reward you with a sweet date."

Lu Ran almost thought he had heard wrong.

Although Li Rouyin used the term "reward," essentially, this seemed like the deity's way of apologizing to him?

Lu Ran knew well that someone of his low status couldn't possibly make a deity condescend.

Everything was because of the Black Fire Sheep Head standing behind him!

The transmission descended again into Lu Ran's mind: "Go."

Lu Ran nodded gently: "Yes!"

Chapter 152: Rebirth Hall

"Rouyin?"

"Brother Lu!" As the two descended the stairs one after the other, several people immediately came forward.

Li Rouyin's eyes were empty as she picked up her bamboo cane, tapping lightly on Hao Tian's leg, "I'll take him inside for worship.

There are some refreshments in the house, take good care of the guests."

Hao Tian, "I'll go with you."

"Lord Wang Quan doesn't like to be disturbed," Li Rouyin repeated the words she had said before, using her bamboo cane to knock on the ground, and stepped over the high threshold.

Hao Tian, "..."

Doesn't like to be disturbed?

I can't go, but he, Lu Ran, can?

"Don't worry," Lu Ran nodded to the others, "I'll be back in no time."

"What was going on just now, there was such a big energy fluctuation?" Chang Ying couldn't help but ask.

"Ah, Lord Wang Quan came to see me," Lu Ran replied casually as he stepped into the backyard.

"Ah?" Chang Ying blinked her big eyes.

Including Hao Tian, everyone was a bit confused.

Lu Ran's expression management was quite good, revealing a reassuring smile that put everyone at ease,

"Lord Wang Quan has quite the presence, scared me quite a bit~"

Everyone, "..."

"Hmph," Li Rouyin snorted coldly, seemingly somewhat displeased.

She didn't like people mentioning Lord Wang Quan's name too much.

Under a front-to-back formation, they walked upon the stone path.

With bamboo cane tapping rhythmically, Li Rouyin walked slowly.

If she really was blind, Lu Ran certainly would have been patient, maybe even offering a helping hand or support.

But Lu Ran didn't think so.

He looked at the beautiful figure in a black dress, "You can see, can't you?"

Li Rouyin, "I wish I could."

Lu Ran tried to make conversation, "You can see me but not the road?"

Li Rouyin stopped in her tracks, the bamboo cane ceasing its rhythm against the ground.

A breeze blew, rustling the bamboo and exotic flowers gently.

Li Rouyin's brow furrowed slightly, as if communicating with someone, and only after a while did her expression relax.

Lu Ran stood quietly, sizing up this mysterious Wang Quan believer.

Wang Quan, Wang Quan...

The "Forgotten" of Forget River, the "Spring" of Yellow Springs Road.

Indeed, as the name suggests.

Truly of the underworld!

The various occurrences he had witnessed on the second floor of the bamboo house were still fresh in Lu Ran's memory.

Logically, those dead souls should have been absorbed by Lu Ran into the Pupil of the Dead World, but those eerie copper coins firmly imprisoned the dead souls, preventing Lu Ran from succeeding.

Li Rouyin finally spoke, "People think I cannot see... eh?"

She had just stepped forward when she suddenly tripped on the stone path.

The usually graceful woman was uncharacteristically flustered.

She staggered forward a few steps before steadying herself with her cane, finally managing to stand firm.

The backyard fell silent once again.

"Goodness~" Lu Ran grinned.

Playing dumb with me?

Hao Tian and Li Rouyin, the siblings, seemed to have a kind of magic.

Whenever together with them, Lu Ran always experienced a special moment—awkwardness!

Li Rouyin smoothed her black skirt.

The graceful motion covered up the previous embarrassment, and she stepped forward once more.

This time she lifted her feet a little higher, "People believe I cannot see."

Lu Ran, "..."

You can see just fine!

Even on flat ground, you tripped; I was indeed hasty.

Li Rouyin, "Before meeting Lord Wang Quan, it was indeed so."

"Oh?" Lu Ran became interested, "Did Lord Wang Quan cure your eyesight?"

"In a way," Li Rouyin said softly with a sigh, "I still cannot see this world, cannot see the people.

I can only..."

Lu Ran raised his eyebrows slightly.

Li Rouyin turned her head slightly toward Lu Ran, revealing a side of her face:

"I can see ghosts, and I can see gods."

"So, you saw my eyes," Lu Ran mused thoughtfully.

"Mm," Li Rouyin smiled, "They really are beautiful."

Lu Ran, "Such a pretty face, you should say less cruel words."

Li Rouyin was somewhat dissatisfied, "I praise your eyes as beautiful, yet you call me cruel."

Lu Ran snorted, "We both know you want to pluck them out."

"Heh~" Li Rouyin chuckled, lowering her head to whisper quaintly, "Just want to play with them a bit."

Lu Ran, ?

Li Rouyin spoke softly, "Won't even let me touch, stingy."

Lu Ran was quite impressed; are you throwing a little tantrum now?

Honestly...

He suddenly spoke out, "Hey, you're walking off course, you need to turn!"

Li Rouyin,..."

Lu Ran watched her get back on track before speaking again, "Does the Divine Technique of the Forget Spring Sect relate to dead souls?"

Li Rouyin nodded gently.

Lu Ran, "Are those copper coins some kind of Divine Technique? Are the dead souls within all collected by you?"

Li Rouyin suddenly asked, "Do you know what this estate is called?"

After a moment's thought, Lu Ran replied, "Youhuang Crossing?"

Li Rouyin, "What is a crossing?"

Lu Ran pondered and ventured, "The 'crossing' that leads others across, the crossing over the Forget River?"

Li Rouyin looked surprised as she turned to face Lu Ran.

Her face revealed a smile as beautiful as before, "I didn't expect you to be so smart.

Well, close enough."

Lu Ran shrugged his shoulders, "On the way here, your brother explained to me the meaning of Lord Wang Quan's name."

Li Rouyin, "I help those dead souls free themselves from suffering, redeem their sins, and send them where they should go.

Naturally, they give me some money in return, as gratitude, don't they?"

Lu Ran slightly confused, "Send them where they should go?"

Li Rouyin walked ahead, "Free from worldly concerns, no more suffering, dissipated between heaven and earth."

Lu Ran smirked, "They would disappear even without your help."

Li Rouyin laughed mockingly, "You mere mortals, how could you understand?

Dead souls are all mourning, being tortured... Oh, right, you're not like most people.

You understand."

Lu Ran fell silent.

His mind inevitably turned to the battlefield spirits.

Those angry cries, chilling screams, and heartrending sobs haunted him.

"Huuu..." Lu Ran exhaled deeply, feeling a weight within him.

"Indeed, words should be spoken to those who understand," Li Rouyin naturally heard Lu Ran's sigh.

Lu Ran spoke softly, "Besides freeing them from suffering and sending them off, you also mentioned helping dead souls atone for their sins?"

Li Rouyin didn't respond because they finally crossed the courtyard and approached the large temple doors.

Despite the bamboo construction, it was quite imposing, not much smaller than the main halls of grand temples in the mortal world.

Above the doors hung a large plaque inscribed with three characters—Rebirth Hall!

"Tap, tap." Li Rouyin tapped gently on the door with her bamboo cane.

Lu Ran quietly waited; were there other Wang Quan believers inside?

Li Rouyin whispered, "What are you waiting for?"

Lu Ran was startled, "Ah?"

Li Rouyin, "Do you expect me, a frail woman, to open such a heavy door to the temple?"

Lu Ran rolled his eyes and stepped forward.

After a brief interaction, he finally believed what Hao Tian said; this seemingly proud, indifferent woman certainly did like to play pranks.

Hmm... maybe she got a little fixated living alone for so long.

"Creak~"

As the bamboo door opened wide, Lu Ran was greeted with an astonishing sight.

Red threads like fine rain, thousands hanging down.

Each thread bore a single copper coin.

The red threads moved gently, as if alive, a captivating sight.

Yet to Lu Ran, it wasn't wondrous, only chilling, reeking of ghost energy.

"Wang Quan," Lu Ran murmured and looked beyond the beautiful rain of red threads towards the heart of the temple.

There stood a small shrine, within which was the figure of Lord Wang Quan.

Such a grand temple, yet the sculpture was surprisingly small, quite unexpected.

However, the statue's aura was anything but small!

The thick aura of death emanated from the shrine, utterly terrifying.

"Tap." With a light tap from her cane, Li Rouyin stepped into the temple.

Upon entering, she seemed empowered!

Amid the endless sway of red threads, Li Rouyin moved lightly and swiftly, not touching a single thread as she advanced.

Like a fluttering black butterfly, the maiden's dance through the threads seemed almost eerie.

Lu Ran was far from certain he could achieve the same feat, that is entering the temple heart untouched.

"Come," Li Rouyin called from afar.

Lu Ran carefully followed, inevitably disturbing many red threads.

The copper coins on the threads chimed melodiously upon contact.

Li Rouyin's voice was playful, "Like listening to music, huh?"

Lu Ran, "..."

What kind of thing is that to say!

"Let's worship," Li Rouyin put down her cane and knelt gracefully in front of the prayer mat.

Lu Ran's expression turned serious; reverently, he brought his hands together and bowed.

You should know, even when faced with the statue of Divine-Sword One, Lu Ran did nothing more than look up in admiration.

Li Rouyin looked displeased, "I brought you in front of Lord Wang Quan, why didn't you kneel..."

She cut herself off.

Seconds later, Li Rouyin spoke softly, "Yes."

After worshiping, Lu Ran asked, "What have the gods told you?"

Li Rouyin slowly stood up, habitually smoothing her long dress, "Lord Wang Quan asked me to be kinder to you."

Lu Ran gave a silent nod.

"Choose a string," Li Rouyin said gently.

"Choose what?"

"Copper coin strings, the dates Lord Wang Quan rewards you with."

Li Rouyin turned to the "Red Line Fine Rain," her expression somewhat melancholic.

"Is this some kind of Magic Artifact?" Lu Ran questioned, scrutinizing the spectacle, "Also, this is called a coin string?"

There's only one coin per red thread."

Li Rouyin countered, "Why not use those beautiful eyes of yours to see for yourself?"

"Huuh~"

Lu Ran's eyes surged with power, pupils transforming into cold, horizontal slits.

Divine Technique·Pupil of the Netherworld!

"Gulp." Lu Ran swallowed.

What "Red Line Fine Rain" is this?

In another dimension, each red thread was threaded full of copper coins.

They overlapped, more aptly described as "abundantly fruitful."

Li Rouyin's mouth curled up faintly, "Just now you asked me about the redemption of dead souls."

Lu Ran nodded, "Mm."

"The souls of the Human Clan, I will lead them on their final journey."

Saying this, Li Rouyin lifted her hand, pointing to the myriad floating copper coins,

"Evil Demon dead souls, however, shall be sealed within these coins, at my command, for my use.

Until they redeem all the sins they've committed in the mortal realm, maybe I'll show pity and send them to the afterlife."

Despite being mentally prepared, Lu Ran was still shocked.

Each coin here sealed an Evil Demon dead soul!

Lord Wang Quan did indeed know Lord Immortal Goat from before.

Truly playing to their interests!

You toss me into this Rebirth Hall, is it any different from throwing a mouse into a rice barrel?

Hmm... too bad, Lord Wang Quan is a bit stingy.

Giving only one string of coins.

If he'd given a few more strings, the Evil Sculptures in my God Demon Sculpture Garden would surely soar!

"Shh..." Li Rouyin suddenly raised her hand, signaling silence.

With her slender, pale finger, she gently picked up an ethereal copper coin, feeling the tortured soul within.

Lu Ran stared at the scene, unsure how to describe the visual impact.

The maiden in black, with her classical elegance, was truly graceful.

Yet she kept company with dead souls, imprisoning and controlling countless Evil Demon spirits.

Death, indeed, wasn't the end of suffering.

Without her consent, no soul could depart in peace.

Even in the afterlife, they must endure endless torment, at her whim.

"Is there a time when the Evil Demon Clan can redeem their sins?" Lu Ran asked.

Li Rouyin fingered the coin thoughtfully, "I'm not sure.

They're in my hands until they're worthless, spirit dissipated, and they've yet to atone."

Lu Ran, "..."

Okay,

Li Rouyin, you're ruthless!

Chapter 153: seven-hundred consecutive draws?

"Choose a string," Li Rouyin said softly, a hint of reluctance in her voice.

Alas, the divine command was absolute, and as a Forget Spring Believer, Li Rouyin had no right to refuse.

Logically speaking, if it were Lu Ran, he too would feel reluctant.

"Okay, thank you, sister," Lu Ran's little mouth suddenly turned sweet.

He looked at the strings of copper coins stacked layer upon layer, fully aware that he was about to make a killing!

How many Evil Demon Dead Souls could there possibly be?

And how much of the Evil Demon's own "qi" was contained within them?

If all of these were to be taken into the Evil Demon Sculpture Garden...

Four words: Utter blissful ecstasy~

Li Rouyin chuckled and couldn't help but tease, "You sure switch faces fast.

You wanted to strike me with a blade before, and now that you've got a sweet date, you're calling me sister again?"

"Aren't you and Brother Hao fraternal twins?" Lu Ran said as a matter of factly, "You are older than I am."

"Heh, little brother, then choose carefully," the reluctance on Li Rouyin's face gradually faded, leaving only a warm smile.

"Just call me Lu Ran."

"What, after calling me sister, now you disown me?"

"In terms of age, I can call you sister, but I'm certainly not your little brother." Lu Ran eyed a string of copper coins, "I am working towards the goal of becoming a powerful figure in the Human Clan.

Your address belittles my ambition."

Li Rouyin stated indifferently, "The name Lu Ran is merely adequate."

Lu Ran grinned, "You may also address me as Ran Shen."

Li Rouyin's smile faded completely.

She slowly turned around and gazed at the shrine with hollow eyes.

A few seconds later, Li Rouyin saw nothing amiss and turned her head back, a hint of displeasure in her tone, "You really dare to speak."

Lu Ran's fingers brushed over a string of stacked copper coins and sighed softly,

"I dare to do it, so why wouldn't I dare to say it?"

Li Rouyin, puzzled, "What?"

"Never mind," Lu Ran changed the subject, "I can't tell what kind of Dead Souls are in these copper coins."

Not only could he not tell, but Lu Ran couldn't even touch these coins.

They all belonged to another dimension of existence, without any physical form.

The fact that Li Rouyin could touch and flick the coins with her fingertips didn't mean Lu Ran could.

Aside from the copper coin at the very end of the string, which truly existed, Lu Ran could only stare at the "abundant fruits" in front of him.

"The copper coins in that string seal the Dead Souls of bamboo demons," Li Rouyin answered.

"And this string?"

"Bamboo demons."

"And what about this one?"

"Bamboo demons."

Lu Ran: "..."

Living in this Demon Cave-Bamboo Sea, it wasn't in vain!

The bamboo demon clan, Lu Ran could kill himself, he could bind their souls.

Lord Wang Quan had only agreed to give him one string of copper coins, so naturally, Lu Ran would pick the rare and powerful Evil Demon Dead Souls.

He would choose those fierce Evil Demons produced in the Demon Caves not open to the public!

Li Rouyin: "Don't like them?"

Lu Ran suddenly inquired, "Is there a string of Yan Zhi coins?"

Li Rouyin appeared thoughtful, "You like eating Yan Zhi?"

Lu Ran intended to object, he chose Yan Zhi for the purpose of activating Evil Sculpture.

But after pondering for a moment, he did not speak.

He was unsure whether Lord Wang Quan knew of the existence of the Evil Demon Sculpture Garden.

And from Li Rouyin's words, it seemed she believed that Lu Ran was just ingesting Dead Souls purely?

"Little brother?"

Li Rouyin saw Lu Ran remaining silent for a long time and urged him.

"Ah, like to eat," Lu Ran responded nonchalantly, "Love eating~"

Li Rouyin smiled mischievously, "We don't have them here."

Lu Ran: "..."

Li Rouyin: "If you like to eat the Dead Souls of rare Evil Demons, stop looking at those red strings full of copper coins."

Lu Ran understood and swiftly located a string that fit the description, "What kind of Evil Demon Dead Soul is in here?"

Li Rouyin's smile stiffened slightly, "Ghost Talisman Doll."

"Ghost Talisman Doll?" Lu Ran's eyes lit up.

Hearing Lu Ran's eager words, Li Rouyin inadvertently pouted.

However, the cute expression was fleeting, and she quickly restored her composed and graceful demeanor.

"And what about this one?" Lu Ran shifted steps sideways.

Li Rouyin breathed a sigh of relief, with a noticeably lighter tone, "Double-faced Demon."

Lu Ran was perplexed, "Double-faced Demons are rare? Why are there fewer copper coins than for the Ghost Talisman Dolls?"

Li Rouyin explained, "These Dead Souls were all collected by me on the night of the fifteenth while I was escorting the Heroic Souls of the Human Clan."

Lu Ran suddenly understood; since it was the night of the fifteenth, it naturally carried great uncertainty.

He simply asked outright, "Where is the rarest string of coins?"

Li Rouyin's tone grew distant, "Are Ghost Talisman Dolls not rare enough?

If not for experiencing several Nights of Ghosts over the years, I couldn't have accumulated so many Dead Souls of the dolls."

Should he choose Ghost Talisman Dolls?

Lu Ran contemplated.

He had fought against Ghost Talisman Dolls before and knew how powerful this clan was.

If he could summon them, they would undoubtedly be excellent allies.

Moreover, there was another personal reason.

Divine-Jade Talisman didn't want me, huh?

I'll just cultivate my own Evil Demon-Ghost Talisman!

Who says I can't enchant my dual blades without Jade Talisman's approval?

Who says if Jade Talisman doesn't accept me, I can't follow in my father's footsteps?

After pondering for some time, Lu Ran made up his mind and finally asked, "Are there any copper strings of Night Charm here?"

At those words, Li Rouyin's expression turned tense, and her body swayed.

"Oh?" Seeing her reaction, Lu Ran thought there might be an unexpected gain.

Indeed there is!

Compared to the Ghost Talisman Dolls, the Night Charm Evil Technique would greatly enhance Lu Ran's combat abilities!

Lu Ran was cultivating Evil Sculpture not only to summon and control Evil Demons in the future but also considering the enhancement the Evil Techniques would bring to himself.

With Night Charm Evil Technique, he could summon a series of wind blades, transforming into a killing machine like Sword Cultivators and Blade Cultivators.

He could bind the Gale underfoot, levitate without worries of lacking leverage in the sky.

Lu Ran could also stir up a Gale, and furthermore, drag long, lethal cuts!

He could wear a bamboo hat and don Night Clothes, possessing true defensive techniques.

Lu Ran could even create several avatars, shifting and switching positions among them!

What Big Nightmare had, Lu Ran mostly had.

And what Big Nightmare didn't, Lu Ran still had!

"Is there one?" Lu Ran looked at the silently bowed Li Rouyin.

Li Rouyin didn't even want to speak, merely lifted her hand and pointed in a direction.

Lu Ran laughed, "Sister, are you that reluctant?"

"Don't call me sister," Li Rouyin's jade hand waved, as if to sever this fateful bond.

"Fine, Little Rouyin." Lu Ran walked over, "Is it this one? This one? Or this one?"

Li Rouyin: "..."

It was obvious the girl's heart was bleeding.

Finally, Lu Ran found the string that imprisoned the Dead Souls of the Night Charm Clan.

Indeed, the string of red line didn't have many copper coins.

But there were six or seven hundred at least!

In other words: at a minimum, six or seven hundred Mist Realm-Night Charm souls.

Lu Ran strove to sense the Dead Souls within, aware that the sealed Dead Souls varied in strength, inconsistently powerful.

Excellent!

The exciting moment of 'unboxing' had arrived~

Just one River Realm soul would be worth a hundred Mist Realm ones!

And if Sea Realm or River Realm Dead Souls could be found...

Two words: Skyrocketing!

Lu Ran could scarcely imagine how far his Night Charm Evil Sculpture could advance!

"Right, Lord Immortal Goat." Lu Ran suddenly realized something and whispered, "If I absorb them all at once, will that be alright?"

The divine voice of Immortal Goat resonated, hoarse, "No harm, after all, the Night Charm Dead Souls have always been imprisoned here.

For the Evil Demon itself, the 'qi' carried by these Dead Souls has long been accounted for as a loss."

Hearing Lord Immortal Goat's words, something else occurred to Lu Ran.

So that's why Lord Wang Quan maintains a reclusive state?

So, that's why she only has Li Rouyin as her sole surviving disciple?

Divine-Forget Spring was clearly forced!

She must have been persecuted by All Gods and driven to seek refuge here, living in isolation.

Li Rouyin had made it clear she could not only imprison Evil Demons but also liberate Human Clan Heroic Souls.

Meaning, she could also consume the "qi" of the divine beings themselves to nourish herself.

Therefore, objectively, All Gods would absolutely not allow, nor tolerate, the growth and strength of Lord Wang Quan's sect!

Even if your sect, Lord Wang Quan, could significantly weaken the power of the Evil Demon itself, even if you could tip the scales of victory...

That too, is unacceptable!

Regardless of who is winning or losing the battle, regardless of how much longer the human realm must suffer war, these are not important.

What's important is, your existence is a threat to us!

"Is that so?" Lu Ran shared his thoughts with Lord Immortal Goat.

He received a four-word reply from Immortal Goat, "A teachable child indeed."

Lu Ran remained silent, turning his head to look at Li Rouyin.

From this perspective, even her sole survival might not be warranted?

Of course, the Human Clan soldiers of Da Xia didn't want their comrades to suffer and hoped Li Rouyin could help liberate their Heroic Souls.

So those who sacrificed their lives wouldn't be humiliated in death.

But from the perspective of the gods, every Dead Soul of a believer that passed through Li Rouyin's escort meant a loss of their "qi."

Lu Ran's mind raced with thoughts.

Now, with Lord Wang Quan barely clinging to life and retaining a single disciple,

The military would invite Li Rouyin to escort the souls of Human Clan soldiers on the night of the fifteenth.

What kind of twisted story lay beneath this status quo?

"Sigh..."

Lu Ran sighed deeply, his eyes drifting towards the small shrine at the depths of the hall.

This qualification to barely survive couldn't have been obtained through mere compromises, bowing heads, and submission.

Even for survival, it had to have been fought for with all their might.

It really was a bitter thought.

"Lu Ran." Li Rouyin suddenly spoke.

"Hm?" Lu Ran came back to reality.

Li Rouyin slightly furrowed her brows, "Lord Wang Quan just sent down a divine message, asking me to relay a few words to you."

Lu Ran nodded and listened quietly.

Li Rouyin pondered for a moment and dared not alter the words of her deity, conveying the message exactly,

"In light of this meeting gift, should Rouyin face trouble in the future, I hope you can lend your aid."

Lu Ran's heart sank.

With Lord Wang Quan overseeing everything, it can't possibly fall to him, a mere member of the Human Clan, to assist her disciple, right?

Could it be that Wang Quan, like Immortal Goat, is gradually fading away?

Or is it that Wang Quan knows her predicament well, in danger of being exterminated by both God Demons at any moment?

"Comply," said a voice.

"Lord Immortal Goat?"

"The situation of Lord Wang Quan's sect is unique. In the future, this person may be of use to you, to become an envoy under your command."

"Yes!"

Chapter 154: A Magic Artifact

"You are indeed very mysterious."

Li Rouyin stepped forward, the doubts in her heart unspoken.

Could it be that their god holds Lu Ran in too high regard?

According to their god's will, in the future, if the Forget Spring Sect truly faces a calamity, could Lu Ran extend a helping hand and protect her?

The god that Lu Ran worships, what kind of entity is it...

It's truly troubling.

Lord Wang Quan, why won't you tell me?

As she pondered, Li Rouyin crossed the endlessly trembling red threads and reached Lu Ran.

Lu Ran spoke, "Lord Wang Quan has overpraised me."

"Sometimes arrogant, sometimes humble," Li Rouyin whispered softly, "You really are a paradoxical person."

Lu Ran: "..."

Li Rouyin pulled off the red thread and handed it to Lu Ran, "Here, eat this."

Lu Ran holding a large string of copper coins, his lifelike pupils stared at the sumptuous dishes in front of him.

After several seconds, Lu Ran looked embarrassedly at Li Rouyin beside him, "How do I eat this?"

Li Rouyin chuckled and placed her hands behind her back, "Aren't you the self-proclaimed Ran... Hmm."

There were gods present in the hall, so Li Rouyin, being somewhat wary, did not address the god.

She paused, a playful smile on her face, "With your prowess, how could you fail to reach that delicious food at your lips?"

Lu Ran was stifled for a while, then looked at the woman again, "Could you help me open the lunchbox?"

Li Rouyin's smile broadened, "Are you asking for my help?"

Lu Ran whispered, "Little Rouyin, that's enough. This was given by Lord Wang Quan.

The god is standing right in the hall; you little devil, don't overdo it."

"Who are you calling a little devil?" Li Rouyin's expression was very displeased.

Those hollow eyes stared hauntingly into Lu Ran's eyes.

It made Lu Ran a bit creeped out...

"They are, they all are." Lu Ran pointed at the string of coins in his hand.

"Humph, eat then."

Li Rouyin lowered her hand, her fingers lightly brushed over the copper coins.

Accompanied by the sound of breaking, wherever her fingertips passed, five copper coins shattered.

"Hiss!!"

"Hiss..." Instantly, five Night Charm Dead Souls surged out.

The Night Charms wailed painfully and screamed furiously.

But more than that, they wailed with venting screams after escaping the boundless sea of suffering.

"Huh~"

Lu Ran's eyes surged with energy, frantically absorbing the streams of Night Charm Dead Souls.

"Hiss!"

"Hiss..." The cries of the Night Charm Clan grew even more mournful.

Having just escaped the 'Karma Fire Purgatory' within the copper coins, they were about to be absorbed into the Sculpture Garden, serving as nourishment for the Evil Sculpture.

Just Lu Ran alone was enough to completely devour the Night Charm Clan.

And before Lu Ran deployed his powerful methods, Li Rouyin had added a process of punishment and torment...

This group of Night Charms was indeed quite miserable.

"Mist Realm, Stream Realm, River Realm, Mist Realm, River Realm."

Thin threads like rain, lightly trembling.

A young man stood amid the red misty rain, murmuring continuously.

Such scenery, anyone who sees it would pause to admire it for a moment.

But if people could see the true scene, they would turn and run!

From a different dimensional perspective, that young man holding the string of coins had just devoured five dead souls!

The souls cried and shouted.

Yet they were powerless to escape, only to be sucked into those Pupils of the Dead World, ultimately brought before the Night Charm Evil Sculpture.

"Again!" Lu Ran spoke.

Li Rouyin's expression was astonished, "Eating so quickly?"

From the appearance of the Night Charms to them being devoured by Lu Ran took no more than 3 seconds!

Lu Ran urged, "Again, again!"

"What's the hurry, they are all yours." Li Rouyin's expression turned teasing, her fingertips once more swept across five copper coins.

Another five dead souls were released.

Hmm... it can be said they just left the wolves' lair to enter the tiger's cave.

"River Realm, River Realm, River Realm... Hm? River Realm?"

Lu Ran's expression brightened, there really were River Realm·Night Charm Dead Souls?

Did I just draw an SSR?

"Come on, keep drawing!" Lu Ran exclaimed excitedly, "Let's do it in one go!"

Can't you strive a little?

Just draw me a Sea Realm!

"You really are..." Li Rouyin's expression was complex, shocked by the speed at which Lu Ran devoured the dead souls.

Of course, she didn't know that Lu Ran first sent the dead souls into the Sculpture Garden before digesting and absorbing them separately.

"Crack, crack."

Li Rouyin's fingertips fell, this time she released over a dozen additional dead souls.

Lu Ran's eyes immediately sparkled!

Good, keep them coming!

Damn!

Why is it the Mist Realm again, I don't want the guaranteed minimum...

Again, draw again... wow, a golden legend!

Another River Realm has come out!

"Wuu~"

"Hiss!" A ghastly wind swept through the hall, heavy with ghostly energy.

Within the beautiful red rain,

stood a peculiar pair of male and female.

The black-dressed girl's skirt fluttered, her jade fingers lightly swept over the copper coins.

She seemed to be showing great mercy, releasing the dead souls that had been tormented by the karma fire one by one.

The young man, however, with his sinister and horizontal pupils, devoured the freshly liberated dead souls.

Dragging them into a deeper abyss...

"Huh~" After a while, Lu Ran sighed.

The chilling wind in the hall gradually ceased.

The string of copper coins was completely shattered, only the last coin at the very bottom hanging lonely.

Is it... over?

A total of 700 Night Charms, all devoured by me?

Lu Ran's originally comfortable expression turned somewhat disappointed.

After all,

joyful times are always so fleeting.

It's called a "700 combo draw," but it doesn't feel like it stops!

Lu Ran turned his head, looking expectantly at Li Rouyin beside him.

"What's wrong?" Rarely, there was a hint of concern in Li Rouyin's tone.

As a Forget Spring Believer, her method of using dead souls is to imprison them and slowly refine them, thereby transforming everything of the dead souls into nourishment for herself.

While Lu Ran's violent devouring of the dead souls really surprised Li Rouyin.

Is such crudeness really okay?

Li Rouyin was worried about whether Lu Ran could suffer a backlash.

But what she didn't expect was that Lu Ran turned his head and looked at another string of copper coins?

What does that mean, you still want to eat?

Li Rouyin was completely shocked!

Usually presenting herself with elegance and aloofness, even her tone of voice went up a notch: "You're dreaming!"

Lu Ran: "..."

Why are you shouting so loudly?

My Evil Technique·Evil Recognition isn't weak, even if you curse me quietly, I can hear it.

No need to shout in my face...

By the way, if I could recruit Li Rouyin as my Angel Envoy under my command, that would be fantastic!

This is purely a Soul Hooker!

From now on, you go out and hook souls, and I'll wait to feast.

Simply blissful~

You might as well not call your mansion "Youhuang Crossing" anymore, just change its name to "Ran Sect Crossing"!

Don't send the dead souls for transcendence.

You can just ferry them directly to me...

The more Lu Ran thought about it, the more he looked forward to it.

Who knows when such a wonderful day will come.

At the moment, of course, it's impossible.

Li Rouyin has a revered god, and Lord Wang Quan is attentively nurturing her, this single seedling.

Why would she stop being a jewel of the Divine Sect to come help you?

Hmm... this is also good.

Li Rouyin can enjoy the blessings of Lord Wang Quan alone, enjoy all the resources within the Divine Sect, and naturally progress rapidly.

Perhaps one day in the future, she will come to my side or I will recruit her, it shall be even better.

"Are you upset?" Li Rouyin's quiet words woke a contemplative Lu Ran.

"Not at all, why would I be," Lu Ran immediately responded, "Just thinking."

Li Rouyin nodded slightly, her heart slightly relieved.

She had thought her own tone had been too harsh, displeasing this Heaven's Chosen.

Otherwise, with others, Li Rouyin certainly could have been straightforward.

"Here." Lu Ran handed the red thread to Li Rouyin.

Li Rouyin suddenly smiled, "You really are slow."

"Ah?" Lu Ran was a bit confused.

Li Rouyin looked slightly reproachful: "I really don't know what to say about you.

You don't take the real treasure, only knowing to eat."

"This?" Lu Ran looked at the red thread in his hand, his eyes naturally falling on the lonely copper coin at the bottom.

Unlike the other copper coins, this coin existed in the real world.

Thousands of red threads hung in the hall, each ending with one such real copper coin.

Li Rouyin: "How could the gift Lord Wang Quan gave you for your meeting be just some dead souls?"

Lu Ran was very surprised.

In his heart, just that 700-combo draw had already been generous enough.

Before absorbing the "Night Charm copper string," Lu Ran could only activate the Night Charm Evil Sculpture. At most, upgrading it only to the Stream Realm.

If Immortal Sheep sneaked some, the realm of that evil sculpture would be even lower.

Overall, if they wanted to nurture and promote the Night Charm Evil Sculpture, they would have to find another opportunity.

The Demon Cave dwelling of the Night Charm Clan was not open to the public, making such opportunities really hard to come by.

But after this draw, as long as Lu Ran activates the evil sculpture, the Night Charm sculpture could directly ascend to the River Realm!

And it would be among the relatively higher tiers within the River Realm!

During the absorbing journey of those dead souls, Lu Ran roughly estimated:

The total of Mist Realm Souls + Stream Realm Souls was about equivalent to the total number of River Realm Souls.

Coincidentally, this was also similar to the structure of the dead souls he personally absorbed during the Night of Ghosts event for the fifteen-year-olds.

This also indirectly indicated that Li Rouyin did indeed imprison this group of Evil Demon dead souls on the night of the fifteen-year-olds.

The difference is, Lu Ran did not encounter any River Realm Evil Demons during his night with the Night Charm Clan's Night of Ghosts.

Yet here, he unlocked four or five River Realm-Night Charm Dead Souls!

Aren't these meeting gifts generous?

Or perhaps, Lord Wang Quan doesn't know of the existence of the God Demon Sculpture Garden?

She doesn't realize how great the assistance she's given Lu Ran is, thinking perhaps that Immortal Sheep loves to eat dead souls and can nourish itself?

"This copper coin?"

Lu Ran managed his expression carefully, pulling on the red thread and picking up the copper coin in his hand.

Li Rouyin: "Use your little brain, what could it be that makes its appearance last?"

Lu Ran frowned in thought.

Li Rouyin reminded him: "You had already said the answer when you first entered the hall."

Lu Ran trembled with realization and spoke: "Magic Artifact?"

Strictly speaking, Magic Artifacts and Divine Weapons are essentially no different.

Both possess an Artifact Spirit and both qualify to activate what's called a "Domain."

It is merely that such treasures are not shown as bladed weapons, so calling them "weapons" is somewhat inappropriate.

"Mm," Li Rouyin gently nodded, adding, "one of them."

Lu Ran: "One of them?"

Li Rouyin gestured towards the red threads in the hall, pointing to the copper coins at the ends, "Only when combined together do they form a true Magic Artifact."

Lu Ran: "By giving me this copper coin, wouldn't that ruin the integrity of the Magic Artifact?"

Li Rouyin gently nodded, "Lord Wang Quan has already ordered me to forge another."

Lu Ran was somewhat at a loss for words.

This is a Magic Artifact!

Even if it's just one part, that still represents one of the most top-tier equipment fragments in this world!

Its rarity, and the effects and energy it can unleash, are absolutely matchless!

Lord Wang Quan,

Do you really need to give such a valuable meeting gift?

Even at the expense of the Magic Artifact's integrity?

And the more valuable the gift, the more challenging the request she seeks must be...

Chapter 155: Rebirth Money

"They're back."

"Finally back!" Inside the hall, where several people were drinking tea and eating pastries, they saw the returning figures of the two.

In the lush backyard, on the path paved with bluestone slabs, a man and a woman walked slowly, one after the other.

Li Rouyin had not changed; she remained indifferent as she tapped the ground with her bamboo cane, searching for direction.

Behind her, Lu Ran's expression was much more solemn.

The concern was evident on the faces of several onlookers, unsure of what had happened.

After all, the atmosphere of the bamboo house was fraught with sinister gusts, revealing eerie aspects everywhere.

"Rouyin," Hao Tian stepped forward to meet her, picking up the end of the bamboo cane and leading the girl into the hall.

Such a caring gesture was, of course, noticed by Lu Ran.

Hao Tian was indeed a good brother.

Given the character of an East Thunder believer, even when dealing with a girlfriend, it is doubtful they would be as attentive and caring.

Only a blood relationship could get Hao Tian to "stoop to such levels."

Thinking this, Lu Ran felt a sense of kinship with Hao Tian.

Recalling the past, when his team, including Little Yuanxi, underwent training, facing his sister's two teammates, Lu Ran was also very careful.

After all, these were the teammates who were to fight shoulder to shoulder with his sister, through life and death.

He feared any oversight on his part that might disturb the harmony of his sister's team.

"Sorry for the lack of hospitality," Li Rouyin's hollow eyes looked toward the group.

"It's very good."

"The osmanthus cake is delicious~" the group immediately responded.

They were not just being polite; for this group used to eating bamboo shoots every day, the pastries were a real treat.

"Brother Lu, what's this?" Deng Yutang had always been paying close attention to Lu Ran.

He noticed that there was a new piece of jewelry on Lu Ran's wrist?

It was a thin red cord with an old-fashioned coin with a square hole threaded onto it.

"This," said Lu Ran as he shook his wrist, "Lord Wang Quan thought I was fated and gave me a copper coin."

"Let me see~" Chang Ying stepped forward, lifted Lu Ran's wrist, and carefully examined it.

The others marveled and sighed internally at Lu Ran's good fortune.

Hao Tian's face changed, and he looked at his sister incredulously, "Re... Rebirth Money?"

Li Rouyin was expressionless as she hummed lightly in response.

"Rebirth Money?" Chang Ying was confused.

Deng Yutang speculated, "Since it's a gift from a divine being, it must not be ordinary."

"Yes!" Hao Tian's heart surged with tumult as he looked at the others who were clueless, "This is a Magic Artifact!"

"What?"

"Magic Artifact?" Everyone finally realized the terrifying value of the copper coin.

Li Rouyin silently turned and walked toward the bamboo staircase, seemingly going to rest on the second floor.

"Rouyin, this..." Hao Tian hesitated in his speech.

"The decision of Lord Wang Quan is not ours to question," said Li Rouyin flatly as she ascended the steps.

Evidently, she wasn't a model host, leaving her guests and climbing upstairs by herself.

However, to the Forget Spring Believers' indifferent behavior, nobody present was surprised.

"I never thought I'd see a Magic Artifact in my lifetime!" Chang Ying was excited and bent down to look closely at the copper coin.

Indeed, on either side of the square hole were the characters for "Rebirth."

Lu Ran said, "This is only a fragment of the Magic Artifact, to be understood as a piece."

Chang Ying asked, "What is its effect?"

Lu Ran hadn't spoken when Hao Tian interjected, "Rebirth Money can absorb Dead Souls from both the Human Clan and Evil Demons, using them for its own purposes!"

Upon hearing this, everyone couldn't help but be secretly alarmed.

They were high school students and small fry in the Stream Realm, unfamiliar with high-level concepts like "Dead Souls."

Their understanding was limited to special Evil Techniques of races like the Soul-splitting Demon and the Black Lantern, which could torment souls after death.

"Too much talk." A faint voice came from the bamboo staircase, where Li Rouyin stood.

Hao Tian: "..."

Lu Ran timely spoke up, "This is merely a fragment of the Magic Artifact; its effect is not as terrifying as imagined."

Deng Yutang stepped forward, "Can it absorb souls?"

"Yes," Lu Ran nodded.

"And use them for its own?"

"Also yes," Lu Ran nodded again.

Deng Yutang's expression was quite animated, his voice rising, "Isn't that powerful?"

Lu Ran: "..."

"Awesome!" Chang Ying muttered excitedly, "My captain owns a Magic Artifact, haha!"

Lu Ran helplessly explained, "What it absorbs are only Dead Souls; it cannot extract a living person's soul from their body."

It's more about refining the Dead Souls and nourishing the copper coin itself.

As its master, I can only incidentally receive a slight nourishment at the soul level."

Lu Ran had such insight because he was well-versed, even owning an Evil Demon Sculpture Garden.

But to the others, what Lu Ran said was incomprehensible!

With such a terrifying function, what more could you want?

"Brother Lu, you are ambitious, even wanting to extract living souls?" Hao Tian looked at Lu Ran, unsure how to react to this bold character.

Hmm... really wanted to hit someone!

Hao Tian frequently looked after his sister, but in all these years, he had only entered the Rebirth Hall once.

Each time he worshipped, Hao Tian did so outside the hall.

Only occasionally would the hall doors be open, allowing Hao Tian the chance to catch a glimpse of the inside's beautiful Red Line Fine Rain.

However, Lu Ran arrived as a newcomer and received a copper coin from the divine being?

This...

Lu Ran suddenly said, "Rouyin mentioned that if I cultivate this copper coin well, I might unlock higher methods of use.

Perhaps, this copper coin could command the imprisoned Dead Souls to fight for me."

Everyone: "..."

What Lu Ran said was true; Li Rouyin had just mentioned this.

But such high-level usage was difficult to achieve with a fragment; it would require the complete Magic Artifact.

This was why Li Rouyin told Lu Ran to cultivate the copper coin well.

Honestly, when Lu Ran heard about the function of the Magic Artifact·Rebirth Money, he was overjoyed!

Whether the copper coin could allow Lu Ran to command Dead Souls was no longer important.

What mattered was that, should the day come when Lu Ran could summon and control Evil Demons, this copper coin would be the perfect cover!

Li Rouyin made it clear:

Rebirth Money didn't fight using the spirits in their soul form.

In most cases, souls couldn't affect the normal world.

Lu Ran had seen many Dead Souls on the battlefield, from the Human Clan to the Evil Demons; those who didn't wish to leave after death were everywhere.

In their Dead Souls state, they still longed to battle, but in vain, as they were insubstantial, and all attacks were ineffective.

The Magic Artifact·Rebirth Coin,

would consume its own "energy" to take the Dead Souls imprisoned within as a foundation and reconstruct bodies for them.

Hmm... it was akin to reincarnation?

Just that such a reincarnation was short-lived.

However, currently, Lu Ran was more cautious, not seeking to command Evil Demons overtly.

He just felt reassured.

Should someone one day notice his association with the Evil Demons...

At least he would have a reasonable explanation.

"My goodness, this is remarkable," Chang Ying whispered, suddenly asking, "Now, does this copper coin contain Dead Souls?"

Lu Ran: "In a minute we'll go out and kill a bamboo demon, and then it will."

Speaking, Lu Ran turned to Hao Tian, patting his shoulder heavily, "Brother Hao, I owe it all to your referral!

Without you, I wouldn't have had this opportunity, nor would I have met Lord Wang Quan."

Hao Tian felt very distressed.

Not because he wanted the copper coin for himself, but from Hao Tian's perspective, all resources from the Forget Spring Sect belonged to his sister.

And here comes this bandit out of nowhere?

Lord Wang Quan actually favored Lu Ran with such a generous gift...

Thankfully, Lu Ran was already a believer, spoken for.

Even so, Hao Tian was somewhat anxious that Lu Ran might switch allegiance to the Forget Spring Sect, dividing the resources meant for his sister.

"How can I ever thank you... that's right!" Lu Ran immediately said, "I almost forgot why you brought us here.

I'll go up now and talk to your sister, persuade her to eat meat."

"No! No need!" Hao Tian quickly said.

"Huh?" Lu Ran was puzzled, "Why not anymore?"

"Uh." Hao Tian suddenly found himself at a loss for words.

He certainly didn't dare to outright say, hurry up and leave, stop lingering around Lord Wang Quan.

After all, since Lord Wang Quan favored Lu Ran, and here Hao Tian was trying to drive them away in secret, that was asking for trouble...

"Let's do this," Lu Ran considered, then spoke up, "We've intruded long enough, and I want to go back and study the copper coin.

Our team will first return to the nearest Bamboo Village to rest.

In the next few days, I'll pack more meals and deliver them to your sister, to ensure she eats well and to admonish her a little more."

Hao Tian remained silent, his emotions complicated, but after some contemplation, he nodded.

No matter his thoughts, for a brother, his sister's health and well-being were always the top priority.

"Let's go," Lu Ran called out to the group, heading for the outside of the hall.

Not long after entering the front yard, Lu Ran remembered something, turned around, and looked up at the open window on the second floor.

He shouted loudly, "Hey you, you've eaten the duck wings!"

Hao Tian's mouth hung open as he looked at the "blatant" Lu Ran.

None of your business!

How could you be so bold?

"You hear me?" Under Hao Tian's astonished gaze, Lu Ran shouted again, "If you don't eat, I will!"

Others naturally assumed that Lu Ran was talking about eating duck wings.

But Li Rouyin knew what Lu Ran was claiming.

With Lord Wang Quan's attitude toward Lu Ran, if he asked, perhaps he could really get more copper coins.

Li Rouyin's heart began to bleed again...

From the second-floor window, a faint response finally came, "Hmm."

Lu Ran smiled with satisfaction, nodded towards Hao Tian as a sign, "Done!"

Hao Tian: ? ? ?

"We're leaving now, no need to see us out, goodbye," Lu Ran called out to the group, quickly departing.

Hao Tian stood in place for quite some time before turning and looking up at the second-floor window.

Trying to cope with his feelings, he couldn't help saying, "Rouyin! I've tried to persuade you every day and you ignored me.

This Lu Ran meets you once, and you eat just because he says?"

Indoors, a cool voice replied, "Oh, then I won't eat."

"No, no, no!" Hao Tian's nerves were frayed, "I was wrong, please eat, eat more..."

Chapter 156: Returning Home (2000 monthly tickets added)

Over the next few days, Lu Ran and the others continued their training.

They also visited Li Rouyin at Youhuang Crossing, bringing her sliced bamboo shoots and such.

Hmm... and incidentally feasting on various exclusive pastries at her place.

It really hit the spot~

What puzzled Hao Tian was that under Lu Ran's persuasion, Li Rouyin did start eating properly.

And Lu Ran's method of persuasion was quite consistent; he only ever said one thing: I'm going to fight you for the food!

What's the difference between that and teasing a three-year-old?

But Li Rouyin totally fell for it!

Every time Lu Ran threatened, she'd obediently eat her meals, which quite frankly surprised everyone.

Disbelieving, Hao Tian even tried threatening his sister, saying he'd compete with her for the food.

All he got was a cold glance from Li Rouyin.

Her unfocused, empty gaze sent chills across Hao Tian's scalp!

Still not convinced, Hao Tian ventured out of Demon Cave-Bamboo Sea to the city and bought a lot of cooked food.

Once again, it proved: Lu Ran was really something else!

Even though Li Rouyin didn't eat much, she did eat, and that attitude was clear.

This time, Hao Tian had to concede.

He could only console himself that since his sister and Lu Ran were similar, both strange in their own ways, she might be more willing to listen to him.

Huh... that must be it.

As days passed, approaching the tenth, Lu Ran and his team began to hastily complete their assignments.

Their situation was like having played madly for 30 days of vacation, then frantically finishing homework the night before school resumed!

An old saying goes:

A pen, a lamp, a night, a miracle!

Lu Ran and his companions performed a miracle.

In just three days, they completed over 20 days of homework.

With two capable assistants!

One was a Copper Armor Guard!

Yes, Chang Ying chopped bamboo while crazily pulling draws.

As soon as the cooldown ended, she'd go for a five-treasures draw.

Drawing other signs wasn't a loss either; if it were attack or defense signs, they could also help delay the bamboo.

Once the summoning sign appeared, things really took off!

The imposing Copper Armor Guard was indeed an excellent hand for tough tasks!

Lu Ran and his team tied up the cut Evil Bamboo in bundles and loaded them onto the Copper Armor Guard.

At Chang Ying's command, she and the guard rushed out, heading straight for the nearest Bamboo Village.

Since the Copper Armor Guard could only last for 5 minutes, master and servant had to run like mad...

Of course, each Bamboo Village had military soldiers guarding it.

A Ling Sign believer rushing towards Bamboo Village with a heroic guard at the speed of a hundred-meter sprint sure entertained the soldiers.

Lu Ran's squad had another helper—Hao Tian!

Brother Hao was indeed a good brother.

To thank Lu Ran, Hao Tian volunteered to help the team complete their experiential assignments.

An East Thunder believer, like the finest rider in the world!

The moment Hao Tian lowered his head, no one could catch up.

Even if Lu Ran activated Divine Technique-Immortal Hoof, he could only sigh in envy.

An East Thunder believer was really like "a trail of sparks with lightning"!

Crashing into Bamboo Village with a crackling sound...

What's that? Our assignments won't be completed?

Joking,

my team has The Flash...

Until the morning of the tenth, Lu Ran and his companions, escorted by Hao Tian, walked out of the scenic Demon Cave.

"Brother Lu, don't you want to stay a few more days? Isn't your school supposed to give you a vacation?"

Under the lanterns and inside the military barracks, Hao Tian looked at Lu Ran, somewhat reluctant.

By now, Hao Tian's mixed feelings had been suppressed.

He just hoped that Lu Ran would stay a few more days so that his sister would eat more.

"I have a mission on the fifteenth, I've told you several times," Lu Ran said helplessly.

Hao Tian could only nod, his heart also feeling a bit helpless.

The trio of Deng Yu, Tian Tian, and Chang Ying had no missions; after all, Rain Alley City had experienced something special on the last fifteenth.

Nevertheless, they chose to return to Rain Alley City, unwilling to lounge about in the Bamboo Sea.

Their families were in Rain Alley.

Even though there was a Divine Shrine Divine Sculpture to protect their parents at home,

they still hoped to be by their family's side on that dangerous and frightening fifteenth night.

"Here, let me teach you a trick," Lu Ran said. "Have you heard of the Tree Shadow Witch story?"

"Evil Demon-Tree Shadow Witch?" Hao Tian was a bit puzzled. "What's with that clan?"

Lu Ran: "When I was little and cried at night, my family would say:

If you don't go to sleep, the Tree Shadow Witch will come and get you!"

Hao Tian nodded: "I see."

Lu Ran lowered his voice: "Next time when you persuade your sister to eat, just tell her, if you don't eat nicely, I'll let Lu Ran come and fight you for it."

Hao Tian was speechless; if it were someone else saying that, he would have kicked them.

But the problem was that it was Lu Ran saying it!

Indeed, in front of Lu Ran, Li Rouyin acted quite like a three-year-old child.

"Use it sparingly," Lu Ran patted Hao Tian on the shoulder, "Just in case one day it annoys your sister too much, you'll have to face the consequences yourself."

Hao Tian shivered involuntarily.

He seemed to have envisioned his sister staring at him with hollow eyes...

Winter, the eleventh morning.

A train traveling from a small town in Jiangnan cut through the ice and snow of the north, arriving at a small city wrapped in silver frost.

"Wrapped in silver frost" sounds quite beautiful.

Unfortunately, this is Rain Alley City.

Even though the city was dressed in vast white snow, the gray, oppressive sky made it feel claustrophobic.

"Hmm~" Lu Ran stepped off the train and onto the platform.

He exhaled wisps of white mist, feeling the cold of the north.

"We're home." Tian Tian followed Lu Ran off the train, her little face looking up at the gray sky.

Faintly, snowflakes were floating down.

It was unclear whether it was actually snowing or if the cold wind was blowing accumulated snow.

The trip to Qiantang River-Bamboo Sea was like a beautiful but brief dream.

Now, having woken from the big dream, everyone was back to reality.

None of them, especially Lu Ran, felt any regret.

To him, only this small city gave him a sense of belonging.

Even his mother's city of Beijing, where he had lived for three years, still felt like he was a guest.

"Buzz~ Buzz..."

Lu Ran snapped back to reality and pulled out his phone from his pocket.

Seeing who was calling, he wasn't surprised; today was the eleventh of the lunar month, so it seemed a new city-defense task was being assigned.

Lu Ran answered the phone: "Uncle Sun, good morning."

"Actually answered the phone?" The voice of Captain Fang, Sun Zhengfang, came through the phone, "Heard the school arranged a nice place for you guys."

Did you come out of the Bamboo Sea?"

Lu Ran laughed: "Yes, I'm already home."

Sun Zhengfang asked: "Now that you're back, do you still want to join us for the task on the fifteenth?"

"Of course!" Lu Ran nodded without hesitation.

He had promised Lord Immortal Goat that he couldn't slack off on every fifteenth.

"Let's go." Chang Ying patted Lu Ran on the shoulder, leading him out of the station with the crowd.

"Okay." Sun Zhengfang anticipated Lu Ran's response and continued, "Your performance was very good during the last two nights of the fifteenth.

You helped us out in critical moments and killed many Barbaric Women during the Night of Ghosts, contributing greatly.

After discussing it in a meeting, the department decided to commend you."

"Oh?" Lu Ran perked up, his full attention on the phone, not even looking where he was going.

Chang Ying led Lu Ran forward like a "Black Armor Guard," and no one else could even touch him...

Sun Zhengfang: "The department already sent a letter to your school, awarding you 30 believer points."

"Only 30 points?" Lu Ran said with a laugh.

Sun Zhengfang: "Hang on, there's more.

To commend your outstanding contribution, the department specially approved a budget to make an exception this time and update your Black Luminous Stone Blade."

Lu Ran: "Ah?"

While he had indeed dreamed of upgrading his weapon, that was a thing of the past.

At this point, how could Lu Ran bear to give up his Silent Night Blade?

Sun Zhengfang seemed to understand Lu Ran's reaction, saying: "Got attached to it?"

Lu Ran honestly replied: "Uncle Sun knows, I've already named it Silent Night.

I'm never changing this blade in my lifetime."

"I mentioned it to the department too, but we still have to follow the procedures," Sun Zhengfang said immediately, "Since that's the case, should we change the reward to Divine Power Pearls?"

"Sure!" Lu Ran responded crisply.

Who would complain about having more Divine Power?

As Lu Ran continued to level up, he became a "kaleidoscope of techniques," naturally needing stronger endurance.

"Then we'll meet on the fifteenth of the lunar month, wait for the message," Sun Zhengfang reminded him again, "Prepare well in the next few days."

Lu Ran's heart tightened: "Did you guys predict something again?"

"Not at all," Sun Zhengfang reassured, "I'm just giving you some advice; otherwise, what's the point of me being the captain?"

Lu Ran: "..."

It wasn't odd for Lu Ran to react this way, considering that Rain Alley City had experienced three special incidents in a row.

At this point, the entire city was on edge, everyone as nervous as startled birds.

As Lu Ran hung up the phone, Deng Yutang asked, "Brother Lu, what's this 30 points?"

Lu Ran replied: "Last fifteenth, didn't I join the patrol team for combat?"

"Oh, you should." Deng Yutang's eyes filled with envy, believing it was well-deserved for Lu Ran.

Just talking about that brief, blurry video in the grade group chat, showing Lu Ran charging at the Barbaric Woman, got Deng Yutang's blood pumping.

The style Lu Ran showed in just a few seconds was enough for everyone to admire!

And to silence all doubts and deter all mischief.

While talking, everyone walked out of the exit and once again stood under a familiar eave.

"Wait here, the driver will be here soon." Deng Yutang looked at the familiar scene and couldn't help but sigh.

"Don't get discouraged." Tian Tian, sensitive as always, quietly comforted him.

Deng Yutang shook his head: "I just suddenly remembered, that rainy night before, we were also standing here.

Brother Lu inspired me with a bowl of 'chicken blood,' saying we'd overturn this world together."

Chang Ying looked curiously at them; she wasn't part of the team that night.

Deng Yutang: "Now, Brother Lu is already on the path to overturning the world, and I'm a bit slow."

Lu Ran raised his hand and patted Deng Yutang heavily on the shoulder: "Deng Yutang, a fervent believer of the Red Scarf, doesn't need much motivation, right?"

Upon hearing this, Deng Yutang nodded.

Lu Ran changed the subject: "Or maybe, you should also address me as 'Ran God' in your heart?

That way, you might accept it better."

Deng Yutang laughed: "I did call you that during last month's morning class, but you told me to change it back."

"My point is, address me in your heart," Lu Ran straightforwardly stated his own scheming plan, "plant a seed first.

Once it takes root, everything will naturally fall into place."

Deng Yutang frowned slightly, understanding what Lu Ran meant.

But he always felt that Lu Ran was implying something more...

Chapter 157: "Heavenly Pride

At noon, in Yuxiang Family Community.

"Hmm."

In the small bedroom, Lu Ran sat up in a daze with the tabby cat still deep in sleep cradled in his arms.

He spent the night in the car with "clangs" and "bangs," and no amount of sleep seemed to be enough to shake off the fatigue.

Now, having slept at home for the entire morning, he finally felt somewhat revitalized.

Lu Ran got up and headed to the kitchen, rummaging through the cupboard before opening a can of luncheon meat.

"Meow~"

At the entrance of the kitchen, the little tabby's mew was heard.

"Heh," Lu Ran looked at the adorable tabby and couldn't help laughing out loud.

I was holding you when I sat up just now, and you were still sleeping like a lump of mud.

Now, the moment I open the can, you're awake?

"Come." Lu Ran placed the luncheon meat on a cutting board and casually drew a kitchen knife.

The tabby meowed and with a graceful leap, it jumped onto the countertop.

Lu Ran sliced a small piece of meat and put it in front of the tabby: "This is for you."

He picked up the remaining large chunk of luncheon meat, took a big bite, and muttered with his mouth full, "This is for me."

"Meow~"

After a quick meal, Lu Ran washed his hands thoroughly and returned to sit cross-legged in front of the shrine in the bedroom.

"Lord Immortal Goat, this journey has been quite fruitful," Lu Ran muttered, touching the Copper Coin on the red string on his wrist.

Gradually, a faint mist began to drift inside the room.

As he cultivated, Lu Ran sighed, "Lord Wang Quan really has it tough, reduced to such a state."

Suddenly, a hoarse transmission broke the silence: "At least Wang Quan still exists."

If you were to be exposed, it might be hard to find wiggle room."

Lu Ran pursed his lips, staying silent.

White Sheep Jade Carving: "The Forget Spring Sect simply feeds on Origin Energy to strengthen themselves.

You, on the other hand, are using Origin Energy as a foundation to cultivate your own God Demon Series.

Which do you think is more serious?"

Lu Ran: "..."

No matter how powerful Wang Quan is, she only strengthens herself.

Lu Ran is building a power base, crafting a system that can deceive the world and replace the existing order.

Your technique? Mine now.

Your sect, your Believers? Mine now.

Your social status, your influence and control over this world, including the rules you've set...

All mine!

So, who is more serious?

"I should keep focusing on my cultivation," Lu Ran said softly.

All of a sudden, his motivation to cultivate became even stronger.

The days of cultivation at home were monotonous, tranquil, yet fulfilling.

What pleasantly surprised Lu Ran was that on the thirteenth day of the lunar month, he felt a sense of swelling within him.

Divine Power within his body was restless, as if it could break through and advance at any moment!

Overjoyed, Lu Ran meditated even more assiduously in front of the shrine.

If he could advance to Stream Realm·Fifth Rank before the city defense, he would naturally have a better chance of surviving!

Moreover, after reaching the Fifth Rank within the major realm, there wouldn't be a need for accumulation of quantity.

Just one flash of enlightenment!

That is to say, if Lu Ran could advance to Stream Realm·Fifth Rank, then he might be able to step into the River Realm·First Rank in the very next second!

If he could take part in the city defense as someone from the River Realm, wouldn't it be delightful?

Lu Ran was full of anticipation and exerted himself in arduous cultivation, however...

He thought too much.

This "swelling" in Lu Ran lasted till the fifteenth day of the lunar month without coming to fruition.

"Alas..."

In the early morning, a sigh echoed in the small bedroom.

In front of the shrine, Lu Ran, who was sitting cross-legged, slowly opened his eyes.

"Indeed, every step is a challenge," Lu Ran stood up, brought his palms together respectfully, and bowed obediently before the shrine.

To think I was fantasizing about advancing to the River Realm, to be seen as a powerhouse in the eyes of the world!

It's already the fifteenth, and I'm still stuck at Stream Realm·Fourth Rank.

Awkward~

Lu Ran took a step to the left and approached the windowsill.

The sky was sprinkling with light snow, turning the whole world a vast expanse of white.

It looked cold.

But to fight amidst the snow, wouldn't that have a charm of its own?

The blood of the Evil Demon Clan spilled onto the pure white snow field would certainly paint exquisite blossoms of blood...

It should be beautiful, right?

Lu Ran turned his head, looking towards the coat rack next to the door.

Should I wear someone's scarf?

Lu Ran walked over and took down a dark red knitted scarf:

"This way, does it count as if you're fighting alongside me?"

Twenty minutes later, dressed in a sleek black combat suit, wrapped in a wide scarf, and carrying twin sabers, Lu Ran stepped out of his home.

The gathering place for the patrol this time was changed to Hexi Park.

Lu Ran walked alone through a world blanketed in white.

For a long time, not a single person was in sight.

Not until he entered Hexi Park and reached the artificial lake did he finally see someone's dashing figure.

Tsk tsk~

Big Nightmare reminiscing about the glorious days of the past?

Although winter had arrived, the artificial lake was not yet frozen.

Right now, Deng Yuxiang was standing on the bow of a black-awning boat, aimlessly drifting in the lake.

In the same spot as the Night Charm stood last month on the fifteenth.

It's a pity, though, that Big Nightmare was wearing a modern-style dark woolen coat.

Despite looking stylish, the outfit didn't match the ancient traditional charm.

"Sister!" Lu Ran called out loudly.

Deng Yuxiang was roused from her reverie and turned her head toward the lakeside.

Upon seeing Lu Ran, a trace of a smile finally appeared on her expressionless face.

She then waved to Lu Ran, signaling him to come over.

Lu Ran: "..."

Do I look like I can fly to you?

Wait until I advance to the River Realm and activate the Night Charm Sculpture, then I'll be able to walk on air.

Wait a minute!

The Night Charm Clan are the sworn enemies of Big Nightmare, right?

If I showcase the Evil Technique-Night Dance in front of her, climbing up into the heavens...

Won't she behead me with a single strike?

"Pfft!"

Suddenly, a long and thin Big Horse-cutting Saber shot out from the lake!

The wet saber, dripping with chilly droplets, thrust straight at Lu Ran, terrifying him!

"Whoo~"

Wind and snow danced together.

The Night-slaying Great Saber steadied itself before Lu Ran, its hilt lowering into his palm.

A true Divine Weapon indeed!

It's so cool... Hmm, though a bit chilly.

Lu Ran gripped the cold blade tightly, gliding over the lake's surface with the aid of the Night-slaying Great Saber, and headed straight for the boat's bow.

"Thump."

Lu Ran landed steadily on the boat's bow, watching as the Night-slaying Great Saber plunged diagonally into the water, vanishing from sight.

Clasping his own twin sabers, Lu Ran's eyes were filled with envy as he looked in the direction where the Night-slaying Great Saber disappeared.

"Nice scarf," Deng Yuxiang commented, examining Lu Ran.

"Not bad," Lu Ran said with a strange expression, looking at the miniature camera tucked into the collar of Deng Yuxiang's coat, "Your camera isn't bad either."

"Heh," Deng Yuxiang laughed and gave Lu Ran a stare.

"Is that a law enforcement recorder?" Lu Ran asked curiously, "Are you guys required to wear those when defending the city on the fifteenth?"

Deng Yuxiang sighed softly, "I'm participating in a program."

Lu Ran: ???

A warrior of the River Realm·Fifth Rank and a North Wind Believer participating in a program?

Are you kidding me?

Deng Yuxiang pursed her lips as if she wanted to say something but seemed apprehensive, so she didn't speak.

Lu Ran grew even more puzzled: "What kind of program is it that could lure you out?

Is this a mission arranged by the bureau?"

Deng Yuxiang said, "It's a task given by the school, which the bureau also approved."

"Oh, a task from the school..." Lu Ran stopped mid-sentence, his expression turning to one of shock as he stared at Deng Yuxiang, "Aren't you a Moon Gazer? How did you become a student again?"

A smile appeared on Deng Yuxiang's face again, seemingly enjoying Lu Ran's puzzled look.

"I'm only 20 years old, why wouldn't I be a student?" she replied.

Lu Ran: "The first time we met, I asked if you were a college student!"

I remember clearly, you told me you were already working."

"Yes, specially recruited by the Divine People Bureau," Deng Yuxiang's smile grew wider, "I just didn't need to attend classes anymore.

But I haven't graduated from my school; I'm still a junior."

Lu Ran: "..."

Nice—

So an individual should suffice with one label.

Now you're both a police flower and a female college student...

What exactly are you aiming for?

"What's that expression for?" Deng Yuxiang frowned slightly with a hint of threatening tone, "Do I not look like a student to you?"

"Uh," Lu Ran scratched his head, "Maybe you're too powerful, and I have a filter."

Deng Yuxiang was already very "imposing," both beautiful and cool.

Plus, with the poise of a warrior forged through constant battling on the brink of death, it was hard to perceive her as just a student.

"Hmph," Deng Yuxiang snorted, letting Lu Ran off the hook.

Lu Ran inquired, "So what about the program?"

"Da Xia officially organized it, and the school approached me," Deng Yuxiang answered.

"Da Xia officially?"

With all that's happening, Da Xia still has the time to organize programs?

"Yes," Deng Yuxiang gave a soft sigh, "We both understand the situation on the fifteenth of every month since this June."

Lu Ran silently nodded.

Deng Yuxiang lifted a hand to cover the microphone on the camera: "This society needs a morale boost.

People need something to lift their spirits and something to rely on."

Lu Ran understood.

In the recent months, the intensity of Evil Demon invasions had suddenly increased, and people have suffered and gone through too much.

In such grim times, people indeed need hope and light.

The program that Deng Yuxiang was participating in was, of course, a cultural product.

It was similar to how Lu Ran once fell asleep to the sounds of comedy sketches on the night of the fifteenth, seeking some mental solace.

But this time, Da Xia was going to make a bold move!

After all, the battlefield is exceedingly brutal, and many images are not suitable for public viewing.

Of course, this world is also quite special.

Even ordinary citizens have likely witnessed the battlefield with their own eyes, if not experienced life and death themselves.

The frequency of Evil Demon invasions is too high, occurring like clockwork every month.

Those who survive, how could they possibly be flowers from a greenhouse?

If, on the night of the fifteenth, people could watch Human Clan warriors slaughtering Evil Demons on the screen, it would undoubtedly immensely lift the public spirit.

Lu Ran murmured, "The participants in the program must all be particularly strong, right?"

Da Xia wanted to showcase its martial strength and lift morale.

If those participating in the program died on the battlefield, how could that work?

Deng Yuxiang nodded slightly: "Each trial campus sends out only one person.

The student must be above River Realm-Third Rank.

Those like me, who possess a Divine Weapon, are prioritized."

Lu Ran nodded, as it should be!

It would be a disaster if it went wrong.

Deng Yuxiang spoke softly, "Currently, the program is only shown to a small group of people.

After two trial broadcasts on the fifteenth of December and January, it will officially air on the next Lunar New Year's fifteenth."

"What's the program called?"

"I think it's called 'Heavenly Pride'."

"Wow, that name is indeed domineering."

Deng Yuxiang smiled: "Work hard, and if you become a freshman next year, you might get to join the fight."

Clearly, she had full confidence in Lu Ran's strength!

But Lu Ran replied: "Tonight, is there a ranking? Any rewards?"

Deng Yuxiang nodded gently, "Yes, the rewards are quite generous."

"Got it, sister!" Lu Ran waved his hand broadly and with high spirits, "Tonight, I'll help you clinch the first place!"

Deng Yuxiang could only smile helplessly.

She placed a hand on Lu Ran's head and rubbed it gently but firmly:

"Okay, good."

Chapter 158: Ambition!

"Heavenly Pride, Heavenly Pride..."

Lu Ran looked at the calm surface of the lake, his thoughts agile and active.

Da Xia's official program was undoubtedly of golden quality.

Mobilizing the entire country's resources to select a handful of people for battle, how could the quality possibly be low?

The mere name of the program alone was enough to make the youth from all over Da Xia break their skulls and rush in, wasn't it?

To put it unpleasantly, you don't even need to perform well!

As long as you were selected, wouldn't that mean you've been recognized as "Heavenly Pride" by the official authorities of Da Xia?

Setting aside the various benefits the participants could obtain for now, the key point was that behind each person stood a deity!

Thinking of this, Lu Ran's thoughts grew even more active.

Such a significant project would certainly be broadcast nationwide, even around the whole world, the influence of this program would be unprecedented!

So behind this project, could there also be the shadow of deities' involvement?

Historically, the All Gods within the borders of Da Xia typically only recruited believers from within the realm.

It seemed now, at this special moment in time, the All Gods were ready to expand and exert their influence abroad?

After the program was broadcast, those foreign guests who witnessed the strong presence of Da Xia's believers might even come to join out of admiration?

To deities, humans were humans, with no distinction in skin color or race.

As long as you were from the Human Clan, you could provide the exclusive Power of Faith that belonged to humans, which the deities would greatly relish!

"Tsk tsk~"

Lu Ran pursed his lips, unsure if his thoughts were correct.

But the strengthening of the Evil Demon Clan was evident for all to see.

Various signs also indicated again and again that the deities were indeed expanding their recruitment.

"Deng Yuxiang!!"

A loud shout yanked Lu Ran out of his musings.

Deng Yuxiang and Lu Ran simultaneously turned their heads, looking toward the lake's edge.

There, they saw Sun Zhengfang with a solemn face, loudly commanding, "What are you doing? Take your hand off, don't cover the camera!"

Deng Yuxiang: "..."

Lu Ran looked toward Deng Yuxiang and saw a rarely seen expression.

Big Nightmare wasn't very happy, but she forced herself not to explode.

A bit amusing~

So long a time has passed, and this was the first time Lu Ran had seen Big Nightmare being scolded.

Without a doubt, Deng Yuxiang was a genuine powerhouse. As a "Sword Cultivator," she was a veritable killing machine.

It's not an exaggeration to say that, given a minute, she could have Sun Zhengfang die 60 times over.

Um... maybe even more than sixty if she put in extra effort.

Sun Zhengfang had always been very polite to Big Nightmare, but today...

It was clear to see that "Heavenly Pride" was indeed a major project as Sun Zhengfang had even invoked his identity as the old captain.

"Hmm?" Deng Yuxiang naturally noticed the schadenfreude in Lu Ran's eyes.

She expressionlessly dropped her hand from the camera and let it rest on Lu Ran's shoulder.

"Hisss..." Lu Ran sharply inhaled in pain.

He almost thought his shoulder was going to be crushed by her.

Good lord~

She truly was the pinnacle of River Realm, truly one of the first batch officially selected as Da Xia's genius!

Such strength in her hand!

Almost deadly...

"Smiling?" Deng Yuxiang's lips curled with an indistinct smile, speaking softly.

"Wrong, wrong," Lu Ran rapidly begged for mercy, "so many people are watching, don't reveal your true nature... cough, behave better.

You're not just representing yourself now.

You represent your school, the Divine People Bureau, the Beifeng Sect, and the basic quality of Da Xia Country's citizens..."

Deng Yuxiang was truly not okay!

A series of titles heavily pressured her, weighing her down significantly.

She wanted to say something but seemed wary of something.

In the end, she raised a finger and touched her lips; her slightly narrowed eyes carried a hint of severity.

Lu Ran decisively shut his mouth, sensing that it was time to accept the current advantage.

He could feel that Deng Yuxiang was extremely uncomfortable.

Hmm... even more amusing~

"You two, come here," Sun Zhengfang called again.

"Whoa!" Lu Ran exclaimed.

Big Nightmare scooped up Lu Ran, and gusts whipped around their feet.

The two traced a parabola across the lake's surface, and with a flurry of frost and snow, they landed firmly on the shore.

"Ergh." Lu Ran quickly stepped aside, well-advised to not provoke Big Nightmare any further for now.

"Come here, bring your camera too," Sun Zhengfang gestured for Lu Ran to follow, heading towards the dock cabin.

"I have to bring it too?" Lu Ran immediately followed.

Sun Zhengfang laughed, "If only Xiao Deng wears one, wouldn't that make you the main character?"

Lu Ran: "..."

Right!

Lu Ran entered the dock cabin and saw a familiar figure.

"Brother Wei." Lu Ran greeted.

If it's unclear whether it's a dragon or a tiger, calling by the surname can't go wrong.

Wei Long nodded, "You're here."

Lu Ran: "Where's your brother?"

Wei Long: "Little Tiger has returned to his own team; I'll be guarding you tonight."

"You're pretty clever," Sun Zhengfang, naturally shrewd, laughed, "not showing any fear, you drew out his identity."

"Heh," Deng Yuxiang followed into the room, sneering, "He's got more than a bit of cunning."

The woman's words didn't carry much mockery, but rather a hint of praise?

Indeed, just as others had assessed, Lu Ran speculated, "So, no special events tonight?"

Without Wei Hu on the team, it unquestionably revealed this message.

Otherwise, the team's configuration wouldn't be downgraded.

On the other hand, it should also be due to Lu Ran himself, right?

Lu Ran believed that on the fifteenth of last month, his performance was superb!

With a completely terrifying combat power that could be described as "slaughtering in all directions," he surely earned deep trust from the Divine People Bureau.

"We can't discuss this," Sun Zhengfang handed the equipment to Lu Ran.

Lu Ran accepted the small camera, turned his head to look at Deng Yuxiang, and internally sighed in regret.

If there were no special events, Deng Yuxiang's performance in battle would probably be greatly reduced.

It would likely be very difficult to achieve impressive results.

Quick-witted as she was, Deng Yuxiang understood Lu Ran's gaze and softly said, "Adjust your mindset."

Lu Ran: "Hm?"

Deng Yuxiang once again covered the camera: "My personal performance is not important. What matters is this city, the people within it.

If there's no Evil Demon invasion tonight and I have no chance to showcase, that would be for the best..."

Deng Yuxiang's abrupt stop in her words came because of the camera in Lu Ran's hanging hand, capturing her towering figure from a sneaky low angle.

"I understand," Lu Ran nodded vigorously.

In the face of major principles, Lu Ran's ideology was without a doubt sound.

His affection for this small city and for the people still residing in his hometown was no less than that of Big Nightmare.

If Lu Ran didn't possess certain qualities, with his sinister nature, he could only have grown even more rapidly!

This wasn't without proof.

That Red Scarf Believer, Chen Jing, still alive, was the best evidence.

Otherwise, Chen Jing would have become fertilizer in Lu Ran's Sculpture Garden last month.

With convictions and principles in his heart, there was no need to declare them to outsiders; Lu Ran was always silently acting on them and demonstrating with actions.

But Lu Ran wouldn't pass up the impression points that Deng Yuxiang should gain.

Each situation has its place.

Now that he was in the game, he should seize every opportunity and make a name for himself!

"Mm," Deng Yuxiang nodded, finally saying nothing and stepped outside.

Standing outdoors, she breathed a sigh of relief.

Deng Yuxiang wasn't even sure whether Lu Ran purposely induced her to say those words.

Inside, someone's voice came through again, "Uncle Sun, you should suggest to those above, us war correspondents need an equipment upgrade.

It would be best to fix it on our heads; the camera's constant wobble is not good."

Deng Yuxiang, standing in the icy snow outside the cabin, felt somewhat helpless, yet a warmth surfaced in her heart.

Hearing that, it truly seemed deliberate.

This guy really was...

...

Night gradually fell, and the snow stopped.

However, the gusting wind never ceased, stirring up layers of frost and cold to the face.

The four-person squad walked through the empty streets, setting off on the same patrol route as last month.

"By the way, sister, which university are you from?" Lu Ran quickened his pace to reach Deng Yuxiang's side.

Deng Yuxiang: "..."

Since the advent of the camera, she always felt that Lu Ran's every word was calculated.

"Sister?"

"You don't know that and you're asking me?"

"Well, a university only has one battle quota, right!" Lu Ran chuckled, "I'm attending university next year; I'm worried about snatching your spot."

Deng Yuxiang's eyes widened slightly as she looked at Lu Ran.

"Hahaha!" Sun Zhengfang laughed heartily from behind.

The always serious Wei Long also revealed a smile.

For this rising star, his growth and performance along the way were deeply known by everyone in the Divine People Bureau.

"Wu Lie River University." Deng Yuxiang volunteered her school.

"Nice school," Lu Ran nodded.

In this world, universities with the privilege of being named after a province were the leading institutions of that province.

"Come be my junior," Deng Yuxiang casually said, "Right now, it's only a pilot broadcast, with very few pilot schools.

In the future, each school shouldn't have just one quota, right?"

"That's fine, when the time comes, let us be a pair of twin stars... Oh, sister," Lu Ran asked again, "what's the reward for your ranking this time?"

Deng Yuxiang pondered for a moment, saying, "There are Believer points, as well as weapons and equipment."

Lu Ran uttered an "oh" and didn't speak further.

Big Nightmare had already cultivated her own Divine Weapon; other weapons would probably not catch her interest.

What mattered the most was the Believer points and the immense influence that ranking could bring to one's own Divine Sect!

In his case,

As a believer of the Nine-level God-Immortal Sheep, to trample all those believers of Sword One, North Wind, Dong Ting, and others underfoot...

And to display it clearly before all people!

How exhilarating would that be?

What's called a public execution?!

Suddenly, Deng Yuxiang spoke, "It's said that the scores are cumulative, calculated annually.

The final ranking rewards supposedly include Divine Weapons and Magic Artifacts."

Lu Ran: "What did you say?"

Deng Yuxiang smiled as she watched Lu Ran, "What, interested now?"

"Divine Weapons and Magic Artifacts are living beings with Artifact Spirits; how could they possibly be given as prizes?" Lu Ran expressed his doubt.

Deng Yuxiang shook her head, unable to explain.

But the news was solid!

This also indicated how much Da Xia valued the project.

Even Divine Weapons and Magic Artifacts, such precious and rare treasures, could be offered as prizes...

Chapter 159: scene-stealing youths

"Squeak, squeak..."

Lu Ran stepped on the snow-covered street, making a unique noise with each step.

The eerie stillness before a major battle was truly challenging to endure.

Besides listening to the footsteps of several people, Lu Ran could also hear someone's Night-slaying Great Saber continuously dragging through the snow, leaving behind marks.

However, the Night-slaying Great Saber wasn't in its owner's hand but was slanted on Deng Yuxiang's back.

This continuous snowy trail of saber marks was a result of the saber playfully acting on its own.

It was as if it wanted to rip a huge gash in the earth, leaving nothing unscathed wherever the blade went.

Truly, the saber was as fierce as its owner.

Could this be a plus point?

At least it could sculpt the owner's image, right?

Lu Ran thought to himself as he aimed the camera toward that solitary figure in front.

"Boom, boom!" A sudden roaring sound came from the distance.

Lu Ran instinctively tightened his grip on his twin sabers.

It had finally begun!

Almost at the same time, Deng Yuxiang ahead stopped walking.

A rich wave of energy surged right in front, and seven or eight Evil Dogs burst forth.

"Swoosh~ Swoosh~"

Deng Yuxiang raised her palm, and eight Wind Blades flew out from her palm.

Not only that, but the Night-slaying Great Saber on her back also flew out.

"Woof!"

"Woof!!" The barking sounds continued as evil teeth appeared out of thin air.

The Evil Dog Clan, not known for their intelligence, reacted to the immediate crisis, trying to shred the Wind Blades.

Only one Evil Dog bared its fangs at the human woman.

Deng Yuxiang pointed her shoe on the ground, lightly stepping back to allow four evil teeth to viciously snap in front of her.

Such precise control of distance truly scored points!

"Yes, just like that," Lu Ran muttered under his breath, captivated by her grace.

Naturally, Lu Ran didn't steal the spotlight as these were just lesser dogs, no need for him to join the fight.

He sidestepped and moved to the woman's side.

Deng Yuxiang reached out with one hand, her fingertips lightly touching as if there were invisible threads leading the Wind Blades in battle.

"Whoo~"

"Whoo..." Mournful howls came over, utterly pitiful.

The Wind Blades slashed through the Evil Dogs, tearing open wounds that were shocking to see.

Blood spurted out, splattering everywhere, staining the pristine snow.

"Yes, absolutely right!"

Lu Ran was quite satisfied, of course, he fully supported the cause against the Big Nightmare.

For the first time, he placed himself in the shoes of a war correspondent and began analyzing the composition.

Endless frost and snow danced wildly around the woman standing among them, creating a profound atmosphere!

She controlled the Wind Blades to shuttle swiftly, continuously claiming the lives of Evil Demons.

"God!" Lu Ran nodded vigorously, "Master of life and death... huh?"

He suddenly took a step back as four evil teeth fiercely snapped just before him.

Lu Ran was speechless.

What do I have to do with this?

That Night-slaying Great Saber had already cut you in half, and you still had time to bite at me amidst your busy schedule?

"Whoosh~"

The Night-slaying Great Saber flew back, indicating the end of the battle.

Eight Evil Dogs all laid defeated, bones scattered and strewn across the snowy field.

A light "snap" sound.

The long saber handle fell straight into Deng Yuxiang's forward-reaching hand.

The wild gale blew her long hair about, revealing her stunningly attractive face.

Shah~

Just as Lu Ran was inwardly admiring, the woman suddenly turned her head to look at him.

"What's wrong?" Lu Ran asked puzzled.

Deng Yuxiang spoke coldly, "You are on a mission, no need to pay so much attention to me."

Lu Ran grinned, "You're my teammate, if I don't pay attention...huh?"

Deng Yuxiang immediately turned her head, following the direction of Lu Ran's gaze.

Standing at the corner of the street was a tall building, and from the window of a fourth-floor apartment hung a lean figure.

Adorable tiger-head cap, flowing yellow paper in the wind...

Evil Demon-Ghost Talisman Doll?

It's hard to imagine what the occupants inside the building must feel seeing a pale little hand pressed against the window, revealing a ghostly pale face.

This is terrifying!

"Go."

Deng Yuxiang swung her big saber sharply, inwardly instructing, "Don't damage the building."

The Night-slaying Great Saber hummed, tracing a beautiful arc closely past the building, aiming straight for the Ghost Talisman Doll.

"Hmm?" The Ghost Talisman Doll apparently sensed the faint sound of wind and immediately turned its head.

Danger!

In a critical moment, the yellow paper on its tiger-head cap flew off.

Instantly, the Ghost Talisman Doll's eyeballs vanished, leaving only two pitch-black eye sockets.

Especially chilling!

The sharp Night-slaying Great Saber mercilessly split open the Ghost Talisman Doll's chest, piercing through its lean body.

Yet, the Ghost Talisman Doll suffered no damage.

As the yellow paper fell from the hat, its body, made purely of energy, completely dematerialized, becoming immune to all physical attacks.

"Waaah!"

The Ghost Talisman Doll cried out, plummeting downward.

Lu Ran opened his mouth but ultimately didn't emit a sheep bleat.

The distance was a bit too far; for Divine Technique·Desolate Sound to be effective, Lu Ran needed to shout very loudly.

Here comes the problem: If the Ghost Talisman Doll can be lured by Lu Ran's shout, ordinary people in the high-rise could also be drawn out by Lu Ran's call!

This is no joke!

Soon enough, who knows how many citizens, with red eyes, carrying kitchen knives or rolling pins, would come after Lu Ran...

Actually, it doesn't really matter.

Lu Ran was very confident in securing the final victory...

His real worry was that while people rushed out of their homes, on their way to kill him, they might just be caught by an Evil Demon.

"Don't go in!" Sun Zhengfang commanded, "We'll just wait in this area for the Ghost Talisman Doll to attack."

Using oneself as bait is a quality every Moon Gazer should have.

"Lu Ran." Deng Yuxiang softly spoke.

"Got it!" Lu Ran closed his eyes, needing no further elaboration from Big Nightmare.

Sun Zhengfang added, "Get off the ground."

Deng Yuxiang stepped toward Lu Ran and raised her palm toward the approaching Wei Long, "I'll handle it."

Wei Long halted his pace and then turned to fly Sun Zhengfang away.

Deng Yuxiang, with one arm, encircled Lu Ran and gently lifted off.

In this relatively open battlefield, there's no need to look for yellow paper, just need a single blast of North Wind Roar from the North Wind Believer!

Sniff~

Lu Ran, with eyes closed and head bowed, his lower face deeply buried in a large knitted scarf, only his nose peeking out.

That ghastly thing really came from underground!

Lu Ran felt the increasingly near Ghost Energy with a sudden shock in his heart.

Another surge of Ghost Energy attacked from behind, approaching incredibly fast.

"Hmm?" Deng Yuxiang wasn't one to underestimate.

She abruptly turned around, just in time to see a little girl emerging from the distant snow.

Another Ghost Talisman Doll?

Indeed, this type of Evil Demon also has a characteristic of potentially appearing in pairs.

If this Ghost Talisman Doll dematerialized, it would have been very difficult for Deng Yuxiang to notice.

But the pale little hands of the opponent, holding a piece of black talisman paper...

That tiny bit of energy fluctuation could not escape the ears of a North Wind Believer.

"Whooo!!"

Deng Yuxiang's palm surged with Divine Power, and a fierce gale suddenly arose!

The powerful North Wind Believer was like a zero-frame start, a tornado suddenly arrived.

"Waaah!"

The Ghost Talisman Girl Doll immediately cried out.

The black talisman paper didn't stand a chance to be thrown as, along with the doll, it was devoured by the tornado.

The terrifying tornado quickly turned into a "Snow Tornado".

Impressive!

"Me~ee"

Lu Ran suddenly grabbed Deng Yuxiang's wrist, moving sharply to the side.

Having fought side-by-side for so long, they had quite the understanding, and Deng Yuxiang immediately grasped Lu Ran's intention.

Energy surged in her hand, forming the cannon stand in Lu Ran's hand, ready to fire.

As soon as Lu Ran stopped moving, Deng Yuxiang didn't hesitate and once again activated Divine Technique·North Wind Roar!

"Whooo!!"

The tornado struck again.

Truly pinpointing the target!

"Go ahead." Deng Yuxiang, fighting the urge to harm Lu Ran, immediately spread her arms.

Her hands each aimed at a tornado, continuously infusing Divine Power.

And Lu Ran, in her arms, naturally plummeted downward.

Lu Ran: "..."

Use me and then throw me away?

What am I in your eyes?

"Thud."

Lu Ran landed firmly on his feet, fortunately only from a height of about six to seven meters, with the snow below cushioning his fall.

Hmm... not painful.

Deng Yuxiang hovered in the air, the two rapidly spinning Snow Tornadoes tearing through a pair of Ghost Talisman Dolls.

In just a moment, the pair of Evil Demons were scattered to the wind under her command!

The Ghost Talisman family can make their bodies dematerialize, which is indeed strong, but its weaknesses are also apparent.

Previously, the similarly dematerializable Yin Flower Dame, upon being swallowed by Deng Yuxiang's tornado, immediately materialized.

Had that Yin Flower Dame hesitated even slightly...

Then she would have met the same fate as these two Ghost Talisman Dolls right now.

This shows that the Yin Flower Dame is much stronger than the Ghost Talisman Dolls.

The Yin Flower Dame could switch body states at will, freely, while the Ghost Talisman Dolls depended on yellow paper.

"Beautiful." Sun Zhengfang softly said, full of admiration.

Those in the know, naturally understand the intricacies!

How tricky the Ghost Talisman family can be is well known among the warriors.

However, such powerful Evil Demons, under the cooperation of Deng Yuxiang and Lu Ran, were instantaneously obliterated!

The cameras of Wei Long and Sun Zhengfang captured both Deng Yuxiang and Lu Ran.

Lu Ran's calm and keenness, Deng Yuxiang's decisiveness and output...

Their exquisite teamwork was fully captured in the footage.

And it was watched by the part of the review audience.

Inevitably, a considerable number of insiders focused on the young man in black!

This young man called "Lu Ran"...

Something seems a bit off?

Finding the Ghost Talisman Doll is naturally a primary challenge and the hardest one.

And yet, this young man in black, despite the distant tornadoes, still precisely located another Ghost Talisman Doll?

It's clear that he used Divine Technique to lure the Evil Demon from underground.

But that's not right!

Before the Ghost Talisman Doll even appeared, Lu Ran had already directed the North Wind Believer's hand towards where the enemy would emerge... Wait a moment!

His shout just now...

He seems to be an Immortal Sheep Believer?

Ah??

Recruited by some Divine People Bureau into the patrol team? The lamb who dared to enter the battlefield and kill enemies on the fifteenth night??

Chapter 160: Lu's good people

Someone indeed stole the show.

Undeniably, Deng Yuxiang performed exceptionally well, her demeanor was striking, and her attacks were fierce.

The problem is, that's exactly how she should be!

As one of the first disciples selected for the official list, if you don't have the skills, what right do you have to be deemed "Heavenly Pride"?

On the other hand, looking at that young man in black...

One could tell he was young, and that dark red knitted scarf couldn't fully cover his somewhat tender face.

Moreover, this young man was an Immortal Sheep Believer!

The grace he displayed on the battlefield truly caught the internal audit staff by surprise!

This... god damn...

Does the Immortal Sheep sect even have divisions of labor internally?

Where the hell did this battle sheep come from?

The audit personnel immediately reported the situation and began to investigate Lu Ran's personal information.

Far away in Rain Alley City, Lu Ran, naturally, had no idea about this situation.

He was still patrolling diligently, endeavoring to help Deng Yuxiang attain good results.

However, nothing special happened in Rain Alley City that night.

It seemed like heaven had finally taken pity, sparing the small, battered city for once.

Objectively speaking, this resulted in the battlefield not being very high-level.

Even though Deng Yuxiang had dominated and cut through the night of the fifteenth of winter...

It would still be tough for her to rank at the top of the Heavenly Pride list.

It was like taking an exam:

Deng Yuxiang received a primary school test, simple questions with a test score capped at 100 points.

Those who experienced special events got a college entrance exam paper, difficult questions but a full score of 150 points!

The score limits were not the same!

Lu Ran had no solution but to assist Deng Yuxiang as much as possible, helping her shine.

He didn't know that many eyes had already shifted towards him...

Dawn broke gradually, and Rain Alley City had a rare moment of normalcy.

On the team's patrol, Lu Ran came once again to the overpass outside Hexi Park.

"Ah..."

Lu Ran raised the Dawn Blade, and through the clear black ice material, he gazed at the white abyss of the sky.

The rising sun—the one hidden behind snowfall and frost—gave light to the world but did not wish to reveal itself.

No rosy clouds.

Still none.

Lu Ran's right hand gripped the Silent Night Blade tightly, the endless night of slaughter made him feel close to the blade's edge.

He felt even more that the Silent Night Blade was taking big steps forward on the path of gathering an Artifact Spirit.

Only this Dawn Blade, also a companion through the night, had yet to greet its moment.

"Why the sigh?"

Ahead in the distance, Deng Yuxiang suddenly stopped.

Lu Ran was somewhat helpless: "This Dawn Blade, it never meets with the dawn's rosy clouds."

Deng Yuxiang didn't turn around, and spoke softly, "Why are you fixated on the rosy clouds?"

Lu Ran explained: "On the day that the Night-slaying Great Saber transformed into a Divine Weapon, I was given some advice.

That morning, I set a goal for the Dawn Blade: to fight through the fifteenth night and bring forth dawn's rosy clouds."

Deng Yuxiang nodded lightly: "Sounds lovely."

Lu Ran looked at the Dawn Blade lifted above his head again, feeling silently regretful.

Deng Yuxiang suddenly said: "Is the focus on the dawn's rosy clouds?"

"Hm?"

"If you just want the rosy clouds, then go find a city with a pleasant climate, lift the blade every morning, and wait for the dawn's light."

Lu Ran: "..."

"Isn't that so?" Deng Yuxiang finally turned around, looking at Lu Ran, "The focus isn't on the rosy clouds.

It's on the bloodied night before greeting the rosy clouds."

Lu Ran silently looked at Deng Yuxiang.

Good Lord, a life coach?

"The day has dawned, Lu Ran," Deng Yuxiang said softly, "Rain Alley City has been defended, we've won."

Lu Ran nodded silently.

Deng Yuxiang gestured to the Dawn Blade: "Now, the blade in your hand, that's the dawn's rosy clouds you were looking for."

Her whisper entered his ears.

Lu Ran felt a stir in his heart, and in his hand, the invaluable Dawn Blade trembled slightly.

"Buzz~"

Lu Ran's face lit up with surprise as he looked at the Dawn Blade.

Do you approve as well?

The reaction of the weapon naturally meant that it was in the process of gathering its Artifact Spirit!

In the past, before the Night-slaying Great Saber had turned into a Divine Weapon, it would often react vehemently.

Reaching that stage meant that it might undergo a metamorphosis into a butterfly at any moment.

At this moment, the Dawn Blade's reaction was not as intense as that; it clearly had a ways to go.

But receiving the Dawn Blade's approval and response was enough to delight Lu Ran!

"Heh." Deng Yuxiang certainly noticed the vibration of the blade.

She looked at Lu Ran's joyous smile for a moment, then turned and left.

"Carrying deep ambitions while shunning fame," she thought?

After a while, Lu Ran looked ahead, watching the woman's figure as she stepped forward through the snow.

Would their conversation add to her score?

Looking after the team members and guiding those at a crossroads should surely add points.

Ah~ How satisfying!

With this thought, Lu Ran's spirits were lifted even higher.

Until seven in the morning, a team came to collect the camera equipment from the small squad of four.

Just like on the fifteenth of the previous month, as the patrol team was passing by the Rain Alley Home Community, Lu Ran said goodbye to everyone:

"I'm heading back first."

"I'll walk you home," Deng Yuxiang still took the lead, saying she'd walk him home, but it felt more like she was a guide.

"There's no need, it's quite safe here," Lu Ran said as he stepped up to follow.

Deng Yuxiang walked faster and faster, which the others clearly perceived.

Sun Zhengfang, that shrewd man, guessed Deng Yuxiang's intentions, so he went with Wei Long to the guard booth at the gate to learn about the situation from the Moon Gazers stationed there.

"Still walking me home?" Lu Ran watched as Deng Yuxiang entered the stairwell, confused.

Deng Yuxiang didn't say a word, she walked straight to Lu Ran's doorstep.

"Come in for a glass of water?" Lu Ran pulled out his keys, inserting them into the lock of the security door.

"Click."

Before Lu Ran could open the door, Deng Yuxiang suddenly reached out her palm and grasped Lu Ran's wrist.

"Sister?" Lu Ran, not understanding, looked at the woman.

Deng Yuxiang remained silent, simply lifting Lu Ran's wrist and gently kneading it through the sleeve.

Lu Ran pursed his lips and asked, "When did you notice?"

Deng Yuxiang snorted coldly: "You hid it so well, how could I have possibly found it."

Lu Ran: "..."

"Night-slaying told me," Deng Yuxiang found the expected object, and her thumb repeatedly traced the edges through Lu Ran's cuff.

Beneath her fingers, the outline of the Copper Coin was revealed.

"Such keen sense in a Divine Weapon?" Lu Ran couldn't help marveling.

Deng Yuxiang: "Night-slaying isn't from the Human Clan, it exists differently from us."

It said it faintly sensed the presence of its kind.

The closer it got to you, the clearer the feeling became."

Lu Ran smiled: "This is my treasure, and not something I can reveal easily."

"Little Lu Ran." Without the cameras, Deng Yuxiang added a "little" before addressing him. Her face was serious: "Though you're not a Moon Gazer, we're comrades in arms.

For the sake of improving our survival chances and combat efficiency, you had better be open with your comrades."

Lu Ran fell silent.

Deng Yuxiang continued: "Moreover, what you're hiding is a Divine Weapon.

If you could've told us in advance, we could've made appropriate battle plans."

Lu Ran suddenly said: "You should've said this last night, in front of the cameras.

This principle, as well as the guidance you provide to the younger team members, would definitely have scored you points."

The Magic Artifact·Rebirth Coin could certainly be made public—it was rightly obtained, clear and aboveboard.

And in the days to come, Lu Ran would proactively reveal the existence of this Copper Coin, after all, he needed to cover for his manipulation of the Evil Demon.

Deng Yuxiang glanced at Lu Ran dispassionately, not sure whether to be happy or annoyed:

"All you think about is points!

Since you didn't tell us, it's obviously because you didn't want to reveal it.

How could I possibly point it out in front of everyone?"

Hearing this, Lu Ran laughed: "Then why are you pointing it out now?"

Deng Yuxiang also laughed: "Now it's just us two, why won't you tell me?"

Lu Ran: "..."

"Hm?" Deng Yuxiang hummed inquisitively.

"Here." Lu Ran finally rolled up his sleeve and showed the Copper Coin to Deng Yuxiang.

"What is this?" Deng Yuxiang frowned slightly, her fingertip lightly touching the Copper Coin.

Clearly, it was no ordinary object.

Lu Ran said: "Magic Artifact."

Deng Yuxiang had been prepared, but upon actually seeing a Magic Artifact, she couldn't help but feel a surge of excitement.

"Last month, I came upon a piece of fortune..." Lu Ran briefly recounted the story.

In the end, Lu Ran said: "I didn't tell because it's just a fragment, still growing.

For now, it's of no help to our battles."

Deng Yuxiang was filled with emotion: "To gain the favor of another divine being is truly fortunate."

"I've always been lucky." Lu Ran pried open the fingers of the Big Nightmare and pulled back his wrist, "And you've been pretty good to me, too."

Deng Yuxiang's tone held a slight reproach as she advised: "Show some respect for the divine, how can you compare me with a deity."

"Maybe in the future."

"What?"

"A slip of the tongue, I mean, I'll be careful in the future," Lu Ran said casually, and finally opened the door to his home.

"Alright, rest well," Deng Yuxiang patted Lu Ran's shoulder and left.

Lu Ran turned and called out, "Aren't you coming in for a glass of water?"

The Big Nightmare simply pushed open the building door without looking back.

Such an attitude, truly befitting of Heavenly Pride~

Lu Ran smirked: "Take care of yourself!

If you're thirsty, just squat by the roadside and eat some snow, it looks rather white."

Deng Yuxiang, having stepped out of the stairwell, finally turned around and glared at Lu Ran with a laugh just before the door closed.

Lu Ran stepped into his home, placed the two blades aside, and his palm came to rest on his wrist.

Through a thin strand of spiritual connection, he could sense two Dead Souls within the Copper Coin.

It was those of the two Ghost Talisman Dolls that the squad had eliminated at the start of the fight last night.

Of course, Lu Ran wasn't raising little ghosts.

On the contrary, he was "eating" the little ghosts with the Rebirth Money...

The Dead Souls of the Ghost Talisman Dolls could nourish the Copper Coin, making this Magic Artifact Fragment stronger.

At the same time, the Magic Artifact-Rebirth Coin could also nourish its owner, enriching Lu Ran's soul.

For Lu Ran at this stage, being nurtured in the soul didn't seem to have much practical use.

It simply made him feel an inexplicable sense of joy and well-being.

But in the future, as he entered higher-level battlefields, encountering various powerful means from a myriad of strong opponents, it would be necessary for Lu Ran to have a strong soul!

Growth, naturally, must be holistic, without any blind spots.

Lu Ran walked into his bedroom, approached the shrine, and brought his hands together: "Lord Immortal Sheep, last night, my gains weren't that substantial."

A voice transmitted in reply, deep and resonant: "Hundreds of Evil Demon souls, two or three Human Clan believers.

For an ordinary night of the fifteenth, it is sufficient, no need to be too harsh on yourself."

Due to Lu Ran being in a patrolling team with a wide operational range, many Evil Demons he didn't slay himself—provided their souls still lingered on the battlefield—would be sucked into the enclosure by Lu Ran.

Lu Ran was a good man.

Wherever he went, there was no such thing as "lonely wandering ghosts."

He was kind-hearted, providing sanctuary to each home-seeking wandering spirit, finding a place they could belong to...