

Summit of the Old Gods

Chapter 16: 009 Show

The school bus swayed and rattled as it headed westward from Rain Alley City.

Lu Ran cradled the Dawn Blade in his arms, leaning his shoulder against the glass window, quietly watching the rainy landscape outside.

"Divine-Witch Crow!"

"Aha, I see it." The classmates inside the bus were chirping and chattering annoyingly.

Lu Ran looked up and through the misty rain, a massive sculpture appeared and disappeared intermittently.

This was a beastly Divine entity, entirely black, resembling a crow in shape.

It stood on a giant stone pillar several tens of meters high, its head held high as if crying out, its wings spread as if ready to take flight.

The massive wings, stretched out, could literally blot out the sun with their imposing presence!

Although Witch Crow ranked low, merely a seventh-grade deity, the Witch Crow Believers were highly sought-after for their Divine Techniques focused on scouting, disrupting enemies, and transforming. No team would refuse an excellent scout.

The drawback of the Witch Crow Believers was also clear, inadequate in output and highly specialized to a fault.

"We're finally here." Wu Shanshan reached forward to the front seat, tugging on the red scarf wrapped around Deng Yutang's head.

"What's up?" Deng Yutang turned his head towards the girl.

Wu Shanshan said, "When we enter Evil Dog Village later, you're going to have to shout a bit louder, to fill us with the will to fight."

Deng Yutang laughed, "We haven't even entered the Demon Cave yet, and you're already scared?"

Wu Shanshan huffed silently to herself, concerned that someone might get scared and flee when facing the actual battle.

Lu Ran had advanced faster than everyone else due to his natural talent, but how he would perform in real combat was another matter.

Indeed, Lu Ran had once directly confronted a Prisoner Demon Believer—Kou Yingquan, but in Wu Shanshan's mind, Kou Yingquan was still human, not an Evil Demon that took lives.

"Ding-ding."

The school bus convoy passed through several checkpoints and entered into a military camp. As the vehicles came to a stop, a crowd of students disembarked one after another.

Many students stood frozen, looking up at the gigantic Divine Sculpture.

Wherever a Divine Sculpture stood, it marked a military stronghold, and generally, it was rare for people to witness the true face of a divine entity up close.

"Number 91!"

"Number 95!"

"Number 98!" Voices echoed through the curtain of rain.

"They're calling us." Deng Yutang spotted a soldier and immediately approached.

"I am Instructor Dou Zhiqiang, your accompanying instructor for this training." The soldier spoke solemnly to the four students who came to report, continuing:

"Once you enter Evil Dog Village, you'll have three hours of free movement.

Under normal circumstances, I won't interfere with any of your actions.

However, the moment I issue an order, you must execute it unconditionally; violators will be sent back immediately with the whole team..."

The group listened to the rules for a few minutes before Instructor Dou led them inside the building.

The students, like Granny Liu entering the Grand View Garden, found everything novel and exciting.

Lu Ran was sure that the huge stone pillar in the center of the hall was the one beneath the feet of the Divine·Witch Crow.

The pillar had a spiral staircase built around it, winding downwards, leading to the underground.

Under the guidance of Instructor Dou, the squad stepped onto the spiral staircase and descended, the Divine Power in the surroundings growing denser as they went deeper.

"Demon Cave Gate." Lu Ran leaned on the handrail of the spiral staircase, looking down.

"So beautiful." Wu Shanshan peeked curiously, murmuring to herself.

Images on the internet could never compare to seeing with one's own eyes!

Below, even deeper, lay a colossal interdimensional space gate.

It was deep and beautifully vast like the starry sky yet appeared as a dark, oval-shaped curtain spread across the floor.

Such a mysterious and wonderful sight could leave anyone speechless.

The stone pillar upon which Divine-Witch Crow stood plunged straight into the starry sky curtain.

Dou Zhiqiang commanded, "Be quiet! Stick together, and if you're afraid of heights, close your eyes and hold onto the shoulders of the person in front of you!"

The group fell silent, not daring to speak further.

As they stepped into the starry sky curtain...

"Whoosh!"

A sudden night wind whipped Lu Ran's clothes about.

The surroundings dramatically transformed, day turned into night, and the deep underground shifted into a space a hundred meters above ground.

The four, walking on the staircase, found themselves above the night sky, looking down a hundred meters below to the actual ground.

Standing high, they could see far.

In the pitch-black night, Lu Ran looked down to see a city made of stone!

Countless torches cast a fiery red glow over the city.

Beyond the walls of the city, torch-lit paths stretched like fiery dragons, twisting and turning into the distant night.

From this height, Lu Ran could even spot several other brightly lit stone cities miles away.

Mysterious and beautiful, magnificent and spectacular.

There should be background music here!

Lu Ran had already imagined the opening theme of "Game of Thrones."

Demon Cave number No.386, Evil Dog Village!

"Maintain walking speed, continue downward!" Dou Zhiqiang reminded the students, not intending to let them linger and enjoy the view.

A height of a hundred meters, in human society terms, would be at least a 30-floor building.

"Flap, flap, flap~"

"Flap, flap, flap!" As people descended the staircase, a flock of crows flew upward along the pillar.

In Evil Dog Village, only the Evil Demon·Evil Dog Clan existed, meaning that the flock of crows must be transformed by human soldiers.

Could it be that they were returning to Earth, rotating off their shift?

Lu Ran looked up enviously at the freely flying flock.

While the ability to fly was second to the transforming trait; turning into crows had such a high cool factor!

Especially in Rain Alley City where it often rained,

crows against a gloomy sky and chilly rainy nights made a perfect picture!

After a while, the group finally reached the ground and stepped onto the land of Evil Dog Village.

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"Keep close, pick up the pace!" the Iron-faced Instructor ordered loudly, leading the four of them straight to the West City Gate.

Lu Ran admired the scene greatly, looking around as they moved forward.

These stone houses, towers, city walls, and other buildings were naturally constructed by the human battalion.

It's said that in the early 1980s, when the Human Clan's soldiers fought their way into the Demon Cave, the casualties were extremely heavy!

It was a tragic Chapter drenched in blood and tears.

Eventually, amidst a sea of blood and mountains of corpses, a small, battered outpost was established.

It stood like a boat wavering in a tempest, resisting wave after wave of assaults from the Evil Demon·Evil Dog.

And that outpost was the infamous Evil Dog Village, which is also the grand Stone City that Lu Ran was in at the moment.

Decades have passed, the small village was gone, the high walls were built, but the name "Evil Dog Village" had endured.

"It's now 10:03 PM," Dou Zhiqiang announced as the team reached the city gate, "in three hours, I will lead you out of Evil Dog Village.

You can explore inside the city, it's relatively safe.

If you want to hunt Evil Dogs outside the city, you can search around the city walls or follow the paths marked by torches; do not leave the lit areas.

Now, you may go about freely."

As his words fell, a surge of energy swirled around Dou Zhiqiang.

"Flap, flap~"

Under everyone's watchful eyes, the instructor transformed into a crow and soared high into the sky.

Lu Ran looked on with even greater envy.

Following the black crow's silhouette, he saw the starry night sky twinkling beautifully.

And in the direction from which they had come, a giant towering stone pillar seemed to have poked a hole through the night sky a hundred meters above.

The sight was extraordinarily eerie!

"Let's head out," Wu Shanshan suggested first.

Team rankings were based on the killing of Evil Dogs.

The accompanying instructor was like an exam proctor, documenting each person's performance.

"Let's go!" Deng Yutang was thrilled, striding with large steps towards the city gate.

"Deng Yutang, shouldn't you shout first?" Wu Shanshan followed.

Deng Yutang refused, "There are other classmates around."

A person's mental willpower can, of course, impact their combat strength.

Everyone came from the modern city to this torch-flickering night in Stone City—who wouldn't feel daunted?

Not to mention the roaming Evil Dogs in the village!

"You..." Wu Shanshan was anxious but couldn't say it outright; she subconsciously glanced at Lu Ran.

Lu Ran, however, showed no fear—where was there any sign of backing down?

"What is it?" Lu Ran happened to catch the girl's eye and couldn't help feeling puzzled.

"No, nothing," Wu Shanshan shook her head repeatedly.

Jiang Ruyi furrowed her brow, her keen mind sensing something afoot.

However, now was not the time to address this; she patted Lu Ran's shoulder, "Let's go, we should head further out, time is tight."

"Oh," Lu Ran immediately quickened his pace.

Starting from the West City Gate, more than twenty torch-lit paths stretched out like fire serpents slithering into the vast, barren wilderness.

After observing for a moment, they chose an untouched path to avoid clashing with other student squads.

As they marched, they could hear fierce barking echoing through the night!

"Over there!" Deng Yutang, raising his Heavenly Star Spear, asked, "Is that it?"

"Yes!" Jiang Ruyi held her sword in one hand, while her other hand hung naturally down, her fingertips tinged with Divine Power, lightly tracing something.

The quality of Divine Techniques varied just like Divine Power levels, categorized using terms such as mist, stream, river, sea, etc.

Jiang Ruyi's Divine Technique·Electric Restriction Talisman was of the lowest grade, mist-grade, meaning the talisman couldn't last long or enchant a weapon.

Therefore, she could only draw them on the spot.

Compared to Jiang, Wu's spellcasting was much quicker.

Wu Shanshan had already unslung her Hunting Bow, holding the bowstring between two fingers; in the moment she drew back her bow, an arrow made of misty water took shape.

"Swoosh~"

The blue water arrow sped forward, aiming straight for the Evil Dog exposed on the barren hill.

"Arf!" With a bark, the Evil Dog swiftly dodged.

Unexpectedly, it didn't rush to attack but kept barking incessantly.

Jiang Ruyi's face tensed, "Does it have a partner?"

The group looked around cautiously; Lu Ran suddenly spoke up, "Left front, that small mound!"

Sure enough, another Evil Dog stuck its head out.

Members of the Evil Demon Clan·Evil Dog were pitch-black, resembling slender dog breeds.

They could be over 1.2 meters tall at the shoulder, with a slender body, head, legs, tail...

In short, slender all over!

"Here they come!" Deng Yutang gripped his Heavenly Star Spear firmly.

Their location was close to the Human Clan's main camp.

The fact that these two Evil Dogs had made it through the defensive walls to appear here meant that the soldiers had deliberately let them in for the students to practice against.

Therefore, the two Evil Dogs were certainly weak, presumed to be mist-grade novices, just like the students.

But even the weakest of the Evil Demons delivered a massive psychological shock to everyone!

The terrifying speed of the Evil Dogs, their fierce eyes, and the violent aura that hit them head-on...

Watching thousands of videos online was nothing compared to facing an Evil Demon in person!

"Ha!" Deng Yutang roared, no longer holding back.

Divine Technique-Red Cloth Order!

Instantly, the spirit of the four-person squad soared, their desire to fight drove back the fear in their hearts, racing to their minds.

"Don't move!" Jiang Ruyi flicked her slender fingers forward, sending a bolt of electricity flying.

A little thunder-snake skimmed past Lu and Deng, and as it flew forward, an ethereal jade tablet intermittently appeared, bearing the lightning runes, thrusting towards the Evil Dog.

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"Woof!"

The number one Evil Dog attacking from the right front was not only fast but also incredibly agile.

It managed to dodge both the Electric Shackles Talisman and the Mist Arrow with just one quick turn, charging straight at Deng Yutang.

"The whimpers of feeble beings can also make hunters drool."

Suddenly, a telepathic message echoed in Lu Ran's mind.

"Ha!" Deng Yutang roared angrily, infusing Divine Power into his Heavenly Star Spear and fiercely thrusting it towards the Evil Dog's gaping maw.

However, the strike didn't pierce through the dog's mouth; the Evil Dog used its sharp teeth to firmly clamp down on the spear tip.

"Rise!" Deng Yutang took a step back and then violently jerked the Heavenly Star Red Tassel Spear upwards, intending to fling the Evil Dog into the air.

The tactic was quite clever.

The Evil Dog Clan wasn't capable of flight, and once hurled into the air, they would be lambs to the slaughter.

Dreams are beautiful, yet the Evil Dog's biting force was so formidable that it wasn't flung away at all!

"Hold on!" Wu Shanshan shouted, already drawing her bow and aiming at the Evil Dog stubbornly biting onto the spearhead.

"Swoosh~" The Mist Arrow was shot out again.

"Grrr!" The Evil Dog Clan's combat instinct was particularly astonishing, obviously sensing impending danger.

Its front legs stepped onto the spear shaft, then it let go and kicked off, twisting its head to pounce towards the ground.

Lu Ran was rendered a mere decoration.

The Evil Dog used the Heavenly Star Spear as a vaulting pole, leaping right over Lu Ran...

Lu Ran was dumbfounded!

Damn, this cunning dog!

Showing off its skills?

And it just tm showed me up and bolted for the rear!

Nowadays, even dogs know to target the backline?

"This is bad," Deng Yutang's face turned ashen. The second Evil Dog was already lunging at him, and he was spread too thin to give chase.

Lu Ran immediately picked up his blade and gave chase, shouting aloud:

"Baa~~~"

Divine Technique-Voice of Compassion!

But that rapidly descending Evil Dog paid no heed to Lu Ran, its paws scraping against the ground as it dashed towards the two women.

Wu Shanshan and Jiang Ruyi each retreated, moving apart to the left and right.

As Wu Shanshan backed away, she cried out, "Hey, Lu Ran! Stop causing trouble!"

To be honest, if not for the effect of the Voice of Compassion, Wu Shanshan would already be cursing.

How could such a ferocious and brutal Evil Dog possibly possess even a shred of mercy?

Bleating at it would only affect the teammates nearby, how could it possibly make the Evil Dog pause for a moment?

"Not weak enough, not desperate enough," the telepathic message once again imprinted itself into Lu Ran's mind.

"Huh?" Lu Ran kept up the relentless pursuit as the Evil Dog seemed to have a knack for picking people, targeting the most beautiful girl in the team.

Yet, as soon as the Evil Dog saw the spark of electricity at the fingertips of Jiang Ruyi, it immediately dodged left and right, continuously shaking its head and twisting its body.

Moving about~

Moving about~~~

"Think about your mindset when facing the Yan Zhi on the Worship God Platform."

"Think about your mindset when looking around and not seeing any divine presence."

Lu Ran's head buzzed, and the deep, authoritative voice took him back to the first day of the sixth lunar month.

"Die!" At the forefront of the team, Deng Yutang was furious, stabbing frantically at the second Evil Dog.

The team's formation was in chaos, and as the vanguard in a perilous situation, he took full responsibility.

The team's tactic should have been Deng Yutang fending off enemies, with Lu Ran assisting beside him, providing a secure environment for Jiang and Wu to attack.

But now, everything was in disarray!

"Swoosh~ Swoosh~"

While the number one Evil Dog was pursuing the beautiful Jiang, Wu Shanshan, momentarily safe, rapidly drew her bow and nocked her arrows.

She managed to make the lowest quality Divine Technique-Mist Arrow feel like a "rapid shot."

The Evil Dog's agility was extreme; it dodged while chasing, giving the Human Clan a hard lesson.

Jiang Ruyi's face stiffened as she continued to retreat, holding the Electric Shackles Talisman without daring to casually throw it.

Once missed, drawing another talisman would take at least 3~5 seconds.

But the talisman in her hand wouldn't last much longer, if not thrown soon, it would dissipate.

Left, right, right...

Jiang Ruyi indeed maintained composure in such a desperate moment, attempting to find the Evil Dog's dodging pattern.

"Baa~"

At that moment, a faint bleating sound stealthily rose.

On the chaotic battlefield, teammates didn't hear it, but the two Evil Dogs with sensitive hearing noticed the pitiful cry of a weak being!

Not only did the Evil Dogs hear it, but they also uncontrollably turned to look at the feeble creature.

Both pairs of dog eyes were filled with greed, saliva dripping from their mouths...

For a dog continuously shaking its head and sprinting, how could it maintain balance when it snapped its head back so fiercely?

Jiang Ruyi's eyes narrowed as she immediately threw out the Electric Shackles Talisman.

"Crack!"

Electricity spread in all directions, and the Jade Talisman hit the dog squarely.

Jiang Ruyi halted her footsteps, ready to rush forward with her sword when a figure had already crossed paths with the Evil Dog.

"Zzzt!"

The Dawn Blade, filled with Divine Power by Lu Ran and accompanied by a whooshing sound, struck swiftly.

The Evil Dog was like tofu, its head severed instantly and cleanly!

At the same time, the battle on Deng Yutang's side had ended, but he was very puzzled: amidst the intense fight, why had the Evil Dog suddenly looked elsewhere?

Deng Yutang glanced behind with suspicion, only to see Wu Shanshan opening her mouth in shock and Jiang Ruyi's astonished face, both looking in the same direction.

His heart tightened immediately!

What's wrong with Brother Lu, I hope nothing's happened?

Deng Yutang followed the women's gaze in a hurry,

Only to see Lu Ran standing there quietly, with his back to them.

Under the wavering flames, he held the Dawn Blade, with drops of fresh blood continually falling from its edge.

Hmm... as cool as it gets.

Chapter 19: 010 Voice of Compassion?

"Flap flap flap~"

Dark crows descended from the sky, landing on Lu Ran's shoulder.

It spoke human language, asking, "What's going on?"

Everything that had just happened had all fallen into Dou Zhiqiang's eyes.

But to the instructor's inquiry, Lu Ran remained silent, not responding.

Because he was listening to the divine being's telepathic message.

At the same time, several team members also gathered around, all with confusion in their hearts, not knowing why the battlefield had suddenly changed.

They had only caught a glimpse of the clues, knowing that this bizarre scene had something to do with Lu Ran.

"Cadet?" the black crow spoke again.

Finally, Lu Ran slowly began, "Immortal Sheep Divine Technique·Voice of Compassion."

Yet Dou Zhiqiang thought Lu Ran was spouting nonsense.

The Voice of Compassion having such an effect?

What a joke!

The black crow flew back elegantly, transforming into human shape: "The Evil Dog Clan is naturally brutal, and will not show you a hint of mercy."

Retreating ten thousand steps, even if the Evil Dogs were really bewitched by you, it couldn't possibly be that kind of reaction.

Was it pity arising in their hearts?

They were completely "strongly controlled"!

The battle had almost reached a fever pitch, the time for bayonets clashing, at such a moment, would two Evil Dogs simultaneously turn their heads to look at you?

Lu Ran said, "The cries of weak beings can call forth the protection of their kin, but also lure the hunters that prowl."

"Oh?" Dou Zhiqiang was somewhat surprised, never expecting Lu Ran to say something like that.

Lu Ran looked at the Iron-faced Instructor: "Since it's impossible to awaken the goodness within all beings, then we'll use the wickedness within them."

Dou Zhiqiang's expression was more serious and stern than ever before, listening intently.

"It can't be called wickedness," Lu Ran thought for a while, then continued, "after all, only human society speaks of respecting the elderly and loving the young.

In nature, it's the old, weak, sick, and disabled that are preyed upon."

Dou Zhiqiang nodded thoughtfully, with a rare note of appreciation in his voice, "That's a good understanding."

Lu Ran looked towards the instructor: "Lord Immortal Sheep has enlightened me, more than that, I cannot say."

Dou Zhiqiang pondered for a while, then nodded again: "I understand, carry on."

The cadets couldn't speak in depth, naturally because it involved the secret techniques unique to the Immortal Sheep sect.

In fact, what Lu Ran had said was already quite a lot.

"Flap flap flap~"

Dou Zhiqiang transformed back into a crow and flapped his wings towards the night sky.

With the instructor gone, several team members also turned their gaze to Lu Ran.

"Brother Lu, that was amazing!" Deng Yutang stepped forward and slapped Lu Ran's shoulder hard, his face full of surprise.

Initially, Deng Yutang joined this team, attracted by Lu Ran's charisma.

During a class conflict, the frail lamb holding a wooden chair charged at the powerful Prisoner Demon believers.

Deeply influenced by the drama "Bright Sword," Deng Yutang loved that feeling of "the brave prevails on a narrow path."

And now, Lu Ran's performance excited Deng Yutang even more.

You translate,

What! they say tm! Surprise!

Lu Ran wasn't just a little lamb with a willingness to fight.

But a big lamb leg!

The kind that sizzles with oil and aroma~

"Luck, just luck." Lu Ran repeatedly waved his hand, but his mind was active.

No wonder my domineering Lord Goat,

this special use of the Voice of Compassion was indeed powerful!

"The Voice of Compassion can also be used in this way," Wu Shanshan whispered softly, "Truly an eye-opener.

Now I finally understand why Yan Zhi had to snatch you away."

Lu Ran claimed to have been enlightened by Immortal Sheep, that much was true.

The question was, why hadn't other Immortal Sheep Believers used this technique?

Why was there not a shred of related information online or in books?

In Wu Shanshan's mind, this must be the result of Lu Ran's extraordinary talent and understanding!

Immortal Sheep created Divine Techniques, while Believer Lu Ran...

actually processed and transformed the divinity's spells?

Ah, this gives me a headache.

Wu Shanshan's thoughts were in turmoil.

After this assessment, should she leave the team and start anew?

Jiang Ruyi looked displeased: "If you can use Divine Technique to such an extent, why didn't you tell us earlier?"

"Uh," Lu Ran stuttered, not knowing how to explain.

"Let's change our tactics," suggested the beautiful Jiang, ever so gentle, not wanting to embarrass someone, "We'll split into two teams."

Wu Shanshan immediately caught on: "Right! One team to distract the Evil Dogs, and you, Ran, keep your distance to divert their attention."

Lu Ran shook the blood off his blade and walked towards the carcass of the Evil Dogs.

Huh,

Women!

Just a moment ago, you wanted me to stop causing trouble, and now you're calling me Ran treasure?

Isn't that why you are always among the top three in the class, purely a dominator...

"I'll attract the Evil Dogs," Deng Yutang volunteered resolutely.

"Alright." Lu Ran sliced open the Evil Dog's head, resisting the nausea, and reached in to search for the Demon Crystal.

Everyone has their first time.

After Lu Ran kills enough Evil Demons, he probably won't feel sick anymore.

Before long, Lu Ran retrieved a blood-stained, diamond-shaped shard from the head of the Evil Dog.

An Evil Dog Demon Crystal!

It was dark grey, semi-transparent, and the size of a fingernail, with strands of energy coursing within.

Though the Evil Dogs were from the Evil Demon Clan, the energy cultivated by both the Evil Demons and the gods and humans was the same.

Therefore, by absorbing the Demon Crystal, the Human Clan believers could supplement their Divine Power.

But Lu Ran wouldn't directly absorb it, after all, the Demon Crystals had to be kept for the task, and within the Demon Cave, Divine Power was abundant, he'd simply replenish it himself.

"It's a pity to waste this corpse," Lu Ran mused, looking at the Evil Dog whose head was separated from its body.

If he had a Divine Power Pearl, he could completely drain the Evil Demon's corpse and extract all the energy it contained.

The Divine Power drawn from the dog's corpse was roughly equivalent to the energy in the Demon Crystal.

And the school's examination ranking rewards were precisely Divine Power Pearls of varying qualities.

"It won't go to waste," Jiang Ruyi said softly, "The school specifically avoids allowing us to bring Divine Power Pearls, they mean to leave the corpses for the military."

Wu Shanshan urged, "Shall we find the Demon Crystal from the other Evil Dog and then move on?"

The school only gave three hours, which for teams desiring a ranking, naturally meant making every second count.

After securing the two Evil Dog Demon Crystals, the four-person team quickly set off, soon encountering another Evil Dog.

More precisely, an Evil Dog sought them out.

This thin dog was very cunning!

Originally pitch black, it hid in the dark wilderness, silent as a ghost.

Until the team noticed it, it was following behind them, ready to launch a stealth attack.

"I've got this!" Deng Yutang rushed to the rear.

"Stick to the plan." Wu Shanshan pulled her bow and notched her arrow, excitedly said, eager for the new team tactic.

"Go." Jiang Ruyi took Lu Ran with her, quickly moving sideways away from the torch-lit path.

Due to the rules, the two of them couldn't go deep into the wilderness, and had to stay within the range of illumination, so they didn't go far.

In fact, the military, to prevent students from straying from the torch-lit path, had not issued lighting equipment, fundamentally stopping any adventurous ideas.

"Any problems?" Jiang Ruyi faced the torch-lit path, leaning against Lu Ran's back, vigilantly scanning the surroundings.

"It's very quiet." Lu Ran faced a pitch-black expanse of wilderness, feeling somewhat eerie.

"Ha!" Deng Yutang's roar came from a distance, drawing the Evil Dog's attention.

"The Evil Dog is charging at Deng Yutang," Jiang Ruyi reported the battlefield situation, "Get ready."

"Okay." Lu Ran focused his mind, quietly gathering Divine Power.

The special version of Voice of Compassion required higher casting conditions, involving mental state.

You couldn't just pretend to be pitiful; you had to truly be weak and defenseless, truly desperate and woeful.

Lu Ran thought it would be more appropriate to call it the "Sound of Despair."

Speaking of which, other believers could only learn a Divine Technique at the first and third stages of each major realm.

And it seemed like Lu Ran had learned an extra Divine Technique?

After all, the Voice of Compassion and the Sound of Despair were completely different in effect.

"Ran treasure?" Wu Shanshan's distant shout came.

"Don't rush." Jiang Ruyi stopped her quietly, as calm as ever.

"Ran treasure?" Wu Shanshan, ready with her bow and arrow and the Evil Dog approaching, couldn't help but call out again, "Why don't you make a sound?"

Jiang Ruyi just quietly watched the charging Evil Dog.

Closer, ever closer...

"Arf!" The Evil Dog howled as it leaped forward.

"Now," Jiang Ruyi finally said.

Lu Ran's emotions churned, and he let out a sheep's bleat: "Mee~~~"

The faint sheep sound was like the cry of a baby.

The wilderness was already ominous, and the cry made it all the more chilling.

"Huh?" The Evil Dog, with its gaping maw, suddenly turned its head toward the wilderness.

Instinct can be both a blessing and a downfall!

"Thud!" The bowstring trembled.

Wu Shanshan's fingers slipped, and the mist arrow pierced straight into the dog's head, forcefully penetrating it.

Deng Yutang followed swiftly, plunging the Heavenly Star Red Tassel Spear into the oncoming Evil Dog, pinning it to the ground!

Minutes ago, the team faced turmoil and danger against the Evil Dog's assault.

Now, everything had become so simple.

All because of Lu Ran's existence, all because of his unique Divine Technique-Sound of Despair!

"The tactic worked!" Deng Yutang shouted excitedly, turning to look at Lu and Jiang.

Lu Ran did not respond because he sensed something amiss!

He saw Jiang the beauty breathing rapidly, her chest rising and falling slightly, her grip on her sword growing tighter.

"Captain?" Lu Ran vaguely realized something.

Deng Yutang and Wu Shanshan were too far away to hear the wailing and were therefore unaffected.

But Jiang Ruyi was different!

She had been back-to-back with Lu Ran and had heard the Sound of Despair loud and clear.

"Mm." Jiang Ruyi responded in a low voice, then turned her eyes to Lu Ran.

The usually blushing girl, for the first time, had red eyes when facing Lu Ran!

Jiang Ruyi did not consider herself a bully, but Lu Ran's call...

directly provoked the wickedness in her heart!

He was weak, he was helpless, he had no ability to resist.

To trample on Lu Ran, to tear Lu Ran apart, to devour Lu Ran...

All these actions would not cost her anything, indeed they would be the optimal solution for survival.

Jiang Ruyi did not act, because she was not a brutal Evil Dog, she was a person with self-control.

But if Lu Ran continued to call out, it was uncertain!

"Mee~"

Jiang Ruyi was still trying to suppress the wicked fire while another sheep's cry reached her ears.

The original Divine Technique-Voice of Compassion!

Jiang Ruyi's expression blanked, her emotions fluctuating.

Her prey gradually became a weak and helpless creature that needed help and care.

"Heh." Jiang Ruyi breathed deeply, slowly lowering her head, covering her eyes with one hand.

Guilt, annoyance, and various emotions surged.

You wretched guy,

You're driving me insane.

"Feeling better?" Lu Ran asked the silent, head-bowed girl cautiously, "Should I make another call?"

The beautiful Jiang...

She hadn't been broken, had she?

We really can't afford that!

Chapter 20: 011 Beauty Goat Plan

"I'm begging you, don't fall apart!"

Lu Ran called out from the bottom of his heart, "Dame~"

"Don't talk," Jiang Ruyi said, both embarrassed and annoyed, as she glared at Lu Ran.

Although she stuttered a bit, she finally managed to come back online.

Lu Ran breathed a sigh of relief and pushed the beauty towards the torch-lit path, "Let's head back first."

Just then, their two teammates also arrived to back them up.

"What happened to you two?"

"Are you guys alright?" Wu Deng looked at the Jiang-Lu duo with concern.

"We need to regroup or adjust our tactics," Lu Ran began.

"Does Divine Technique have a big impact on the squad leader?" Deng Yutang carefully examined Jiang Ruyi and speculated.

"Yeah," Lu Ran replied helplessly, "Just now, your squad leader Jiang almost ate me..."

"Don't say it!" Jiang Ruyi stomped her foot, both embarrassed and annoyed again.

"Eh?" Wu Shanshan's eyes widened, having never seen the usually calm and collected beauty Jiang Ruyi show such a side.

It was quite amusing~

"Should we two pair up?" Deng Yutang volunteered eagerly, "You shout yours, and I'll add fighting spirit to myself."

Lu Ran spoke faintly, "You really want to kill me."

Deng Yutang: "..."

Fighting spirit could dilute the effects of the genuine Divine Technique·Voice of Compassion, making everyone eager to fight without pitying the opponent.

The problem was, the Divine Technique Lu Ran needed to use was Sound of Despair.

This Divine Technique could already awaken the beastly desires within people's hearts, and if fighting spirit was added...

Deng Yutang might just pick up the slaughter knife and become a demon on the spot!

"You are all Mist Realm·First Rank, and your mental resistance is still quite low," Lu Ran considered and then said, "It's best if I roam outside alone."

Lu Ran was clear about his role in the team; he was naturally the flexible jungler position.

"Is that really okay?" Wu Shanshan said in a low voice.

"We won't split into groups, just fight normally," Jiang Ruyi steadied herself with a hand to her forehead, her emotions finally stabilizing.

She lifted her head, eyes looking at Lu Ran, "When we fight the Evil Dogs, you seize the opportunity to circle behind them, cast spells quietly, okay?"

The flickering torchlight cast her pretty features in alternating light and shadow.

Her brows were lightly furrowed with a sense of weariness, carrying a shattered feeling after being tormented mentally.

Ruyi, the beauty, was nearly broken,

And Lu Ran was completely numb!

He felt like a total playboy...

Who could withstand this!

"Sure!" Lu Ran nodded decisively.

"Then let's go."

"Let's go! Let's go!"

For the sake of ranking and rewards, the four-person team didn't delay any longer and quickly set off on their journey.

Combat experience, naturally, was something they had to fight to accumulate bit by bit!

In the continuous battles, Jiang Ruyi gradually adjusted to the swiftness of the Evil Dog Clan. Her fingertips sparked with electricity, and her Electric Shackles Talisman became increasingly accurate.

As soon as an Evil Dog was hit, it would be immobilized on the spot, ready to be slaughtered.

Squad leader Wu kept up without showing any weakness, her arrows shooting in rapid succession, becoming ever more skilled.

Deng Yutang was as brave as ever, especially with Lu Ran's support, which gave him even more confidence.

And Lu Ran...

Was simply inhumane!

Yes, he was a sheep.

A plump little sheep that often lured Evil Dogs to hunt.

What was heartbreaking was that as the lamb cried out all along the way, it was the dogs that ended up dead.

This tactic,

This tactic was known as the Beauty Sheep Strategy.

Ancient seductresses beguiled emperors; today, a fragrant little plump sheep brought misfortune to the poor dogs.

After three hours, Lu Ran could no longer speak human language, opening his mouth only to "baa," seeing everyone as dogs.

The squad operated effectively, with the four members playing to their strengths and experiencing significant growth.

Only two things became stumbling blocks on their dog-slaying path: one was physical strength, and the other was Divine Power.

"Flap, flap, flap~"

Black crows descended from the sky and transformed into human figures.

The four-person squad stopped in their tracks, turning to look behind them.

"Time's up," Dou Zhiqiang announced.

"So soon?" Deng Yutang took off his sweat-soaked red headband and shook his head from side to side.

Compared to the reluctant Deng Yutang, Lu Ran felt a huge sense of relief and immediately sat down on the ground.

Turning to look at him, Jiang Ruyi's face showed slight concern, "Are you okay?"

Throughout the journey, Lu Ran was the engine of their tactics, the jungler moving around and luring enemies. He was without a doubt the most exhausted and weary among them.

Lu Ran waved off, too tired to talk.

Truth be told, he could no longer distinguish whether he was tired or frail...

Even with abundant Divine Power in the Demon Cave, Lu Ran couldn't recover.

Sound of Despair may well be a Basic Divine Technique, but Lu Ran was also a rookie, with both a low reserve of Divine Power and a slow absorption rate.

And as they ventured deeper, encountering Evil Dogs more frequently, Lu Ran's Divine Power was always on the verge of depletion.

Just absorbing a little bit meant having to use it up immediately, this "Energy Depletion" feeling was torturous for Lu Ran!

This was also why Lu Ran's steps became more and more unsteady.

Yet for the sake of ranking, he couldn't bring himself to absorb a Demon Crystal.

Ah...

Isn't everyone a slave to points?

If only he had a Divine Power Pearl.

Never before had Lu Ran longed so much for such an endurance-enhancing treasure.

"Team 98, follow me back to the city, immediately!" The Iron-faced Instructor was indeed unforgiving, not even willing to give them time to rest and turned to leave.

"Lu Ran?" Jiang Ruyi stepped forward, reaching out a helping hand.

Watching the instructor's retreating figure, Lu Ran had no choice but to extend his hand, grasping the girl's palm.

Soft and delicate.

Well... just as soft as his legs were at the moment.

The way back to the city was rather calm, as they had fought their way through it.

There were some scattered Evil Dogs, but these were dealt with by Dou Zhiqiang, sparing the students from having to lift a finger.

After walking for a long, long time, they finally returned to Evil Dog Village.

Looking at the majestic Stone City illuminated by torches, Lu Ran had no mood for imagining any epic background music.

At that moment, he looked with discomfort at the hundred-meter-tall stone pillars.

Only then did he realize that to truly leave the Demon Cave, they still had to climb more than thirty stories of spiral stairs!

"Brother Lu, hang in there," Deng Yutang offered his shoulder to Lu Ran, his voice still firm and strong.

Lu Ran felt ashamed; as a Mist Realm-Second Rank Believer, he was even less able to cope than the Mist Realm-First Rank Believers.

This was surely the price of overexerting himself with spellcasting and overtaxing his body.

At 2:47 p.m., they finally emerged from the Demon Cave and returned to the barracks.

The sky was still overcast, with a light rain drizzling down.

The bedraggled four-person group walked out from beneath the huge structure below the Divine-Witch Crow, bathed in the pouring rain, reflecting on many things.

Jiang and Wu were disheveled and looked a sorry sight.

Top laner Deng Yutang and jungler Lu Ran had turned into two "blood-soaked" figures.

Due to the squad's unique tactics, it was Lu Deng who killed the most dogs up close, and blood from their bodies washed down with the rain.

Seeing the squad emerge, a bus parked not far away began to rock violently.

The classmates waiting inside the bus made a ruckus and crowded to the bus windows to watch.

"They're out, someone's come out!"

"See, I guessed right, didn't I? I said it was Wu Shanshan and Jiang Ruyi's team!"

"How far did they go? They're only just returning now? It's almost three o'clock!"

Qian Hao's chubby face turned red as he shivered and looked out the window as if trying hard to endure something,

"I finally got out! I'm dying to pee..."

He was Lu Ran's classmate. On the day of Worshiping God, Qian Hao also offered strategies from below the stage to encourage Lu Ran to burn more paper figures.

As for why Qian Hao was so desperate...

It's because beneath the feet of Witch Crow was a military stronghold!

No one was allowed to enter or exit freely, so the students naturally had to move as a group.

With 40 seats filled on a bus, 9 had already departed before Lu Ran's team emerged.

Only this last bus was still waiting, with 4 seats empty, for the last team to return.

More importantly, the last batch of students to emerge was all locked in the bus, unable to move with the doors sealed shut.

One could imagine how stifled these 36 students felt.

"I want to see how many dogs they've actually killed!"

"Look at the amount of blood on their uniforms, it needs to be censored on TV; they've probably gotten a lot."

"Did they really walk for three whole hours without stopping?"

Qian Hao's face was downcast as he squeezed his legs together and muttered quietly, "I need to pee..."

Smack!

A hand rested on Qian Hao's shoulder.

His face turned even redder, and he shivered, squeezing his legs tighter.

He turned his head ready to curse, but when he saw who it was, Qian Hao wisely swallowed his words.

The top student of the year, Ma Tianchuan!

The young man was tall and slim, wearing rimless glasses, looking scholarly.

He stood in the aisle, leaning on Qian Hao's shoulder, peering out the window.

He happened to see Wu Shanshan take out a handful of Demon Crystals from her pocket and place them on the table under the sheltered area.

The soldier in charge immediately began to count them, and the students inside the bus started to whine:

"Shoot, I thought there would be more, such a letdown!"

"That few? Only seven or eight Demon Crystals?"

"It shouldn't be... Ah ha! Squad leader Jiang has some in her pocket too!"

Under the watchful eyes of the students in the bus, Jiang Ruyi also took out nearly ten Demon Crystals and placed them on the table.

"Added up, that should be around 20, right? Not a bad score."

"Hmph, my Ma brought back 31 Demon Crystals."

"This is just two girls, don't expect too much from them, they dared to act on their first demon hunt... Wow!"

A gasp rang out through the bus.

The blood-soaked Deng Yutang also took out a handful of Demon Crystals from his pocket and dumped them on the table.

"Uh." Qian Hao could only feel the hand on his shoulder suddenly tighten.

Ma Tianchuan's expression darkened. For the first time in two years, he felt his first-place position at risk.

And the next scene made Ma Tianchuan's eyes widen in disbelief!

Because the last Immortal Sheep Believer also pulled out a handful of Demon Crystals from his pocket and threw them on the table!

The stone in Ma Tianchuan's heart completely fell to the ground.

No chance at all.

What close contest?

It was clearly a distant lead by the other side!

"Is this for real?" After a brief silence in the bus, it completely erupted again.

"How could there still be more Demon Crystals?"

"Rightly the second and third students of the year, these chicks went crazy killing!"

"Don't say not to expect too much from girls, I tell you, women's hearts are the cruelest!"

"Too many Demon Crystals, did this team cheat?"

Indeed, how could it be possible?

Ma Tianchuan was just as incredulous.

With only 3 hours for the task, he and his three teammates obtained 31 Demon Crystals, averaging less than 6 minutes to kill an Evil Dog!

For rookie beginners, this efficiency was already extremely terrifying.

Yet Jiang and Wu's team could pull out 40 Demon Crystals?

Was this team really that strong?

Indeed, Wu Shanshan was a Second-class God·Ash's follower, and Jiang Ruyi was a Third-class God·Jade Talisman Believer.

Deng Yutang, as a fifth-class God·Red Scarf Believer, was also a good hand and wouldn't drag them down.

But that Lu Ran...

As an Immortal Sheep Believer, how could he not be a drag?

Ma Tianchuan frowned deeply, having heard of Lu Ran's glorious record of defeating a Third-class God·Prisoner Demon Believer into retreat.

Could it be that this lamb kid was really special and not like other Immortal Sheep Believers?

The bloodstains on Lu Ran's body seemed to suggest just that.

"Ma... Ma bro! Ma bro?"

"What's wrong?" Ma Tianchuan was still pressing on Qian Hao's shoulder, peering out the window without looking down.

Qian Hao was on the verge of tears, burying his face in the back of the seat in front, "Stop squeezing, if you squeeze any more... I'm going to pee myself!"

Ma Tianchuan: ???