

## Old Gods 161

Chapter 161: Just Break Up

Day and night alternated several times, and it was the nineteenth day of the lunar winter month.

Rain Alley City welcomed the moment of its unsealing.

Coincidentally, on this day, the winter sun shone brightly, with no wind and no snow—it was as if calling for people to come out for a breath of fresh air and to stretch their limbs.

However, Lu Ran still nested at home, sitting cross-legged in front of a small shrine.

School had canceled morning classes for the month.

This was because a considerable number of students were still in the Demon Cave·Bamboo Sea near Qiantang River, enjoying a relaxed vacation there.

Due to Rain Alley City suffering from consecutive incidents for three months, the school gave the students great care.

For this month's training tasks, students could go to any Demon Cave and receive tasks from the local military.

After completing the tasks, obtaining certification from the military would grant them extra points.

The school only stipulated that on the fifteenth day of the twelfth lunar month, all students must return to school to participate in the final exam.

The so-called final exam naturally involved city defense on the fifteenth.

Lu Ran could imagine that after the students had stayed outside for so long, experiencing blue skies and blooming flowers, they would likely consider moving away from the dark and damp Rain Alley City after the final exams.

People can endure darkness,

if they haven't seen the sunlight.

"Sigh..."

Lu Ran kept his eyes tightly shut, continually taking deep breaths.

His body had been "swollen" for many days.

Since the city defense on the fifteenth, Lu Ran had returned home and entered a mode of arduous cultivation, focused on breaking through to the next rank.

He was unclear whether he was on the correct path or somewhat obsessed.

In any case, Lu Ran had called his team members around 7 o'clock, saying he needed seclusion at home.

As for when he would exit seclusion... well, that depended on fate.

Out of respect, Lu Ran had made individual calls.

Interestingly, Deng Yutang and Chang Ying had surprisingly similar reactions, both very straightforward in saying they would handle the training tasks of the month, allowing Lu Ran to focus on cultivation without worrying about the points.

Tian Tian spoke softly, cheering greatly for her master...

With his teammates' care and expectations, Lu Ran sat in meditation before the small shrine, resembling an old monk in deep trance.

Aside from eating, drinking, and adding cat food, Lu Ran hardly got up.

Even for sleeping, he lay on the floor in front of the shrine.

He was almost to the point of taking the Immortal Sheep Jade Carving out from the shrine and cuddling with Lord Immortal Goat to sleep...

His non-stop arduous cultivation finally brought about a transformation!

It happened in the afternoon of the twenty-third day of the lunar month when Lu Ran's body suddenly began to tremble violently.

"Ah~"

Lu Ran was ecstatic, finally about to enjoy a moment of relief after many days of discomfort.

"Thud thud thud~" A sudden knock on the door came.

Lu Ran, immersed in his own world, ignored everything outside.

He continued to compress his Divine Power, turn it into a water flow, circulate it orderly within his body, and expand his meridians.

"Thud thud thud!"

This time, the knocking grew louder.

"Hmm?" Lu Ran almost thought he was hallucinating.

"Thud! Thud! Thud!"

The knocking resounded again, not only heavier but also more urgent.

However, as Lu Ran was at a critical moment, he had no attention to spare for opening the door.

He concentrated his mind, continuing to challenge the bottleneck, attempting to expand his body's capacity even further.

Fortunately, the visitor outside the door was not persistent; after knocking three times, they left.

The surroundings fell quiet once more, with only the small bedroom enshrouded in mist, shivering within.

"Sigh!!"

After more than twenty minutes, a fierce burst of energy spread from Lu Ran's body.

"Meow!" The Li Hua cat screamed and quickly fled the scene.

The furniture in the room shifted, with sheets and pillowcases flying around.

It was like a burglar had entered~

"Ah..."

Lu Ran suddenly leaned back, lying directly on the cold floor.

Refreshing~!

His body no longer felt swollen, and he was at ease.

The turbulent Divine Power calm down, and the gentle streams nourished Lu Ran's flesh and body.

Stream Realm·Fifth Rank!

The pinnacle within the scope of the Stream Realm.

This was a particularly special rank, which the world's believers begrudgingly called—Death of Five!

Countless youths had turned into uncles and aunts and still hadn't transcended this "Death of Five."

The so-called reality was suffocatingly harsh.

And now, Lu Ran had entered this rank, becoming one of the vast numbers.

At this moment, he could no longer accumulate anything further.

Only a sudden insight could lead Lu Ran to a higher realm and enable him to continue progressing.

If the insight didn't appear, then there was no bright future ahead.

"Thud thud thud~"

After some indeterminate time, the knocking sound started again, but this time, it switched to the window.

"Who is it?" Lu Ran was quite curious, walking to the window.

He saw a tall figure standing outside, youthful and beautiful.

She wore a pure white down jacket adorned with bunny ear muffs.

The girl's face was beautiful, and her clothes were cute.

However, Lu Ran knew very well that beneath that beautiful skin lay a fierce and impetuous soul.

"Si Xianxian?" Lu Ran opened the window, and immediately, the cold wind hit his face.

"Did you break through?" Si Xianxian sized up Lu Ran, "Did I interrupt you just now?"

Lu Ran said irritably, "You actually know?"

Si Xianxian snorted, "I noticed the energy in the room was off, so I immediately stopped knocking.

You should just be thankful that you were having a breakthrough!"

Just now, I was about to dismantle your door."

Lu Ran then directly asked, "Why are you here?

Didn't we text saying I wouldn't do any field training this month?"

Si Xianxian turned and walked away, her voice trailing off from a distance: "Be good, open the door for your sister."

Lu Ran: ?

After a dozen seconds, when Lu Ran opened the security door, he saw Si Xianxian standing outside with a smiling face.

"Not at all." Lu Ran was helpless, "You're really presumptuous!"

Si Xianxian's smiling face slowly vanished: "What did I do?"

Lu Ran: "Who blocks someone's doorstep directly?"

Si Xianxian: "Then should I leave?"

Lu Ran: "..."

"Goodbye." Si Xianxian's expression darkened, and she turned to leave.

"Hey?" Lu Ran hurriedly called out, "Don't... don't, Si Xianxian, stay right there!"

Si Xianxian had already reached the corridor door.

It was unclear whether she had changed her mind or if it was a natural response:

In any case, when Lu Ran raised his voice, she stopped.

"Don't you not want me here?" Si Xianxian turned her head to look at Lu Ran.

"Does your aunt know you're here?" Lu Ran asked.

"Nonsense!" Si Xianxian gave Lu Ran a sidelong glance, her mouth sweet, "If I didn't come to see you, would my mom let me go out?"

Lu Ran was truly impressed.

Look at you, so blunt and straightforward, how can you have the nerve to wear such cute bunny ear muffs?

Have you no shame?

Lu Ran asked, "What exactly do you want?

Did you have a fight with your aunt, or are you causing trouble again and hiding from it?"

Si Xianxian almost laughed in anger, suddenly raising her hand.

Lu Ran's expression was guarded: "What are you doing?"

This impetuous Lie Tian Girl, reincarnated from a Pudding.

Her slap was incredibly fast and powerful!

It practically could be used as a Divine Technique...

Si Xianxian shook her pale, delicate hand: "White, isn't it?"

Lu Ran disdainfully said: "Don't flatter yourself, it's just so-so."

Si Xianxian looked at her hand: "It's been a long time since it was stained with blood, too clean, it's time to kill."

Lu Ran: ?

Si Xianxian looked at Lu Ran, suggesting: "Let's go, let's go kill someone together?"

Lu Ran was alarmed, guessing: "You're talking about going down to the Demon Cave, to kill the Evil Demons, right?"

Si Xianxian nodded: "Yes, that's right."

Lu Ran said irritably: "I've already told you, I'm not doing field training this month, I need to practice at home."

"Yeah." Si Xianxian suddenly said, "I forgot to congratulate you, for advancing to Stream Realm·Fifth Rank."

"Thanks." Lu Ran nodded.

This scene was very weird.

Their tones were very confrontational, as if they were arguing.

Yet suddenly, for a moment, both were courteous, congratulating and thanking each other.

Thankfully, this strange scene didn't last long.

Right after this exchange, the two continued "arguing."

"Fine, then I'm leaving." Si Xianxian hummed in dissatisfaction, pushing open the corridor door.

"Where are you going?" Lu Ran stepped out of his house, standing in the chilly corridor.

"Going home, where else." Si Xianxian looked out at the snowy world outside the window, speaking casually.

"Really going home?"

"Yes."

Lu Ran thought for a moment and said: "You're not trying to fool both sides, right?

Telling me that you're going home, then telling Si Auntie that you're at my place?"

Si Xianxian: "..."

Crap!

I actually forgot, you're a high school student!

I really walked into a trap.

Lu Ran said: "Then shall I call Si Auntie right now and let her know?"

Si Xianxian raised her hand again.

Lu Ran: "What's the issue now?"

Si Xianxian suddenly laughed: "No issue this time, I just purely want to slap you."

Lu Ran: "..."

Seeing Si Xianxian approaching step by step, Lu Ran said: "I want to strive in one go, to break through and enter River Realm First Rank!"

Of course, Si Xianxian didn't dare to slap Lu Ran. Her pale hand touched his shoulder:

"At this stage, sitting home and cultivating is useless!

You need to go out and find opportunities, you need to seek inspiration!"

Lu Ran felt a bit embarrassed: "To break through Stream Realm Fifth Rank, I refused all my teammates.

Now, I'm going to go out with you, how does that make sense?"

"You've already become Stream Realm Fifth Rank!" Si Xianxian was hopeful upon hearing this, immediately saying, "You haven't lied, and besides..."

"What?"

"People will always part." Si Xianxian stood in a nonchalant pose, leaning slightly against the corridor wall.

Lu Ran: "What do you mean?"

Si Xianxian shrugged: "No matter how good your friends are, as long as you move forward, you will eventually drift apart."

Si Xianxian did not think that Lu Ran's teammates could keep up with his pace.

Birds of a feather flock together.

It wouldn't be long before the peers around Lu Ran would only be the strong followers of Sword One, North Wind, and West Desolation.

Lu Ran shook his head: "I don't think so."

"Heh." Si Xianxian smiled with a hint of self-mockery, "Everyone thinks they are special.

That they won't part with classmates, that they won't separate from close friends.

That they will always be with their loved ones, grow old together."

Lu Ran gazed at the world-weary girl: "So pessimistic?"

Si Xianxian shrugged, quite carefree: "Say goodbye when it's time to say goodbye."

"Maybe." Lu Ran didn't openly agree or disagree, but he didn't believe so in his heart.

Because he was way too special!

In Lu Ran's scenario, he and his teammates had another unbreakable relationship—deities and Angel Envoys.

"Come in." Lu Ran walked into the house, casually speaking.

Si Xianxian's heart lifted: "Do you agree to come with me to kill people?"

"It's to kill Evil Demons." Lu Ran corrected again and pointed casually towards the corner of the living room, "The cat litter needs changing."

Si Xianxian: ???

Chapter 162: Why don't you kneel at?

In the living room, Lu Ran was holding a tabby cat and sitting on the sofa.

In the corner, Si Xianxian pouted, repeatedly scooping the cat litter.

"Where are we going?" Lu Ran rubbed the tabby cat's fuzzy head, "Evil Dog Village?"

"Are we going to kill dogs again?" Si Xianxian was a bit resistant.

"Then where do you want to go?"

"Chang'an? Mount Song?" Si Xianxian clearly had plans, enthusiastic, "Or should we head south to see Guangfu City?"

Lu Ran sensed something off.

Was this girl really intending to slay Evil Demons, or did she just want to travel?

Si Xianxian mentioned three places, all abodes of First-class Gods.

These areas were densely populated and relatively prosperous cities, heavily influenced by the presence of gods and featured the distinctive traits of the Divine Sect.

There were only four First-class Gods in the rankings of Da Xia's deities.

Lu Ran wondered, "Why did you leave out Beijing? That's the closest; we could get there in an hour."

"I've been there, it's boring!" Si Xianxian complained, "All the Sword One Sect's believers have such stiff faces, like I owe them millions."

They look down on everyone from the nostrils, arrogance for who knows what reason.

Seeing one makes me want to slap one..."

Lu Ran found her courage admirable: "In the territory of Lord Jian Yi, slapping a follower of Sword One Sect, you really are tired of living."

"Gods are high above, why would they lower themselves to deal with petty matters of Human Clan believers?" Si Xianxian said nonchalantly, "What about Hushang?"

Hushang City was the location of Second-class God·East Thunder Spear.

It was even more bustling and radiant.

Lu Ran finally understood, this girl was under strict parental control at home and couldn't go anywhere.

Now that she was with him, she finally could let loose and wanted to see the bustling world.

"Huh?" Si Xianxian paused her movement and turned to look at Lu Ran.

Lu Ran: "So, where do you want to go now?"

Si Xianxian's eyes brightened: "How about we go northeast?"

"Why are you back to that again?" Lu Ran was surprised; this didn't quite match Si Xianxian's desire to "see the world."

"No, let's go further north, to Ice City!"

"To meet Lord Beifeng?"

"Yes, aren't you a swordsman?" Si Xianxian nodded vigorously, "It would be good to train there.

Plus you're at Stream Realm Fifth Rank, maybe you'll find some inspiration there?"

Lu Ran smiled, "It's rare for you to think about me."

Si Xianxian looked displeased: "What nonsense are you spouting! Haven't I been nice to you all this time?

I even went to jail for you, and you've already forgotten?"

Lu Ran: "..."

"Ungrateful." Si Xianxian turned away and scooped the cat litter heavily.

"Then let's go to Ice City, I'll book the tickets." Lu Ran got up and headed to the small bedroom.

Watching Lu Ran's retreating back, Si Xianxian suddenly blurted out, "This season, there seems to be an ice sculpture exhibition over there.

Isn't there also a Snow and Ice World?"

In this special era, the spiritual needs of the people were infinitely magnified.

And in this regard, the actions of Da Xia were absolutely impeccable.

No matter the number of people, the investment, or the return, the necessary projects would definitely exist.

Everything was naturally to ensure people could continue living well.

Lu Ran could even imagine, during the recent Fifteenth Night of winter, the Moon Gazers and the Evil Demon Clan battling it out in the Snow and Ice World.

Ice and snow slides, snowflake Ferris wheels, magnificent ice castles...

Battling in such an environment must be magical, right?

"Are you really going out to slay Evil Demons, or are you just after a vacation?" Lu Ran came back holding his phone.

"Half and half," Si Xianxian changed the cat litter, "Ever since I was little, I've been watched by my family, and as a believer, monitored even stricter."

Her voice grew fainter, "I haven't been to any fun places."

Lu Ran was silent for a moment, then said, "Today is the twenty-third of the lunar month, Demon Cave closes on the tenth, we don't have time for tourism."

"Oh." Si Xianxian said softly, "Just meeting in Beifeng City is fine too."

Lu Ran, seeing the girl's disappointed look, could not bear it:

"Wait until my girlfriend comes back, both of us can accompany you."

Si Xianxian was stunned for a moment, her eyes widening at Lu Ran: "Are you afraid she'll misunderstand, that's why you won't go with me?"

Believers of Fierce Heavenly are like explosive barrels, and at that moment, Si Xianxian exploded: "Lu Ran!

You tell her, I am a non-marriage believer, tell her to be completely at ease!

In this lifetime, no one is going to touch me!"

Lu Ran: "..."

Could it be possible that nobody dares to touch you?

Si Xianxian was visibly furious with Lu Ran: "Open the mic! Speak!"

Lu Ran was numb.

He explained: "That's not what I meant, it's my first time going to that kind of amusement park, of course, I want to go with her.

You could be our third wheel, and we would show you around."

Si Xianxian pointed a finger at Lu Ran, visibly upset: "You... Huh? I just realized, you have a girlfriend?"

Lu Ran scratched his head, saying, "More precisely, it's a one-sided affection."

"Oh?" Si Xianxian's anger momentarily subsided, and she asked curiously, "What rank of god is her believer?"

Such a question truly stumped Lu Ran.

Si Xianxian could ask many things, yet she asked this.

Lu Ran responded truthfully: "Jade Talisman Believer."

"A Third-class God, huh." Si Xianxian nodded thoughtfully, "Good luck to you."

Lu Ran's expression was a bit weird.

The words were indeed nice.

But something felt slightly off?

...

From Rain Alley City to Ice City, taking the high-speed train required 5 hours.

When the two arrived at this northern Ice City by nightfall,

just as the snow began to fall lightly, Lu Ran looked at the brightly lit Ice City under the night sky, feeling its immense beauty and prosperity.

It's true, comparing oneself to others will drive you to despair, as will comparing goods.

Lu Ran discovered a law:

No matter which direction you travel from Rain Alley City, it seems you're always a bit closer to heaven...

The two enjoyed a meal of local specialties until their stomachs were nearly bursting.

Afterward, they found a hotel and booked two separate rooms, planning to enter Beifeng City the next morning.

The so-called Beifeng City was the location of the statue representing the godly entity, Divine-Beifeng.

It lay within Ice City, sort of a "city within a city".

Lu Ran's previous visit to Demon Cave had mostly shown him Divine Sculpture Avatars.

Underneath the feet of a Divine Sculpture Avatar were military camps.

However, the location of the Divine Sculpture itself was entirely different!

Take Beifeng City as an example:

The city had its own set of rules and operating systems, and the city contained a large number of North Wind Believers, who worshipped their deity all day.

The moment you stepped through the gates of Beifeng City, it was like entering another world, stepping into an ancient sect.

Thus, visitors should definitely prepare themselves mentally.

In fact, each godly statues' location has such a "city within a city."

Lu Ran hadn't visited many places; up to now, he had only seen one Divine Sculpture itself—Sword One.

During the three years he lived in Beijing, he had visited "Jianyi City" to see the idol.

As Si Xianxian said, the followers of Sword One were terrifyingly aloof.

Only their gentle mother, still with a soft gaze, took him and his sister to Worship God.

At that time, the mother repeatedly prayed that the god would pay attention to her children so that in the future, at the Worship God Platform, they might receive blessings from above.

Now, it seems pulling strings was quite useless~

Silent through the night, they awoke early the next morning.

The two hailed a car and headed straight for Beifeng City.

The driver was well accustomed to the route; after all, a large number of North Wind Believers arrived from all over the country every day to make their pilgrimage.

"Wow~" Lu Ran had hardly stepped out of the taxi before he was looking up again in admiration.

From a great distance, he could already see this high-reaching Divine Sculpture.

The Divine Sculpture Avatars that Lu Ran had seen before, although standing tall, were only about ten meters in height.

The godly statues themselves were terrifyingly large!

Lu Ran couldn't estimate its exact scale with the naked eye.

The books stated it was around 200 meters?

Two hundred meters!

What does that mean?

Every member of the Human Clan, in front of such a majestic deity, must feel immensely insignificant...

"Wow!" Si Xianxian was also full of wonder, urging, "Let's go in and see!"

From outside the city gate, their view was somewhat obstructed.

For Beifeng City was an ancient fortress, surrounded by high stone walls.

Above the grand city gate, two gilded characters were engraved: North Wind.

These two characters, truly a fierce calligraphy!

It was as though the strokes concealed blades, and a Wind Blade might shoot out at any moment.

Terrifying!

"Slow down, slow down!" Seeing Si Xianxian rushing into the crowd, Lu Ran hurriedly followed.

Inside and outside the city gate, people flowed in and out incessantly.

There were many Sword Holders like Lu Ran.

Unexpectedly, were all these people coming to pay homage as North Wind Believers?

"No shouting!"

From the left side of the gate, a scolding voice arose.

Lu Ran clasped his twin swords with one hand and placed the other on Si Xianxian's shoulder, then turned his head to look.

It was a young man in ancient dress, likely a city gate guard?

His face was stern, his gaze severe, watching Lu Ran intently.

It seemed that if Lu Ran dared to make any more noise, the man might take action.

With Lord Divine present here, it was indeed exceptionally quiet inside and outside the gate, even amid the bustling crowd.

Lu Ran pursed his lips, said nothing, and followed Si Xianxian inside.

Without the city gatehouse blocking their view, Lu Ran could fully appreciate the grandeur of Lord Beifeng.

That towering Divine Sculpture, though a bit blurry, did not conceal its impressive presence.

Divine·Beifeng was clad in a snow-white cloak, holding a slender blade, and wearing a hair-bundling silver crown.

He looked heroic and particularly stern!

An overwhelming aura surged forward, crushing Lu Ran, this diminutive member of the Human Clan, leaving him secretly heart-throbbing.

Of course, the statue's clothing and crown were not white or silver but made of stone.

It was only because Lu Ran had seen the remnants of Divine-Beifeng in textbooks, so he knew its true colors and filled in the gaps himself.

Just as Lu Ran was quietly admiring the view, a voice came from beside him:

"Seeing the deity, why don't you kneel?"

Hearing this, Lu Ran's brow furrowed slightly.

It was undeniable that since entering the gate, the crowded masses had been kneeling on the ground, their faces filled with utmost devotion.

There were also a few standing, hands joined in front with bowed heads in respect.

These people were not North Wind Believers, but seeing the deity, they naturally paid their respects reverently.

After all, this stone sculpture was not just any avatar, but the genuine deity itself!

In such an environment, Lu Ran looking up at the deity's grandeur simply made him an oddity.

"Hmm?" Lu Ran looked over, and saw the scolding figure was the same young man who had told him to shut up.

The young man's eyes widened!

Despite his prior scolding, this young man holding twin swords didn't kneel immediately but instead turned to look his way?

Suddenly, the young man flared up in anger!

His expression darkened, his gaze sharp, his voice suddenly rose:

"You, why don't you kneel?!"

Chapter 163: Speak with a knife?

Why not kneel?

Joke!

In front of Lord Immortal Goat, I'm always sitting cross-legged every day!

Did I run all the way here just to kneel before your North Wind?

"I have my own god, I cannot kneel," Lu Ran said solemnly.

"Oh?" The young man in white tight clothes, with a skeptical look, scanned the twin swords in Lu Ran's arms, "Aren't you a disciple of Lord Beifeng?"

Lu Ran shook his head.

He had to admit, Lu Ran really had the look and the flair.

Firstly, the two Tang swords cradled in his arms.

They were nourished with the fresh blood of numerous Evil Demons on the battlefield.

Moreover, Lu Ran's own temperament was genuine, perfectly fitting the title of "Swordman."

Throwing him into the group of North Wind Believers, he indeed was highly deceptive!

"Hmph." The young man in white clothes snorted coldly, "You'd better not be, to spare us enforcing the sect rules."

"Are you sick or something?" Si Xianxian was not happy, "Who would tell such a lie?"

The young man in white didn't pay attention to Si Xianxian, still looking at Lu Ran: "You're not a believer of the Beifeng Sect, fine.

But shouldn't there be the due courtesies?

You come to Beifeng City, face the god of my sect, wouldn't you bow your head, wouldn't you bow?"

"You..." Si Xianxian wanted to continue but was firmly grasped on the shoulder by Lu Ran.

Lu Ran expressionless, "Everyone has their own way of worshiping gods.

I gaze upon Lord Beifeng with what I believe is sufficient respect. Where's the fault in that?"

"Sufficient respect?" The young man in white frowned, deep down feeling that this youth was disrespectful to North Wind, "You were making a racket outside the city gates.

Do you consider that showing sufficient respect?"

Lu Ran pursed his lips.

Your Beifeng Sect's rules are really strict, huh?

If you say no talking inside the city, near a grand hall or something, that's one thing.

But here, at the bustling city gates, I can't even call out to a friend?

"Let's go," said Lu Ran, gripping Si Xianxian's shoulder, leading her towards the gate.

There were indeed things Lu Ran found hard to do.

Like truly from the heart, profound respect, or bowing his head.

"What are you doing?" The young man in white furrowed his brows.

Lu Ran turned back with an unusually somber look, "Why, am I not allowed to leave?"

The young man in white, "Is everything clear?"

"Does it need to be?" Lu Ran looked straight at him, barely holding back, "Or would you prefer we clarify with swords?"

"Ah??" The young man in white was startled!

For a moment, he stood there frozen.

He never expected this young man to be so defiant!

This was the Beifeng Sect's territory.

And this youth dared to say to a city gate guard, to clarify things with swords?

Setting aside the territory and guard issues, would anyone dare to say to a North Wind Believer to talk with swords?!

No! How could this guy dare?

"Damn, he's so cool..." Si Xianxian murmured under her breath.

She looked at Lu Ran's profile, feeling comforted~

She had been held by the shoulder by Lu Ran, not even allowed to make a scene, let alone speak.

But in the end...

You tell me not to speak, yet you don't hold back, dude!

Seeing the other party didn't take the bait, Lu Ran snorted and continued walking towards the city gates:

"If I'm not welcome, then I'll leave."

The young man in white had a rigid expression, returning to his senses from his astonishment: "When did we not welcome you?

I am telling you to follow the rules here!"

"What's all the noise?" Another deep voice came, firm.

The young man turned deathly pale and immediately shut his mouth.

Lu Ran turned to see a middle-aged man similarly dressed in quaint white clothes.

It seemed that the attire of the North Wind Believers in the city was all similar.

The man sternly looked at Lu Ran, "Regardless if you're a believer of another god or just an ordinary person, Beifeng City welcomes everyone to come and worship the god."

Lu Ran's hand still pressed on Si Xianxian's shoulder, clutching over and over.

The implication was clear, to keep this Explosive Barrel from speaking.

Si Xianxian indeed didn't stay relieved for long, her anger surged again at the young man's words!

However, her body was honest, and under Lu Ran's hand, she could only stomp her feet angrily.

The man clearly saw the girl's dissatisfaction and asked, "Why have you come here?"

Lu Ran, "To broaden our horizons, to enter the Demon Cave for training."

The man nodded, "Remember to abide by the various rules in the city, please go ahead."

"Hmph," Si Xianxian glared at the young man in white from a distance and then yanked Lu Ran into the city.

They had barely walked a few steps before she started cursing, "That guy is sick, just picking a quarrel for no reason."

Lu Ran, "We're on someone else's turf, we'll follow their rules, it's not wrong."

Whether the rules themselves are reasonable, is another matter.

Si Xianxian disdainfully said, "What's the fear in raising your voice a bit?

That guy just saw the crowd around him, caught someone speaking loudly, and wanted to show off!

And this is right at his own doorstep, which makes him even more confident!

I've seen many such cowards."

"Enough," Lu Ran patted Si Xianxian's shoulder, "We've entered, and they didn't force me to bow or anything."

Si Xianxian huffily said, "Maybe he judged your identity wrong. With so many people watching, he couldn't step down and then picked a quarrel!"

"Alright already."

"You're like a clay Bodhisattva, not angry at all... well, no, that's not right." Si Xianxian turned her head toward Lu Ran.

She suddenly raised her elbow, propping it up on Lu Ran's shoulder with a smile.

Lu Ran wary, "What are you doing?"

Si Xianxian's mouth corners upturned, "You looked a bit handsome when you snapped at him earlier?"

Lu Ran remained silent, cradling the swords, strolling the ancient streets.

"Haha~" Si Xianxian's laughter was unrestrained, "Next time we face such a situation, I'll allow you to add a few swear words to your speech."

Lu Ran, "..."

This girl switches emotions too quickly, doesn't she?

Going on like this, she won't get sick, will she?

Well... she's kind of a patient already.

Afflicted by gods.

The ailment, Fiery Sky.

"Trust your Sister Xian'er," Si Xianxian affirmed, "A few swear words add more force!"

Lu Ran suddenly turned to look at a street on the right.

The street was bustling and full of excitement.

Being called "city," the size was naturally large.

Lu Ran employed his Extreme Vision and saw the quaint commercial street with inns and taverns in abundance.

"Sure thing, I checked online when I came here, this place has a commercial street," muttered Si Xianxian, stepping inside, "How could it be quiet?"

"Do you want some candied haw?" Lu Ran suddenly asked.

"Huh?" Si Xianxian was looking at a tavern and was taken aback by Lu Ran's words.

"I'll buy you some," Lu Ran gestured toward a vendor in the distance.

"Ha," Si Xianxian chuckled lightly, "Not bad, Sister Xian'er didn't dote on you for nothing."

"Sweets can improve your mood," Lu Ran said, stepping over to the vendor.

But his heart was quietly complaining: Indeed, you give me a headache.

Headache~

Then, Lu Ran spent a full 25 yuan on a hawthorn candied fruit stick.

Now Lu Ran was not only having a headache but also feeling a bit heartache.

As expected of the city under the gods, the stronghold of the Beifeng Sect, they sure knew how to make money!

Probably maintaining this city cost a fair bit of money.

The two of them wandered around the east and west, feeling like they had traveled to ancient times.

As for going deep inside to worship at the feet of the god, they didn't really have any interest.

Probably once they finished roaming outside, they would head straight for the Demon Cave.

"Go straight ahead, then take a right," Si Xianxian looked up at the sign at the crossroads, "Martial Arts Arena."

"Do you want to check it out?" Lu Ran was quite tempted.

Si Xianxian looked at Lu Ran, "We didn't go to Chang'an or Guangfo but ran all the way to this icy and snowy place.

It's for you, the Swordman!

Watching the North Wind Believers practice martial arts, perhaps you could steal a couple of moves?"

Lu Ran pointed at the corner of her mouth, "Sugar."

"Mm." Si Xianxian licked the corner of her lips with her tongue.

Soon after, she revealed a sweet smile.

Lu Ran was right; eating sweets did make people happy.

This scene also made Lu Ran silently chuckle. In this sense, the 25 yuan was well spent.

The two had been strolling around the city for a long time now. Si Xianxian had already finished her candied haw and kept reminiscing about it.

Now, being told that there were still sugar stains at the corner of her mouth...

That was an unexpected delight!

"We're going!" Si Xianxian took the lead.

"Go we shall, but you can't fight with anyone," Lu Ran quickly followed.

"Not even sparring?" Because Si Xianxian had just had something sweet, her attitude was quite good.

"No."

"Why not?" Si Xianxian was obviously indignant.

"I'm afraid you'll kill someone," Lu Ran said darkly, his words weighty.

Si Xianxian, "..."

That was indeed hard to refute.

Sometimes, even Si Xianxian was afraid of her own potential for violence.

The two headed towards the northeast of Beifeng City. After leaving the bustling commercial area, the surrounding atmosphere became more solemn.

From far away, Lu Ran could hear cries of effort and the clear sound of weapons colliding.

Snow still fell from the sky, drifting down, with occasional gusts of wind blowing through.

The Martial Arts Arena was bustling, and the clamor of people filled the air.

"I'm feeling it!" Si Xianxian's eyes sparkled.

The arena was quite large.

In the main field, a group of men and women dressed in white tight clothes were practicing sword techniques together.

They were serious and didn't mind being observed and learned from by the surrounding people.

In fact, North Wind Believers from all over the country came here to pay homage to the god, and most would visit this Martial Arts Arena to seek advice from these "Inner Sect Disciples."

It's not that the believers living in the North Wind City had a particularly high status.

But it's undeniable that they had an easier time receiving guidance from Divine-Beifeng.

Under the god's instruction, these North Wind Believers qualified to live in the city carried the responsibility of imparting sword skills.

Any North Wind Believers that came here would just need to reveal their identity to receive free instruction from the city believers.

If you were a believer of another god...

The Beifeng Sect was generous enough not to drive people away, but they wouldn't offer one-on-one teaching either.

If you wish to learn, you should quietly self-study beside.

"Come on, let's start over there!" Si Xianxian grew more excited, pointing to a grove not far away.

Three sides of the central field were surrounded by forests. In the Snow Forest, there were many sparring fields.

And those sparring fields were especially packed!

Clearly, more people preferred to watch fights...

"Slow down, slow down." Lu Ran was pulled by Si Xianxian and plunged into the grove.

In the nearest training field, two North Wind Believers were engaged in heated battle.

They both donned water-flow armor, their blades flashing cold light.

Sometimes, a Gale would blow, shaking trees and scattering frost and snow.

"Wow~" Lu Ran was quickly engrossed.

The sparring couple in the field, one more ruthless than the other, their attacks incredibly sharp, were literally lethal moves aimed at vital points!

Exactly,

absolutely right!

It's this kind of momentum that's needed to truly beat back the Evil Demons!

Lu Ran was intently absorbed when a voice of indignation suddenly came from behind,

"So you were saying to talk with swords earlier?"

#### Chapter 164: Knives and Hearts

"Hmm?" Si Xianxian turned her head and her expression instantly changed, "Not finished yet, huh?"

Lu Ran also turned his head and saw a face that was livid with anger.

The people around them, naturally, had heard the ruckus and everyone had turned to look.

Some were curious, some puzzled.

Some people, upon seeing the newcomer, frowned slightly, seeming to recognize the young man in white.

The young man in white paid no heed to Si Xianxian, focusing instead on Lu Ran, word by word, "Did you just tell me to 'talk with my sword'?"

Just now, at the city gate, when Lu Ran had said "talk with my sword," the young man in white hadn't understood right away and was left standing there dumbfounded.

In the eyes of the bystanders, he was completely overpowered.

A humiliation indeed!

And the young man, who came back to his senses later, of course wouldn't just let it go.

At this moment, there was also someone who felt insulted—Si Xianxian!

Just like at the city gate, she had already been ignored once.

This white-clothed youngster looking for trouble only had eyes for Lu Ran, completely ignoring her existence.

What utter nonsense!

"I'll fucking give you face!"

Si Xianxian flung her right hand out, and with an empty grip out of thin air, she directly clenched onto a massive warhammer.

The huge illusory hammer, measuring 3 meters, bore lines of fracture with red light flickering and contained terrifying energy, as though it could explode at any time.

"Fierce Heavenly!"

"Holy shit, a Fierce Heavenly believer?"

"A three-meter hammer, that's a River Realm Fierce Heavenly believer for you." The surrounding area erupted into commotion.

Originally, the training ground had been packed tight with spectators shoulder to shoulder.

But when someone summoned the Fierce Sky Hammer, the crowd quickly dispersed!

Clearly, nobody had expected that this girl with cute bunny ears was actually a patient.

A highly irascible, extremely dangerous patient!

"Don't push!"

"You're stepping on my foot..."

This indeed was Beifeng City; a mere River Realm Fierce Heavenly believer couldn't make much of a fuss, of course.

But the problem was, before the Fierce Heavenly believer could be restrained, she definitely could give the surrounding crowd a few hard times...

As the saying went:

The strong feared the reckless, the reckless feared those who disregarded their lives!

The crowd grew even more packed, yet the area around Si Xianxian was extraordinarily vacant, creating an amusing scene.

Only a young man dressed in black, with twin blades in arms, oblivious to his impending doom, stood behind the Fierce Heavenly believer.

"You..." The young man in white suddenly looked shocked.

This time, he could no longer ignore Si Xianxian.

Si Xianxian took a step forward, her beautiful big eyes nearly shooting out flames:

"Are we not done yet?

You've been looking for trouble since the city gate, you can go to hell...hey?"

The fuming Si Xianxian was suddenly pulled back by the arm by Lu Ran.

This scene surprised the surrounding spectators.

Was this young man really that strong?

One would have to be quite capable to dare to intervene with an enraged Fierce Heavenly believer.

The question was, how high could his strength possibly be at such a young age?

"Don't stop me!"

Si Xianxian's full brunt of anger fell on Lu Ran, which instead seemed like coy petulance?

Instantly, the people around were even more puzzled...

"He's here for me," Lu Ran spoke.

"If he's here for you, doesn't that mean he's here for me too?" Si Xianxian said irritably.

Lu Ran shook his head, "You've been out with me twice, into jail twice, how can I face Aunt Si?

From now on, how could I dare take you out again?"

Si Xianxian opened her mouth, not knowing how to retort.

Lu Ran was like a savior to Si Xianxian.

Only by staying by his side could she temporarily escape her mother's control.

She could say whatever she wanted and go wherever she wanted.

Otherwise, she would have to go home, be disciplined and confined by her mother, and continue an uninteresting and troublesome life.

"What's going on here?"

A stern shout came from behind.

A pair of male and female sparring partners on the training ground had stopped.

The man seemed to have some status and certainly seemed to take responsibility.

While most people avoided the Fierce Heavenly believer, the man took the initiative to step forward and address the crisis.

"From now on, I will do the talking," Lu Ran's voice softened as he patted Si Xianxian's shoulder, "Put the hammer away."

Si Xianxian pouted, her face wearing an unwilling expression.

Lu Ran: "Be good."

"Oh." Si Xianxian unhappily clenched her fist, and the illusory warhammer silently shattered.

This scene indeed reassured the onlookers quite a bit.

Everyone knew just how dangerous a River Realm Fierce Heavenly believer could be.

"Bu Qingfeng, what's going on?" The man looked at the young man in white and demanded an explanation.

The young man in white, referred to as Bu Qingfeng, addressed the man, "Senior Brother Liu, this man was making a loud fuss at the city gate, and after entering the city, he disrespected the gods!

I told him to obey the rules, and he told me to 'talk with my sword.'"

Si Xianxian was very upset: "Where did we disrespect the gods? Don't talk nonsense..."

Lu Ran pulled Si Xianxian behind him and looked coldly at Bu Qingfeng:

"I thought you practiced the sword, turns out it was your mouth?"

Bu Qingfeng's face turned livid: "You..."

"Silence!" Senior Brother Liu's face darkened, his gaze shuttling back and forth between the two.

He somewhat understood his new junior brother Bu Qingfeng.

The common problem of Heavenly Prides was not lacking in any of them: extreme arrogance, even to the point of overconfidence.

And from the reactions of these two tourists, the matter still warranted further investigation.

"Let's resolve this through the sword then," a female voice suddenly came from behind.

Everyone turned to look, and it was the other participant who had been sparring on the field earlier.

Bu Qingfeng, hearing this, quickly said, "Senior Sister Yan?"

Senior Sister Yan did not pay attention to her fellow disciple but instead walked towards the edge of the field.

She seemed to really like Lu Ran's words, savoring them: "Talk with the sword..."

"Okay!" Once Senior Sister Yan spoke, Bu Qingfeng immediately strode toward the center of the field.

Having been labeled as "having a sharp tongue," Bu Qingfeng suppressed his anger and spoke tersely, looking at Lu Ran: "You! Come!"

Si Xianxian looked at Lu Ran: "Since this wimp is agreeing to spar, he must have armor made of flowing water, and he must be from the River Realm."

It was clear that she really wanted to fight for Lu Ran.

"River Realm." Lu Ran gripped his twin blades and snorted disdainfully, "Say he's dead, and he's dead."

Si Xianxian's lips slowly curved into a smile, her eyes shining brightly, and she couldn't help but reach out to gently tap Lu Ran's cheeks.

She absolutely adored this defiant and arrogant side of Lu Ran!

She didn't understand why he was usually so easygoing.

He wasn't living up to his capabilities at all, lacking the air that a Heavenly Pride should have!

Lu Ran: "..."

True to a Fierce Heavenly believer, she never thought any scene was too big to enjoy.

"The sparring will stop at victory or defeat." Senior Brother Liu, clearly having exceptional hearing, warned sternly, "This is Beifeng City, under the feet of the gods!

Within the city, deaths are not permitted!

Think of your future, do not treat your prospects as a joke."

"Okay." Lu Ran began to move.

Under the watchful eyes of everyone, the black-clad young man stood undaunted, cradling his twin blades as he stepped into the center of the field.

"From the house of North Wind, Bu Qingfeng!" The young man in white declared his identity with pride.

As he spoke, energy surged in his hands, grasping a Wind Blade.

Lu Ran did not declare his identity, he just gazed at the young man from afar, asking:

"Swordman, why take a name of a sword?"

"You! You...." Bu Qingfeng was furiously indignant but couldn't spit out his words.

"Pfft...Hahahahaha~" Si Xianxian laughed out loud, insolently.

"Both parties, don the armor made of flowing water, you may begin," Senior Brother Liu announced.

Bu Qingfeng immediately released Divine Power, streams of water entwined around his body, growing increasingly detailed.

Until endless streams formed a curtain of water, covering his whole body.

Lu Ran was, as usual, uncompliant.

Just earlier, he did not follow the rule to declare his household.

And now, he continued to disregard the rules, not donning any armor.

"You're asking for death!" Bu Qingfeng spat out the words through clenched teeth, his face livid with rage.

He gripped the Wind Blade tightly and threw it toward Lu Ran with force before rushing straight for him.

"Whoosh~!"

The sharp blade, accompanied by a sound of cleaving air, aimed directly at Lu Ran.

Lu Ran, however, stepped back a bit and slightly sidestepped, allowing the Wind Blade to pass in front of him.

In just a single scene, the onlooking crowd was impressed.

Lu Ran's maneuver was not particularly profound.

After all, he had just dodged a throwing knife.

What was crucial was Lu Ran's expressionless face, that sense of calm composure, and even a bit of scorn for his opponent...

"Whoosh~ Whoosh~"

As Bu Qingfeng charged forward, he threw no fewer than four Wind Blades.

Yet Lu Ran's twin blades seemed but for show.

Sidestep, tilt head, sideslip...

Each blade, like a sketch outline, passed by Lu Ran without touching him.

"Ah?"

"What the?" This time, the onlookers were not just impressed but also began expressing their amazement out loud.

The increase in the number of Wind Blades meant a sudden spike in the level of danger.

Many also noticed that Bu Qingfeng, covertly controlling the blades as they neared Lu Ran, had slightly changed the direction of at least two of the blades.

Yet Lu Ran remained composed, evading each deadly move.

It appeared he was particularly familiar with the North Wind Divine Skill·Flying Wind Order?

"You really know how to put on airs, huh?!"

Bu Qingfeng yelled in fury, having reached Lu Ran and slashed his Wind Blade downward harshly.

From his words and actions, Lu Ran time and time again enraged Bu Qingfeng.

A North Wind Believer, provoked into behaving like a Fierce Heavenly believer.

But the question remained, are the characteristics of your Divine Skill as blunt and explosive as those of the Fierce Heavenly Sect?

Or do you have the Fierce Heavenly believer's support, ready to shatter and perish together in defiance?

"Huh~"

Lu Ran's eyes darkened as the Divine Power swirled around him.

Evil Technique·Evil Sense heightened his sensory acuity.

Evil Technique·Evil Agility made his movements incredibly swift.

Evil Technique·Soul Splitting Power greatly increased his strength!

"Zzzt—"

With a light tap underfoot, Lu Ran shifted half a step to the side and his right-hand's Silent Night Blade sliced right past Bu Qingfeng's neck.

Their silhouettes crossed, and in a flash, it was over!

The Silent Night Blade's edge sparkled as it cut into the water armor.

The layer of water armor wrapped around Bu Qingfeng's neck now bore a gash that was neither deep nor shallow!

Everyone: !!!

Inside and outside the sparring field, the buzzing discussion abruptly ceased, and the crowd fell into a sudden silence.

Their eyes widened, witnessing a scene that was over in a flash and that sent shivers down their spines.

Is it over?

Just one round?!

He...he's finished just like that?

Had there been no water armor to protect him, Lu Ran's blade would have already decapitated Bu Qingfeng.

Even with water armor...

Lu Ran's attack, in technique, in mindset, and in overall momentum, had already torn Bu Qingfeng to shreds.

Senior Brother Liu's expression hardened as he whispered, "Fine blade."

Senior Sister Yan at the edge of the field nodded in what seemed like approval, "Nice sentiment."

As sparring partners of equal caliber, they naturally gave completely different evaluations of Lu Ran's slash.

"Huff..."

A flurry of frost and snow danced in the air.

After a single exchange, Bu Qingfeng furiously surged forward, rapidly gaining distance from Lu Ran.

"Heh...heh..."

Bu Qingfeng panted heavily as he suddenly turned to look at Lu Ran, his face a mix of shock and anger!

In his view, Lu Ran stood amidst the spreading frost, not even bothering to turn around.

He exposed his back to his opponent.

It was contemptuous, it was full of endless mockery.

Lu Ran's voice floated over:

"As expected, your mouth is stronger than your blade."

"You..." Bu Qingfeng's face alternated between green and purple!

Extreme rage couldn't cover his inner terror.

Everyone was a survivor from the Demon Cave, more or less having experienced a moment of life and death.

Lu Ran's recent strike still caused Bu Qingfeng to shudder!

Never before had Bu Qingfeng felt so close to death...

Lu Ran even had the leisure to twirl his blade but still did not deign to turn around:

"Seems like with the blade in your hand, you can't speak clearly."

"Son of a bitch! Do not insult me!" Bu Qingfeng's face turned red with utter exasperation as he finally roared.

Lu Ran remained expressionless: "The blade has suffered following you.

Let it go, and switch to practice the sword, don't waste your Sword name."

"Sss..."

Senior Sister Yan inhaled sharply.

This young man,

A blade so swift, a heart so ruthless!

He aimed not just to win, but squarely at the very spirit of Bu Qingfeng.

Chapter 165: Heavenly Pride under the Knife

"Hiss..."

"This?" The onlooking crowd gasped in shock, exchanging uneasy glances.

Like Senior Sister Yan, most of them specialized in sword techniques and were devout followers of North Wind, thus fully understanding the profound significance the "sword" held for the North Wind followers.

The young swordsman's words were a barefaced insult.

Bu Qingfeng indeed lost his composure, his face contorted with rage as he yelled, "Shut up! You shut your fucking mouth!"

"Hoosh~"

Bu Qingfeng's feet stirred the wind as he rapidly lunged towards Lu Ran.

North Wind Divine Skill·Breeze Dance!

Publicly humiliated in front of a large audience, Bu Qingfeng no longer cared about anything.

Being disciples selected by Second-class God·North Wind Blade, of course, they were all exceptionally talented!

Such people were usually looked upon with admiration wherever they went, showered in flattery and praise, when had they ever been ridiculed like this?

"This is bad," whispered Senior Brother Liu, observing the scene.

"Foolish man," Senior Sister Yan said, her face showing some disappointment.

As a follower of North Wind, you can be proud, even arrogant, but one must never let anger cloud their vision.

Your North Wind Divine Skill, your sword, is for meticulous execution!

Not for a reckless charge like the Fierce Heavenly Divine Skill or the Fierce Sky Hammer.

In the blink of an eye, the young man in white and the youth in black had already exchanged several blows!

Under intense rage, Bu Qingfeng's attacks were particularly fierce, like a wild beast lashing out, far more rapid than usual.

However, the young man in black, wielding dual swords, remained composed and fearless, skillfully dodging or blocking the assaults.

"Be careful, good, be careful, don't, be careful..."

Xianxian's heart was in her throat, continually muttering under her breath.

There was no helping it, the speed of offensive and defensive transitions between the two swordsmen was simply too fast!

As soon as Lu Ran had dealt with one crisis, another quickly followed.

This left Xianxian alternating between caution and relief.

This fight was even more nerve-wracking for her than if she were participating herself!

"Zii—"

Suddenly, the sound of a blade cutting through water armor sounded again.

The dark Silent Night Blade, shimmering with deep purple patterns, once again tore open the watery defense at Bu Qingfeng's neck!

The crowd turned solemn, their spirits heightened.

Lu Ran started to counterattack.

He boldly withstood what Bu Qingfeng called his "three-pronged attack," and then revealed his own edge.

"Zii!"

Lu Ran shifted sideways, the Silent Night Blade in his right hand deflecting the attack while the Dawn Blade in his left hand aimed a direct slash at Bu Qingfeng's thigh.

The sound of the armor tearing was painfully vivid, as though the sharp Black Ice Blade was really slicing a bloody wound on everyone's thigh.

"Die!" Bu Qingfeng's face twisted in fury as he stepped back, swinging his sword fiercely.

Lu Ran moved with alarming agility.

He ducked low, letting the blade sweep over his head, and with a light tap of his toes, he surged forward.

The Dawn Blade, sweeping upward from between Bu Qingfeng's legs, cleaved towards his brow!

"Zii—"

The split in the watery armor traced the line where Bu Qingfeng was nearly split in two.

"Huff!!"

A gale abruptly rose under Bu Qingfeng's feet, and he fiercely retreated.

The anger in his eyes once again "devolved" into shock and rage as he swiftly widened the gap from Lu Ran.

"Worthless," Senior Sister Yan said flatly, her expression growing even more disappointed.

Earlier, she described Bu Qingfeng as a "common man," merely thinking that the young disciple was blinded by anger.

But as the saying goes: "A common man in a rage will spill blood within five steps."

Under such extreme anger, Bu Qingfeng's blade could not even stain itself with blood, instead he continued to accumulate injuries.

Indeed, he didn't even deserve the term "common man!"

"You..." Bu Qingfeng's face was extremely contorted, as if he wanted to shatter all his teeth.

"What now?" Lu Ran looked at the hastily retreating Bu Qingfeng, "Is your blade too soft, and now your mouth can't get hard too?"

"Die!" Bu Qingfeng suddenly flung his hand.

In an instant, at least eight wind blades directly thrust at Lu Ran.

This time, Bu Qingfeng did not charge forward.

Sighs echoed from the crowd of onlookers.

He was defeated—thoroughly defeated.

At this point, in everyone's eyes, Lu Ran hadn't even used any Divine Techniques!

Bu Qingfeng, a proud follower of North Wind at the River Realm-First Rank, hadn't managed to force his opponent to use any Divine Technique!

Let alone Divine Techniques, the opponent hadn't even summoned his water armor.

What did this mean?

No one on the field even knew which god's follower this young man in black was!

From beginning to end, the young man in black was purely letting his "sword" do the talking!

This was insane...

And most crucially, and fatally, Bu Qingfeng had shown fear!

Earlier, Bu Qingfeng had charged forward recklessly.

Now, look at him, retreating far back, remotely controlling eight wind blades, trying to encircle and kill Lu Ran.

During a duel, both sides are of course allowed to use Divine Techniques.

However, generally speaking, when followers of North Wind spar, they rarely become "mages" and fight from a distance.

In Demon Cave, you can slaughter Evil Demons this way.

But in a Martial Arts Arena?

Aren't you here to practice and exhibit your sword technique?

"Shameless!" Xianxian shouted loudly, "Look, Lu Ran, didn't I tell you he was a coward?"

"Shut up!" Bu Qingfeng seethed, glaring at Lu Ran, struggling to control the flying blades.

And what happened next left the crowd dumbstruck!

Within the formation of flying blades, Lu Ran nimbly dodged about.

Advancing and retreating, weaving left and right.

A simple lifting of a leg, a slight bending of the knee, a precise and quick step...

Chapter 166: Under the Knife Heavenly Pride\_2

Through the torrent of throwing knives, not a leaf touched him!

"My goodness..." Si Xianxian felt utterly overwhelmed.

She, of course, knew that Lu Ran had risked his life to save hers by charging into the lantern formation alone.

She had witnessed firsthand how Lu Ran dodged agilely among a pack of Evil Dogs, as if he had foresight.

But Si Xianxian had never seen how Lu Ran freely roamed within the Bloody Purgatory woven by the Prisoner Demon believers!

Merely eight blades of wind, are they comparable to endless chains?

Hmm... Xu Zhen could withstand them.

After all, these wind blades were swift and ruthless, intensely fierce.

But the throwing knives controlled by Bu Qingfeng, be it in speed or dexterity, were far too inferior.

The question arose, whom was Lu Ran comparing them to?

The pinnacle of River Realm· Deng Yuxiang!

Having fought alongside Deng Yuxiang for so long, how could Lu Ran not understand the command of the flying wind?

How could he not know the true terror of the genuine command of the flying wind?

Bu Qingfeng indeed fell far short.

"Crack!!"

Two blades of wind collided abruptly, emitting a crisp sound.

This grating noise also woke the intoxicated crowd.

"Ah??"

"God damn it!"

"This... isn't he a North Wind Believer?"

"You're joking! With that level of sound positioning, I'd stake my life, he must be a North Wind Believer!"

"Gulp." Bu Qingfeng swallowed his saliva.

In his sight, Lu Ran was actually approaching!

Lu Ran was not only dodging but also moving closer to Bu Qingfeng in the process of dodging the stabbing wind blades!

And because the wind blades crisscrossed around him like butterflies, wrapping around Lu Ran, fluttering about.

This led to the situation where the Divine Technique-Flying Wind Command didn't seem to be taking his life, but more like it was a "Domain" especially for Lu Ran?

Lu Ran just like that, with his "wind blade" domain, charged at Bu Qingfeng!

"Awesome!" Si Xianxian let out a shriek, her excited face flushed, "Damn awesome!"

Si Xianxian certainly knew Lu Ran was strong, but she only had a vague idea.

Only today did she truly realize just how formidable Lu Ran was!

Si Xianxian inevitably felt a surge of emotions.

Looking at it this way, was Lu Ran really nice to her?

So tolerant and easy-going, he had just bought candied hawthorns to cheer her up...

You're so freaking strong, when I mess up, just kick me, will you!

Anyway, if I really blow up, you could hold me down~

"Still say you're not a North Wind Believer!" Bu Qingfeng shouted furiously, trying to cover up his inner terror with an angry shout.

The next moment, Bu Qingfeng abruptly raised his hand.

A tornado erupted!

Divine Technique·Northern Wind Howl!

Previously, Bu Qingfeng had already used the command of the flying wind, so now when he used Northern Wind Howl, nobody found it odd.

Scared, resigned, but still hoping to win.

It seemed contradictory but was understandable.

"Zzz—"

Immortal Fog surged, and Lu Ran suddenly darted through.

The North Wind Believer, without any casting delay, suddenly unleashed a tornado.

The Immortal Sheep Believer also started moving fast on the field with zero frame delay!

However, Lu Ran was still affected.

He indeed burst out of the tornado, but the wind diverted him, not allowing him to charge directly at Bu Qingfeng but forcing him to dash diagonally forward to the left.

Senior Sister Yan's expression changed as, in her view, Lu Ran's figure rapidly enlarged.

And around her, the spectators also showed fear!

Under the coercion of the North Wind Roar, this young man in black finally unleashed his Divine Technique!

But the question was...

"What Divine Technique is this?"

"It looks like Immortal Hoof?"

"Stop, that's not funny."

"It really is Immortal Hoof, look at the Immortal Fog under his feet, it really is..."

"Immortal, Immortal Sheep Believer?"

"Holy crap! Immortal Sheep Believer?"

"Ah???"

"Zzz—" Lu Ran stomped heavily, and the fog rose again under his feet.

Divine Technique·Immortal Hoof!

His eyes, shimmering with a sinister glow, had already transformed into horizontal pupils.

Divine Technique·Immortal Pupil!

Not the Pupil of the Dead World.

But the Divine Technique·Immortal Pupil that could amplify the target's inner fear!

"Get lost!"

Bu Qingfeng swung out another tornado, his loud cry reverberating across the arena.

But in Lu Ran's eyes, it seemed nothing more than pretense filled with inner fear.

By now, Bu Qingfeng was indeed terrified.

At this moment, Lu Ran's menacing expression and sinister pupils were making Bu Qingfeng shudder intensely!

"Zzz—"

Lu Ran marked a "Z" shape across the Martial Arts Arena.

A dark charming shadow, oozing a bizarre aura and filled with a dense killing intent, swiftly swept past the storm's side, heading straight for Bu Qingfeng.

"Ah!" As Bu Qingfeng saw Lu Ran approaching, he couldn't help shouting in alarm while instinctively trying to block.

Why?

Because the Divine Technique·Immortal Pupil had taken effect!

In the eyes of the world, Immortal Sheep Believers are all good-hearted, even cowardly.

Little did they know, the Divine Technique of the Immortal Sheep sect was ridiculously strong!

In front of an Immortal Sheep Believer, you absolutely cannot show fear.

Any bit of timidity, and your spirit will be invaded.

Like a dam cracked open, you will be infiltrated and destroyed until it finally collapses!

With a crisp "snap!"

Lu Ran directly flicked away Bu Qingfeng's wind blade with his own.

"Ah!" Bu Qingfeng's wrist went numb, and the wind blade fell from his grasp.

Evil Technique·Soul Splitting Power taught this River Realm·First Rank Believer a tough lesson!

Next, Lu Ran seemed to "stick" to Bu Qingfeng.

Initially, Bu Qingfeng had controlled eight wind blades, encircling Lu Ran.

Now, it was Lu Ran, like an inescapable spirit, tightly entwining Bu Qingfeng!

A slanting slash!

Silent Night Blade cut from Bu Qingfeng's left shoulder to his right waist, forcibly splitting open a gash in his water armor.

A horizontal slash!

Dawn Blade swept across Bu Qingfeng's neck, instantly slicing his throat.

"Stop, stop..." Bu Qingfeng kept retreating, hands covering his front, his face filled with terror.

"Zzz!"

Lu Ran suddenly crossed his blades into an "X," flicking away Bu Qingfeng's hands.

His pair of dead, horizontal pupils, like two sharp blades, directly stabbed into Bu Qingfeng's eyes.

"Ah!!"

Bu Qingfeng's pupils contracted violently as he screamed in horror and fear!

Under extreme terror, not only was his defense totally disorganized, but even the water armor on his body rapidly dissipated.

This magic, of course, required the owner to continuously supply Divine Power.

Now, Bu Qingfeng was completely frightened, how could he calmly power his armor?

"No!"

"Calm down!"

"Stop!"

"Young friend, hold back!" Amidst a series of exclamations, Senior Sister Yan and Liu Shixiong both spoke out.

Liu Shixiong had already dashed forward.

However, Lu Ran's blades were already swinging towards Bu Qingfeng's face!

Swipe?

Yes, like a slap!

As Lu Ran swung horizontally, he twisted his wrist, raising the blade vertically, and it firmly slapped across Bu Qingfeng's face!

"Thwack!!"

The slap sounded incredibly crisp.

Lu Ran's blades were Tang-style, all fine and long.

Because of this, when the blade swept across Bu Qingfeng's face, it was like a steel whip...

"Ugh."

Bu Qingfeng's head jerked, feeling a burning pain on his cheek as blood seeped from the corner of his mouth.

Under the tremendous force, he even fell face-first to the ground, a two-finger-wide red mark emerging on his cheek.

Additionally, there were blood traces unintentionally cut by the blade, blood trickling down.

"Boom boom boom!"

Suddenly, a bursting sound came from the sidelines.

Liu Shixiong immediately turned to look.

He saw Si Xianxian holding a heavy hammer, with flames swirling around the hammer's head.

Standing in the snow with her hammer, her bright lips slightly curved upward, her smile unrestrained:

"Can't bully people now!"

Liu Shixiong's pupils slightly contracted!

And on Bu Qingfeng's side...

His body trembling, he panickedly backed away.

Lu Ran's expression was grim as he stepped forward, looking down at Bu Qingfeng who was scrambling away:

"Knife, have I made myself clear?"

"Clear, clear, clear..." Bu Qingfeng said tremulously, hand covering his bloody face.

Where was his previously aggressive and arrogant demeanor now?

Lu Ran: "I can't kneel, do you understand now?"

"Yes, I can, can understand..." Bu Qingfeng's voice trembled even more.

However, he hadn't made eye contact with Lu Ran for a few seconds, so his crawling was a bit more agile.

Finally, Lu Ran stopped walking, his voice cold: "Get lost."

Bu Qingfeng also finally got up, clumsily pushing through the crowd, hastily fleeing towards the woods.

Chapter 167: Creek Five Sheep

"Immortal Sheep Believer?"

From behind, the voice of Senior Brother Liu was heard.

And this questioning was almost a reflection of the thoughts of the spectators.

Previously, Lu Ran had been speaking only with his blade and had not used Divine Technique.

While everyone secretly admired him, they couldn't help but wonder which divine follower this young man in black was.

Given his overwhelming strength...

A follower of the First-class God-Martial Artist?

A follower of the First-class God-Monk?

There was no choice but to describe Lu Ran's martial skill as shockingly extraordinary!

In the whole of Da Xia, there were many Divine Sects known for their martial prowess.

And among those whose use of weapons varied but whose disciples were unparalleled in martial arts, the preferred choices were "North Monk, South Martial Artist."

As for other powerful Divine Sects, they mostly specialized in weapons.

Of course, quite a few people believed that Lu Ran was a disciple of Second-class God Lord Beifeng.

After all, Lu Ran's skill in Listening Wind Positioning was exactly like that of the Beifeng Sect!

However, at the moment Lu Ran released Immortal Fog under his feet, everyone was stunned!

The Martial Arts Arena, which had been surrounded tightly, suddenly fell quiet, and outside the arena there was a complete silence!

A follower of Nine-class God-Immortal Sheep!

Immortal Sheep Believer??

Given a million chances, no one would have guessed that this vigorous and fierce young man was akin to a little lam...

"Damn, he actually nodded, really an Immortal Sheep Believer?"

"Seeing ghosts..."

"Perhaps, this kid has taken vows under two gods?"

In the deadly silent Snow Forest, the sound of discussion erupted again due to Lu Ran's nod.

And this time, the noise was huge, filled with astonishment and questions.

"Too tough, Lu Ran!"

Si Xianxian hurried over, her fair face flush with excitement.

Unable to contain her excitement, she reached out and gently patted Lu Ran's cheek: "Hehe~"

Lu Ran: "..."

What kind of aggressive language was this?

Also, are you celebrating, or are you slapping me?

Well... it must be celebration.

If it were a slap, I would probably be bleeding from the mouth and scrambling for my teeth.

"Little friend, well played." Senior Brother Liu's expression was quite complex.

Believe it or not, the reality was right here.

A North Wind Disciple of Second-class God, just like that, completely ravaged by a follower of Immortal Sheep, sent sprawling and fleeing in disarray!

The issue also arose:

This place is Beifeng City, right at the feet of a divine being!

This was somewhat inappropriate.

Senior Brother Liu continued to speak, his tone grave: "Little friend, the fight just ended, some actions were unnecessary, right?"

Lu Ran frowned and looked at the young man: "It was entirely necessary.

Bu Qingfeng kept being aggressive and bullying others because of his power. I had to make my stance clear."

Senior Brother Liu's face darkened: "You..."

"You what you." From a distance came the cold voice of Senior Sister Yan, "Be thankful that he showed mercy."

Senior Brother Liu opened his mouth, hesitated again and again, but ultimately sighed.

Senior Sister Yan stepped forward and instructed: "Go, bring Bu Qingfeng back."

"Yes." Senior Brother Liu followed the order and left.

It seemed that although both parties were strong individuals of the same class, within the Divine Sect, did Senior Sister Yan hold a higher position?

Senior Sister Yan scrutinized Lu Ran and muttered: "Immortal Sheep Believer..."

"The competition has already ended, we shall take our leave now." Lu Ran nodded.

Before Lu Ran could take a step, he heard the other party speak: "Stop."

"What do you want?" Si Xianxian asked in a bad tone, looking at the young woman.

It must be said, the disciples of the Beifeng Sect really knew how to ignore others.

Senior Sister Yan ignored Si Xianxian, instead fixing her gaze on Lu Ran:

"I see that the Immortal Sheep Believer is exceptionally skilled, I'd like to learn a thing or two."

Si Xianxian raised her eyebrows: "You guys, never-ending, aren't you?"

"Heh." Senior Sister Yan was straightforward, "In this Beifeng City, when a North Wind disciple gets handled like this,

I can't just stand by as his sister."

"Alright!" Si Xianxian suddenly changed her mind, "Then as his sister, I can't stand by either!"

Let's do this!

Quick, quick, I can't wait!"

Lu Ran was speechless, pulling Si Xianxian behind him.

After glaring at Si Xianxian, he then looked at the Yan woman: "You seem very strong."

This young woman had a complexion clear as ice and fittingly matched the snow-covered world around her.

The North Wind disciples all wore white martial attire, but she was draped in a majestic snow-colored cape, imposing and awe-inspiring.

She was like a great sword standing upright in a world of ice and snow...

Her cold aura was chilling and her presence commanding!

Senior Sister Yan's deep black eyes looked directly at Lu Ran, her thin lips slightly parting: "You're not bad either."

Lu Ran guessed: "Are you at River Realm Fifth Stage?"

Senior Sister Yan gracefully introduced herself: "North Wind Believer Yan Shuangzi, River Realm Fifth Stage, come on."

Lu Ran shook his head: "No, can't fight, I've been restricted."

Yan Shuangzi: "What?"

Lu Ran thought for a moment and responded: "Strictly speaking, I'm not qualified for a sparring match."

Yan Shuangzi: "Why not?"

Lu Ran shrugged: "I don't have Waterflow Armor."

This response truly surprised Yan Shuangzi.

Waterflow Armor was a common Divine Technique among believers and was not considered particularly profound.

Given the immense talent Lu Ran had just displayed, it was impossible for him not to have mastered this technique.

Thus, this kind of excuse was indeed laughable.

Yan Shuangzi's expression turned cold, she said lightly: "Are you scared?"

Lu Ran spoke: "That Bu Qingfeng kept overstepping the bounds, forcing me to take action.

Swordfighting is perilous, and I took a great risk.

Under normal circumstances, I shouldn't engage in sparring matches."

Chapter 168: Xi Wu's Goat\_2

Yan Shuangzi's voice grew increasingly icy, "Why?"

Si Xianxian replied impatiently, "Haven't I told you already? Lu Ran doesn't have the Waterflow Armor!"

Yan Shuangzi felt the absurdity of it all, finding it ridiculous to the extreme.

Her voice, colder than ever, made the already chilly winter day feel even colder, "Why not learn?"

This question didn't seem to annoy Si Xianxian.

Instead, she seemed to think of something amusing and wore a bizarre smile as she looked at Lu Ran, "Because he can't learn it, that's why!"

Lu Ran nodded, "Indeed, I can't learn it; I am of the Stream Realm·Fifth Rank."

Yan Shuangzi: ?

Lu Ran watched as her icy expression turned into one of utter astonishment.

"Pfft... Haha~" Si Xianxian finally couldn't hold back her laughter.

Yan Shuangzi's expression also became more and more fascinating.

All of a sudden, she realized what Lu Ran had meant by "looping."

She was of the River Realm·Fifth Rank, while Lu Ran was of the Stream Realm·Fifth Rank.

That was a whole major realm difference!

Could it be that this kid was actually of the Stream Realm·Fifth Rank?

Could it be possible?

An Immortal Sheep Believer of the Stream Realm Fifth Rank killing a North Wind Believer of River Realm·First Rank so effortlessly that they'd cry for their fathers?

Maybe if it were the other way around, some might believe it.

Yan Shuangzi saw it all very clearly; this youth had defeated Bu Qingfeng in just one exchange.

That fierce slash had set the tone for the entire fight.

The bouts that followed, in Yan Shuangzi's eyes, were not really fights at all.

It was domination, trampling over the other.

It was Lu Ran's unilateral, seemingly effortless crushing!

It was precisely because this bout had deviated from a regular friendly match that Yan Shuangzi had stepped forward to challenge him.

After all, this was Beifeng City, under the very feet of the divine entity.

From her standpoint, if she simply overlooked this, how could she answer to her own deity?

However, Lu Ran's "I am of the Stream Realm Fifth Rank" silenced Yan Shuangzi entirely.

Firstly, Yan Shuangzi had her own pride, which did not tolerate the bullying of the weak.

Secondly, Bu Qingfeng, as a North Wind Believer of the River Realm, had been defeated by a mere Stream Realm lamb...

Who would have the face to help him take his revenge?

"Stream, Stream Realm?"

"No way... Seriously?! Ah?"

"This is simply too bizarre! Where did he spring from..."

"Damn it! This is too ferocious; I'm going back to bed."

Although Lu Ran and his group were not speaking loudly, the surrounding spectators, mostly North Wind Disciples who possessed keen hearing, overheard the conversation.

That statement "I am of the Stream Realm Fifth Rank," which muted Yan Shuangzi, caused an uproar in the Snow Forest.

"Excuse me." Lu Ran nodded slightly to Yan Shuangzi, intending to leave this place of trouble.

So I've hit someone and now I'm making a run for it!

Now you must believe I'm an Immortal Sheep Believer, right?

Even though "hitting someone" doesn't quite fit with the demeanor of the Immortal Sheep Sect, running does!

Zoom~

"Let's go." Without waiting for a response, Lu Ran quickly left the scene with Si Xianxian.

And there stood Yan Shuangzi, originally like ivory and jade, but now her frozen posture made her seem even more like a sculpture of ice and snow.

Lu Ran had no interest in lingering, yet he had just taken a few steps when he heard an icy voice come from behind:

"Kneel."

Lu Ran's expression instantly darkened as he turned to look back.

However, he had misunderstood.

He saw Senior Brother Liu, holding Bu Qingfeng, arriving from the sky and landing before Yan Shuangzi.

The woman's command to "kneel" was, of course, directed at Bu Qingfeng.

"Senior Sister Yan, I..." Bu Qingfeng stammered, his face flushed with embarrassment.

Just on the battlefield, Bu Qingfeng had been terrified by Lu Ran's decisive and fierce offense and dreadful presence.

And under the effect of Divine Technique-Immortal Pupil, the fear in Bu Qingfeng's heart went out of control and completely crumbled.

What could a person whose spirit and will have been shattered still hold on to?

Pride? Dignity? Life?

Everything Bu Qingfeng possessed was at Lu Ran's demand.

The Divine Technique of the Immortal Sheep Sect wasn't just for show.

When Immortal Sheep Believers stopped avoiding combat and instead initiated it, the world would eventually realize just how terrifying these fellows could be!

When Bu Qingfeng eventually escaped the scene and began to recover, his heart was full of shame and rage!

Yet, he dared not return.

The arrogance he once carried had been thoroughly extinguished.

He simply had no courage to face that strange and powerful black-clothed youth again...

As Bu Qingfeng stood hesitating, becoming more and more bewildered, Senior Brother Liu came and flew him back without a word.

Bu Qingfeng dared not resist.

But then, returning to the Martial Arts Arena was akin to a public execution, wasn't it?

What Bu Qingfeng did not expect was...

When he was taken before Yan Shuangzi, she simply said one thing: "Kneel."

"Wow," Si Xianxian whispered in admiration, looking towards the imposing Yan Shuangzi, "I like this move; I will use it too in the future."

Lu Ran: "..."

"Can't you hear?" From a distance, Yan Shuangzi's voice was cold, "I told you to kneel."

With his head hung low, Bu Qingfeng's knees buckled, and he submitted to his powerful Senior Sister.

Yan Shuangzi: "You should know where to kneel."

Bu Qingfeng, already in a daze, only then realized and immediately turned towards the direction of the deity's statue.

Yan Shuangzi, looking down at Bu Qingfeng with a cold expression and a hint of disdain in her eyes, said:

"Think carefully about why this fight started."

"Because, because that person was disrespectful to the deity, I, uh..." Bu Qingfeng stuttered, but he suddenly heard Senior Sister Yan sigh.

From her long sigh, one could tell she was suppressing her emotions.

Bu Qingfeng shrank back, not daring to speak further, and hung his head even lower.

Yan Shuangzi finally spoke coldly: "Think again about how you lost this fight."

Bu Qingfeng, now cautious, simply listened to the command, not daring to answer.

Yan Shuangzi turned away to leave: "Whenever you understand, that's when you may rise."

"Yes," Bu Qingfeng answered softly.

From a distance, Lu Ran watched as Yan Shuangzi walked towards them, and he immediately pulled Si Xianxian away.

Darn, I shouldn't stick around to watch; it's time to leave.

"Lu Ran." Sure enough, Yan Shuangzi's voice came from behind.

Lu Ran paused mid-step, looking towards the woman, "Do you really need to fight me to take back face?"

However, Yan Shuangzi shook her head, "When you declared you were of the Stream Realm Fifth Rank, everything became unnecessary.

All responsibility and consequences should be borne by Bu Qingfeng himself."

Lu Ran couldn't help but raise an eyebrow slightly.

This girl, isn't she something?

"Care to have a cup of tea with me?" Yan Shuangzi approached Lu Ran.

Lu Ran: "Tea?"

Yan Shuangzi spoke very directly, "You are absurdly strong; how could I not have a cup of tea and chat with you?"

Lu Ran seemed to be influenced by her style and blurted out, "A feast at Hongmen, perhaps?"

"This is Beifeng City." Yan Shuangzi laughed, "If I wanted to deceive you, why would I need to change locations?"

Lu Ran: "..."

Yan Shuangzi walked past Lu Ran, "You should leave on your own, otherwise, you might attract even more trouble."

Lu Ran immediately understood her implication and quickly scanned his surroundings.

They were completely surrounded, with numerous North Wind Believers.

With ample numbers, naturally, there would be those with different thoughts and reactions.

Even with reason, as a counterattacker, Lu Ran had straightened out a North Wind Disciple in the territory of the Beifeng Sect.

"They're used to getting away with too much!" Si Xianxian suddenly became unhappy.

Her aggressive eyes swept over each face:

"I'd like to see who dares... huh?"

"Let's go." Lu Ran, holding on to Si Xianxian, quickly followed Yan Shuangzi's strides.

Si Xianxian was not pleased, "Where did that boldness from before go?

Why have you turned into such a wimp again?"

"Barefaced lies." Lu Ran, gripping Si Xianxian's arm, unceremoniously brought her along, "Aren't I being bold with you now?"

Si Xianxian: "..."

You really have no shame!

Chapter 169: Northern Tea House

South of Beifeng City, the Northern Tea House.

Within an ancient-themed private room on the second floor, three people sat around a table.

On the table sat a pot of Pu'er tea, its rich aroma filling the air, alongside several small dishes of melon seeds, candied fruits, cakes, and flaky sugar pastries.

"Ka~ Ka~"

Si Xianxian sat by the window, holding a handful of melon seeds, cracking them and gazing out the window.

This spot was truly excellent, with a view of the bustling market alley.

"Where is Lu Ran from?"

Yan Shuangzi picked up the teapot, pouring tea for the two while inquiring.

"From Wu Lie River," Lu Ran said softly, his hand resting by the teacup. "Just call me Little Lu."

Yan Shuangzi glanced up, looking at Lu Ran.

Previously in the Martial Arts Arena, Lu Ran had shown his valiant and ferocious side.

Even domineering!

Lu Ran, with a grim expression, advanced step by step toward Bu Qingfeng, while the sight of Bu Qingfeng scrambling and pleading in retreat was still vivid in Yan Shuangzi's mind.

Now seeing Lu Ran's gentle and soft-spoken demeanor, it was as if he had become a different person.

"Wu Lie River," Yan Shuangzi said softly, setting down the teapot. "It's indeed a place where heroes emerge."

Lu Ran picked up the teacup: "In a world of endless war, heroes emerge from anywhere.

Rather than the region, it's the era that shapes them."

Yan Shuangzi laughed, sighing, "I have a dear friend who is from Wu Lie River too, a person of exceptional talent and bravery, just like you.

Unfortunately, she had her heart set on her hometown and did not stay with me in Beifeng City."

Lu Ran agreed wholeheartedly, saying, "I'm probably like your friend."

Yan Shuangzi raised an eyebrow slightly, "Will you do the same in the future, Little Lu?"

Lu Ran picked up a red date from the plate and murmured, "I certainly will."

His tone and choice of words were most decisive.

Yan Shuangzi had just seen Lu Ran's terrifying strength and talent.

For someone of such extraordinary caliber to not stay beside their revered god for tutelage, advancing step by step toward heaven; nor to seek prosperous and flourishing cities beneath the feet of powerful gods, but to choose to guard his hometown?

"Heh." Yan Shuangzi picked up her teacup, took a light sip of tea, and a hint of reminiscence appeared in her eyes, "Indeed, they are of the same kind.

I remember her saying her hometown wasn't valuable, old and small.

So small that no Second-class God's Believers would go there to protect it.

So, she went back by herself."

Lu Ran's hand holding the date suddenly paused.

Yan Shuangzi naturally noticed this and asked, "What's wrong?"

Lu Ran's thoughts stirred slightly, "What's the name of your friend's hometown?"

Yan Shuangzi: "Rain Alley City."

Sitting nearby and cracking melon seeds, Si Xianxian suddenly turned her head to look at Lu Ran.

Yan Shuangzi sensed something and probed, "Which city does Little Lu come from?"

Lu Ran went straight to the point: "Is your dear friend named Deng Yuxiang?"

Yan Shuangzi's eyes widened slightly, and after a moment, she couldn't help but laugh wryly, "What a small world, do you know her?"

Lu Ran: "..."

I surely don't know her! Even if she turned to ash, I... hmm, well, I might not be able to recognize her.

After all, ashes don't have the scent of camellias.

Yan Shuangzi continued on her own, "Right, with Rain Alley City being so small, it makes sense for people like you to know each other."

"More than knowing her," Lu Ran sighed, "I'm in her team, and we've fought together for several fifteen-day cycles."

Yan Shuangzi sized up Lu Ran, "So as comrades in arms, you must be quite close?"

Lu Ran nodded, "I call her 'sister,' and not in the same way colleagues call each other 'Brother Zhang' or 'Sister Wang.'"

"Oh?" Yan Shuangzi pondered and then stood up to go to the clothes rack. From the pocket inside the large cape, she pulled out a cellphone.

The call was quickly connected, and through it came a woman's voice: "Shuangzi?"

Yan Shuangzi: "Not busy?"

"The team has no missions at the moment; I am cultivating at home, not busy."

"Mmm..." Yan Shuangzi lifted her eyes to look at Lu Ran, "Guess who I ran into here in Beifeng City?"

Deng Yu let out a light laugh, "Where would I guess from?"

"Your brother."

"My brother?" Deng Yuxiang was puzzled, "My brother said he was going to Wuling Mountain this month, how come he's arrived at Beifeng City?"

"Not your blood brother." Yan Shuangzi's smile was brimming.

The temperature inside the room seemed to have risen a bit.

Deng Yuxiang immediately said, "Little Lu Ran?"

"Little Lu Ran?" Yan Shuangzi looked interestedly at the young man across the table, "This little brother of yours is something else, eh?"

Deng Yuxiang laughed heartily, "How did he end up in Beifeng City?

Hearing your tone, did he cause trouble?"

Yan Shuangzi casually picked up a raisin, "He's new around here and has already sent Beifeng City's guards scurrying, tumbling over themselves."

On the phone, Deng Yuxiang was startled, "What? Give him the phone!"

Yan Shuangzi's smile grew deeper as she handed over the phone.

"Sister?" Lu Ran reluctantly took the phone.

"Are you injured?" Deng Yuxiang inquired.

Such words warmed Lu Ran's heart.

"No, don't listen to your friend talking nonsense," Lu Ran explained, "I was sparring with that person in the Martial Arts Arena, I didn't cause trouble."

Hearing this, Deng Yuxiang relaxed a lot and then frowned, "Did he provoke you?"

Lu Ran smirked, "I just shouted at the city gate!"

Good heavens~

They kept an eye on me, and then they escalated the issue, saying I was disrespectful to the gods; how could I indulge him!"

"Hmm." Deng Yuxiang muttered softly, "What's your situation now, are you detained?"

"No, I told you it was a sparring match in the Martial Arts Arena, I didn't cause trouble." Lu Ran was quite exasperated, "After it ended, Mrs. Yan Shuangzi invited me for tea."

Deng Yuxiang guessed, "Probably they were alarmed by your impressive performance and want to question you, give the phone to Shuangzi."

Lu Ran passed the phone back.

"Speakerphone is fine." Yan Shuangzi gestured for Lu Ran to place the phone on the table.

Deng Yuxiang: "Who's the one looking for trouble?"

Yan Shuangzi was truly impressed!

Just from hearing Lu Ran's side of the story, Deng Yuxiang had made her judgment.

Yan Shuangzi: "A new disciple you don't know; I've had him kneel in the Martial Arts Arena."

"Didn't you say it was just a match? Why is there a punishment?"

Yan Shuangzi snorted coldly, "A River Realm Believer, beaten to a pulp by a Brook Realm Believer.

The face of the Beifeng Sect has been completely lost by him!"

"Hmm." Deng Yuxiang spoke softly, "Have him kneel for a few more days."

"Okay." Yan Shuangzi replied casually, toying with her teacup, "When will you come back to visit?"

Deng Yuxiang, however, said, "Shuangzi, take care of Lu Ran, don't let him be bullied again.

With such an incident, many North Wind Disciples probably hold grudges against him."

Yan Shuangzi was already displeased, "Are you asking for help or giving orders?"

Deng Yuxiang suddenly laughed, "Missy, need straightening out?"

Yan Shuangzi hastily reached out, picked up the cellphone from the table, and switched off the speaker mode.

Si Xianxian, no longer cracking seeds, looked at Yan Shuangzi in surprise.

Yan Shuangzi was, of course, incredibly dominant and overbearing.

But at that moment, her cheeks were rosy as she spoke with a mocking tone to the person on the other end.

This...?

Across the table, Lu Ran quietly held his teacup, not uttering a word.

Good heavens~

Worthy of the title Big Nightmare!

No matter how strong the other person was, the Big Nightmare was always the more "dominant" one.

After a while, Yan Shuangzi hung up the phone, lifted her eyes to look at Lu Ran.

Lu Ran pretended not to notice, snacking on pistachios.

You know, they were quite tasty~

Yan Shuangzi put down the phone and said, "Your sister asked me to take good care of you."

"No need to bother, Mrs. Yan. Please go about your business," Lu Ran hastily said. "My teammate and I will be heading down to the Demon Cave in a bit."

Yan Shuangzi thought for a moment, "You are at the Stream Realm Fifth Rank."

"Correct."

"At that rank, entering the Demon Cave for experience won't help you much."

"Hmm..." Lu Ran pondered briefly.

Strictly speaking, at his special rank, whatever Lu Ran did wasn't of much help to him.

After all, nobody knew where the "flash of enlightenment" came from or when it would arrive.

Yan Shuangzi spoke softly, "Since you've come all this way, stay in the city then.

In the coming days, let us exchange sword techniques; at least it can help with your martial arts."

"Ah?" Lu Ran looked at Yan Shuangzi, "You want to teach me?

But I'm not a North Wind Believer; wouldn't that be against the rules?"

Yan Shuangzi was undoubtedly a high-status "Inner Sect Disciple," and being personally taught by her was like striking it rich!

Such people usually lived beside the gods, often receiving revelations!

Lu Ran certainly wouldn't arrogantly think that his swordsmanship was stronger than Yan Shuangzi's.

Even Deng Yuxiang probably wouldn't dare to say that!

"Lord Beifeng is magnanimous. Swordsmen from all around the world can come learn in Beifeng City," Yan Shuangzi explained. "However, our resources are limited, so we naturally prioritize our own sect's disciples first."

Lu Ran had to admit he was very tempted.

Yan Shuangzi smiled brightly, "And you are strong, exchanging skills with you is also beneficial for me."

Lu Ran: "Mrs. Yan, you are too modest."

Yan Shuangzi continued, "It's a pity you're not a North Wind Believer.

If you were devoted to the sword, perhaps in the process of comprehending the sword, you could also grasp the method to advance to the next level."

The woman's tone, to Lu Ran's ears, did not seem like regret.

But more like some kind of hint?

As Lu Ran was thinking this over, Si Xianxian suddenly said, "We're not going to the Demon Cave anymore?"

Only then did Lu Ran remember there was another person right beside him!

"That's great." Si Xianxian's face lit up with excitement, and she turned to look out the window, cracking melon seeds again, "Someone's going to pay for my shopping spree in the city. How comfortable~"

Lu Ran: "..."

Yan Shuangzi was quite surprised, her gaze sweeping back and forth over the male and female pair.

Of course, she knew the young girl was a Fierce Heavenly believer.

She had also seen firsthand how, in the Martial Arts Arena, Lu Ran repeatedly calmed down the young girl's fiery temper.

Yan Shuangzi really couldn't fathom why such a fiery Fierce Heavenly believer would be so well-behaved by Lu Ran's side.

Lu Ran noticed her gaze, he reached for the teapot and filled Yan Shuangzi's teacup:

"Thank you for your guidance in the days to come."

"Hmm." Yan Shuangzi rested her chin in one hand, looking at the polite and courteous Lu Ran with a beaming smile.

From their first meeting until now, Lu Ran gave her the impression of a paradox, a person both extremely special and profoundly mysterious, terribly intriguing.

Yan Shuangzi picked up the teacup, accepting Lu Ran's gesture of respect:

"If Little Lu Ran is so strong, why do you choose to be an Immortal Sheep Believer?"

"That's a long story."

"It's still early; there's time for another round of tea."

Out of nowhere, Si Xianxian blurted, "Are melon seeds okay too?"

Chapter 170: Beifeng Divine Ruins

Three days later, Beifeng City.

The streets and alleys were decked with lanterns and streamers, and the city was crowded inside and out.

On the twenty-sixth of the lunar winter month, which was also January 1st on the solar calendar, it was the New Year's Day celebration.

On this day, the world officially stepped into the year 2019.

On this day, believers of the North Wind from all over Da Xia flocked here for a pilgrimage, making Beifeng City extraordinarily lively.

Lu Ran stood in the Martial Arts Arena and could see from afar into the inner city, where thick clouds of incense rose up, emanating from the base of the Divine Sculpture.

It was truly a spectacular sight!

Compared to that, the Martial Arts Arena seemed rather empty.

In the Snow Forest, Lu Ran stood alone in the snow, as if he had booked the entire place for himself.

Most people had gone to worship in the inner city, unwilling to miss such a grand ceremony.

Lu Ran didn't go.

He wanted to, very much so, to broaden his horizons, but...

He didn't want to kneel.

At the entrance of Beifeng City, you could admire the elegance of Lord Divine without necessarily having to kneel.

After all, you were a believer of another deity, which was a plausible excuse.

But entering the inner city?

It was your choice to walk in there, to come before Divine-Beifeng of your own volition. Wouldn't you worship then?

In the midst of a crowd of believers kneeling, praying, and offering incense devoutly, would you just stand there?

What's the meaning of that?

Are you the only sober person amongst a city of drunks?

You could stay sober; no one would bother you, but you couldn't provoke!

Lu Ran feared that once he went in, he wouldn't be able to come out again...

Si Xianxian was dragged into this by Lu Ran, and she also missed the great worship ceremony.

At the moment, Si Xianxian was sitting under a large tree by the Martial Arts Arena.

She still held a candied haw stick in her hand, with only one hawthorn left, seeming reluctant to eat it.

Si Xianxian just sat there, looking at the remaining hawthorn, her tongue occasionally licking her lips, resembling someone with a craving.

Hmm... somewhat cute?

"Eat it; I'll buy you another one," Lu Ran's voice came from within the arena.

"It's like I don't have money to buy it myself!" Si Xianxian rolled her eyes, still not willing to eat the last piece.

The Martial Arts Arena was far from the commercial street; to replenish her candied haws, she would have to walk a long way...

"Hurry up and eat; you're bothering me," Lu Ran's voice came again.

Si Xianxian was annoyed, "How can I bother you when I'm sitting here quietly, not making a sound?"

Lu Ran, with both swords in his arms, standing alone in the snow: "Your face is full of what's in your heart.

Your heart, it's bothering me."

Si Xianxian: ?

Lu Ran commanded, "Eat."

"You're being tyrannical; it'll be the death of you," Si Xianxian grumbled, but opened her small mouth and took a bite.

"Crack~ Crunch~"

Between her lips and teeth, the sugar coating continuously shattered, producing an enticing, crispy sound.

It sounded delicious.

"You've been standing there stupidly for half a day," Si Xianxian mumbled with her mouth full, "What are you thinking about?"

Her displeasure from just moments ago was gone, her mouth sweet with treats, and her mood suddenly much lighter.

Even her voice seemed to have become sweeter by three degrees.

Lu Ran, still embracing the swords, remarked, "Quiet, I'm contemplating the Dao."

Si Xianxian, holding the stick in her hand, suddenly wanted to stab Lu Ran to death...

These past few days, Yan Shuangzi had kept her promise to Deng Yuxiang, taking very good care of Lu Ran.

What Lu Ran did not expect was that the first lesson Yan Shuangzi gave him was not about sword skills, but about presenting an idea.

She said there were three realms for a swordsman.

One was Body and Blade Unity.

Two was Heart and Sword Unity.

Three was Person and Sword Unity.

She said that the vast majority of swordsmen in the world were in the first realm.

The so-called Body and Blade Unity meant being adept at using the blade in one's hand.

This was the most basic usage.

In your superficial understanding, the blade is just a tool.

A weapon to help you win and slay enemies.

But in truth, for a true swordsman, the blade in one's hand is an extension of a swordsman's spirit.

This is the second realm: Heart and Sword Unity.

In this realm,

The blade can be firm, dominating, or even compassionate.

With this, the blade in your hand is no longer a cold object.

Instead, it is a physical manifestation of your will and spirit!

Yan Shuangzi gave Lu Ran high praise.

She said that during Lu Ran's match with Bu Qingfeng, she glimpsed the embryonic form of "blade intent."

Lu Ran's blade could indeed "speak."

At the very least, it was babbling.

However, Lu Ran was not a North Wind Believer; his understanding of the blade didn't need to be so profound.

He didn't even need to delve into it!

After all, everyone's energy is limited, and for believers of other sects, delving deep into this path wouldn't be of much help to them.

Only North Wind Believers must grasp it, as it was a mandate of the sect!

If you wanted to learn and perform the great Jiang Realm Divine Techniques of the Beifeng Sect, believers had to reach the third realm—Person and Sword Unity.

In this realm: the person is the blade, the blade is the person.

After Yan Shuangzi explained this concept, Lu Ran suddenly awakened!

Before, when Lu Ran first scrutinized Yan Shuangzi closely, he had such a thought:

"She's like a great blade standing in the icy snowscape.

Chill and sharpness emanate from her, an imposing air all around!"

This was Lu Ran's instinctive feeling about Yan Shuangzi, something he thought but never shared with anyone.

And when Lu Ran understood the concept of "Person and Sword Unity," he realized just how powerful Yan Shuangzi was!

Lu Ran felt fortunate to have been exposed to these ideas.

Indeed, he was not a North Wind Believer, but he was the Evil Sect Master!

Before long, Lu Ran would activate the Night Charm Evil Sculpture.

The Night Charm Evil Skills below the River Realm, Lu Ran could naturally perform at will.

But once the Night Charm Evil Sculpture reached the River Realm, did Lu Ran need to reach the "Person and Sword Unity" realm to perform the incredibly powerful Jiang Realm·Night Charm Evil Skill?

After all, the North Wind Clan and the Night Charm Clan were quite similar to an excessive degree.

"Lu Ran?" A voice called out, awakening the contemplative Lu Ran.

"What's up?" Lu Ran turned to look.

Si Xianxian shook the stick in her hand, "I'm going to buy some more candied haws, be right back."

"No, you can't go right now; the market is too crowded," Lu Ran immediately objected.

"What's the problem with a crowd?"

"I'm afraid someone will bump into you, and you'll slap them away," Lu Ran scoffed, "We'd both end up in jail."

"You and your fussing!" Si Xianxian shot up to her feet, having tolerated Lu Ran for quite some time.

The previous few times didn't matter, but now, he was keeping her from eating candied haws; how could she agree?

"Don't be mad," Lu Ran promptly tried to calm her.

"Ugh." Si Xianxian stumbled a bit, one hand to her forehead.

A few seconds later, the re-oriented Si Xianxian looked at Lu Ran again with a smoldering gaze.

"Fine, fine, I'll go with you," Lu Ran sighed with helplessness and started toward the edge of the arena.

"Hmph, that's more like it," Si Xianxian didn't wait for Lu Ran, striding into the depths of the Snow Forest.

Half an hour later, in the bustling commercial street.

Si Xianxian held a warm sugar cake in one hand and a stick of strawberry candied haws in the other, her eyes gleaming with delight.

Where was the hint of rage from a moment ago?

"Crunch~"

With one bite, the sugar coating crunched crisply, the sweetness filling her mouth.

"Mmm." Si Xianxian closed her eyes, a look of utter bliss on her face.

Lu Ran poked her spine, "Let's go."

Si Xianxian started walking, clearly in great spirits, her steps light and airy.

Perhaps the strawberries were too sweet; she was so happy she bobbed her head, muttering:

"I'm a little wild horse, I trot and gallop~"

Lu Ran: ???

Well, well...

She's indeed a patient; what kind of state is this?

Has she really been so satisfied by eating?

Perhaps, Auntie Si wouldn't dare take her daughter to such a lively market, right?

Her life before must have been very dull and repressive.

"Eh?" Si Xianxian, still lost in happiness, suddenly got bumped by a running child.

Instantly, the strawberry candied haw fell from her hand.

Being a martial artist, she instinctively kicked it back up with her foot and caught it in her hand again.

"That's definitely a little wild horse, wow!" Lu Ran couldn't help but laugh out loud.

Si Xianxian's face darkened, "Shut your mouth!"

Lu Ran continued laughing, "Such injustice for that candied haw!

Not only does it get eaten, but it also gets kicked first?"

Si Xianxian glared at Lu Ran fiercely, then looked for the possible dust stuck on the sugar coating of the candied haw.

Hmm... not a big deal.

What's a little dirt; it won't make you sick to eat it!

She gave a symbolic blow and bit into it again.

"Wow!"

"Such presence..." Suddenly, exclamations of awe came from the crowd.

Lu Ran looked up and saw a group of North Wind Believers flying overhead, heading towards the inner city.

At least three to four hundred people covered the sky like a great canopy!

Every North Wind Believer seemed full of vitality, enviable to onlookers.

They were all here for the pilgrimage?

Lu Ran paused to watch for a moment, his heart imagining a day in the future when he could fly carefree in the sky.

Of course, by then, he wouldn't be using Divine Technique·Breeze Dance, but rather Evil Technique·Night Dance!

"Let's go, head back to the inn," Lu Ran came back to his senses and proceeded with Si Xianxian.

"Just a little longer, please!" Si Xianxian was reluctant to leave.

"You go back and eat; I've been practicing all morning and want to rest."

"Alright..." the two chatted as they crossed half the street and entered an inn.

This was their place to stay in Beifeng City, with the room fee paid by Yan Shuangzi.

It was hard to imagine how expensive a room would be during such a special time.

"Don't wander off, okay?" Lu Ran got to the second floor and before entering his own room, he cautioned again worriedly.

"Got it, got it," Si Xianxian, with treats in hand, entered her room and closed the door behind her.

Lu Ran sighed and pushed the door to enter his own room.

The inn inside the city was very traditional, adorned with an ancient elegance.

Lu Ran went to the window and flipped through his phone on the table.

It had been a long time since he received a message from that person; she must be busy.

Busy cultivating, busy experiencing the world.

For Jiang Ruyi, Lu Ran had refused Si Xianxian's suggestion to visit the Ice and Snow World together.

Yet, even in the hustle and bustle of Beifeng City, everything Lu Ran saw was fresh and intriguing to him.

More than once, he thought how nice it would be to replace the 'little wild horse' with Jiang Ruyi...

"Happy New Year," Lu Ran typed four words and sent it out.

Lu Ran waited for a moment and, as expected, there was no reply.

He then texted his family, but at that moment, an anomaly suddenly occurred!

"Buzz!!"

The entire Beifeng City seemed to tremble.

Lu Ran was alarmed and abruptly lifted his head to look out the window.

"What the--!" Lu Ran gaped, what was he seeing?

A mirage?

In the sky far north of the Divine Sculpture, a phantom appeared.

It was a majestic Chinese palace!

As if a relic projected from ancient times, with overwhelming grandeur!

"Divine Ruins," Lu Ran muttered to himself.

He had seen the Evil Nest, which was a powerful method of the Evil Demon Stone Sculpture, capable of deploying endless minions of Evil Demons in a specific area.

And now, this grand and illusive architecture before him, was a particular method of a divine being.

It would not bring calamity to the world but instead was another form of blessing from the divine.

Seems like Lord North Wind was in high spirits, ready to reward his disciples?

Creating Divine Ruins was as exhausting as creating Evil Nests for divine beings, both costing tremendous amounts of Qi!

Lu Ran used his Extreme Vision and saw more than a dozen North Wind Believers rise up and reach the front of the big hall.

These individuals looked vigorous and full of spirit!

No joke, was that just a dozen people?

In Lu Ran's eyes, they were more than a dozen blades.

And among these blades stood Yan Shuangzi, like a great sword herself!