

Old Gods 181

Chapter 181: The Legendary Name?

"Damn it!" Zhang Feng's face turned grim.

He, of course, had no intention of supplying the Prison Sky Demon with weapons, so he decisively cancelled the Divine Technique·Lotus Flying Sword.

In an instant, a series of breaking sounds ensued.

The six flying swords held in the six hands of the Prison Sky Demon shattered and disappeared one after another.

At the same time, Zhang Feng knelt on one knee and plunged one hand into the snow.

Divine Technique·Lotus Bone Bud!

"Huh!!"

Right in the path of the onrushing Prison Sky Demon, a delicate lotus bloomed from the snowy ground.

"Beautiful!" Deng Yutang's eyes lit up.

The formidable Prison Sky Demon stepped right into the center of the lotus.

The nine petals of the lotus closed rapidly, and while it couldn't imprison the massive body of the Prison Sky Demon, it firmly fixed one of his legs!

"Good accuracy," Tian Tian murmured in admiration.

Others could only see a flower blooming out of the snow.

But as a fellow Sword Lotus believer, Tian Tian was clear about how exquisite Zhang Feng's skill was.

She followed the example of her fellow disciple and immediately knelt down, activating the Divine Technique Lotus Bone Bud as well.

"Lu..." Zhang Feng was about to say something when his already grim face turned even more ashen!

What no one expected was that the Prison Sky Demon continued to stride forward without a moment's pause.

"Zila!"

With each step the Prison Sky Demon took, the tender petals were torn apart!

"Divine Power, huh?" Zhang Feng was shocked inwardly.

He had thought that at least he could slightly restrain the opponent.

But the resilient lotus, in front of the majestic body of the Prison Sky Demon, was so fragile.

In fact, it was Zhang Feng's first time witnessing a Prison Sky Demon with his own eyes.

Such Evil Demons, like the Night Charm Clan and the Barbaric Woman Clan, were extremely rare.

All along, small cities like Rain Alley City rarely attracted the conquest of the Prison Sky Clan.

And the Demon Cave, where Prison Sky Demons were plentiful, was also off-limits.

This resulted in Zhang Feng not having crossed hands with the Prison Sky Clan from his time as a student to his ten years of employment.

"We can't stop it," Deng Yutang said with a serious expression.

If Zhang Feng's Lotus Bone couldn't stop the Evil Demon, let alone Tian Tian's.

Everyone watched helplessly as the lotus summoned by Tian Tian was trampled and destroyed by the Prison Sky Demon before it even took shape.

"Roar!!"

The Prison Sky Demon, burning with rage, trampled heavily on the ground, venting his brutality.

Such a sight sent a chill down everyone's spines.

The Prison Sky Demon stood three meters tall and seemed to be cast from bronze and iron, making unlikely that his strength was anything but immense.

What was more terrifying was that the Prison Sky Clan possessed an Evil Technique-Power of Prison Sky!

There were numerous types of Evil Demons in the world.

Many of these Evil Demon breeds had techniques to enhance their strength, speed, and other physical attributes.

Unfortunately, these power amplifying techniques were often found with strength-type Evil Demons like the Prison Sky Demon and the Soul-splitting Demon...

There truly was no way out for humanity!

"Get out of the way, Lu Ran!"

"Master, get out of the way!" Voices called out, filled with concern.

"So strong..." Lu Ran narrowed his eyes slightly, black fire burning within his pupils.

Evil Technique-Cage Fire (Yin)!

Such an Evil Technique was capable of petrifying a raccoon flower.

It could even slightly hinder the actions of most River Grade Evil Demons.

But when the black fire's glow shone upon the Prison Sky Demon, nothing happened?!

"Roar!"

The Prison Sky Demon suddenly swung his hand fiercely, launching the Heavenly Star Spear like a javelin straight at Lu Ran.

Lu Ran's eyes widened in shock!

He quickly dodged to the side, and with a terrifying whooshing sound, the spear grazed past his chest and plunged deep into the ground.

"Hiss!" The Prison Sky Demon, failing to hit his target, became even angrier.

Little thing, still daring to resist?

I'll crush you into pieces today!

"Peng!"

The Prison Sky Demon's feet crumbled beneath him, and he lunged forward like a heavy cannonball, aiming straight for Lu Ran.

"Zi—"

Lu Ran's feet churned with Immortal Fog, swiftly moving to the side.

The Prison Sky Demon grew even angrier, his eight arms flailing wildly.

One chain after another emerged from his palms, lashing viciously at Lu Ran.

Evil Technique·Heavenly Prison Chain!

The iron chains seemed to stretch indefinitely, turning into heavy, savage whips that lashed at Lu Ran.

"Snap! Snap! Snap!"

The Prison Sky Demon was incredibly strong, and the chains he wielded were swift and powerful.

Each strike on the ground exploded into a deep pit.

Lu Ran, concentrating fully, dodged while bringing all his Evil Techniques to the extreme.

Evil Technique·Evil Sensitivity!

Evil Technique·Evil Agility!

Lu Ran darted and weaved through the snow, living on the edge.

"Hu~"

Suddenly, the Blood-colored Chains on the Prison Sky Demon burst into black flame.

Evil Technique·Prison Heaven Fire!

This fire does not physically harm nor even melt the frost and snow.

But it consumes the target's Divine Power!

And this was only the effect of the River Grade·Prison Sky Fire.

Once this technique advanced to "Jiang Pin," the black fire would be able to refine the target's Divine Power!

Should the Divine Power of the Human Clan be ignited into black fire, the Prison Sky Demon could then recover this black fire.

In other terms: the Prison Sky Demon had a unique method of sapping the energy from its target's body!

Lu Ran's foundational knowledge was rather solid. He even knew that once Prison Sky Fire advanced to Sea Grade, it could burn the souls of living beings!

"Ah ah ah!"

The Prison Sky Demon, incensed with anger, continued to roar.

Those crimson eyes emitted two beams of red light, making onlookers shudder with fear.

"Hu~"

Lu Ran slipped backwards through the snow, the black fire in his eyes changing nature.

Though it was still black flames, the Evil Technique was entirely different.

Evil Technique·Caged Fire (Illusion)!

"Bring it on!" Lu Ran glared fixedly at the Prison Sky Demon.

If I can't control your body, I will control your mind!

"Garala!"

Suddenly, a Blood-colored Chain materialized next to the Prison Sky Demon and wrapped around his arm.

Clearly, there was a Moon Gazer team coming in support, with a Prisoner Demon Disciple among them.

And this Blood-colored Chain sent the already furious Prison Sky Demon into a complete frenzy!

If the Beifeng Clan and Night Charm Clan were considered archenemies...

Then the Prisoner Demon Clan and the Prison Sky Clan were absolutely irreconcilable!

"Garala garala..."

More and more Blood-colored Chains rapidly appeared, binding the towering body of the Prison Sky Demon.

Dark crows flew in as well, flapping their wings madly, circling him and trying to peck out his eyes.

Another Lotus Bone Blossom emerged, and the flying swords launched in rapid succession.

"Ah ah ah ah!!" The Prison Sky Demon roared in pain.

He did not care about the lotus beneath his feet or the crows surrounding him; he just tore at the Blood Chains on his body and charged straight towards the human team, his blood-red eyes locked onto the Prisoner Demon believer!

Seeing such a scene stunned Lu Ran.

What kind of extreme hatred was this?

Before, he had not ceased his bleating, but now, the Prison Sky Demon actually abandoned the fight to target the Prisoner Demon believers?

No way! Not acceptable!

He had been whipping me for so long, and now he's just walking away?

"Meow!!" Lu Ran shouted loudly.

I don't care if the Prison Sky Clan and the Prisoner Demon Clan are deadly enemies!

In today's battle, my Immortal Sheep Clan will have a stake!

With that cry from Lu Ran, it was as if an invisible hand forcibly turned the head of the Prison Sky Demon.

Not just for the Prison Sky Demon, the Moon Gazers who came to assist also glanced at Lu Ran with rather unpleasant looks.

"Yes! Look right at me, you brat!" Lu Ran muttered inwardly.

His cold gaze, like two sharp swords, pierced directly into the crimson eyes of the Prison Sky Demon.

"Ah ah ah ah!"

The completely enraged Prison Sky Demon flailed his chains wildly, charging at Lu Ran without a care.

"Zi!"

Suddenly, a sound of a blade piercing flesh was heard!

Among the circling Lotus Flying Swords, one of them took a strange trajectory.

It avoided the frenetically swinging chains and stabbed deep into the arm of the Prison Sky Demon.

The pained howls of the Prison Sky Demon echoed as his majestic body shuddered; he lost control.

"Hu!!"

A surge of energy swelled.

Suddenly, iron chains seemed to form out of thin air all over the Prison Sky Demon's body.

Evil Technique·Hundred Chains Robe!

It was a rather crude defensive technique, as each chain had gaps.

Of course, if enough chains were wrapped around the body, this shortcoming could be mitigated.

"Ugh ah!" With another collapse of the ground beneath him, the Prison Sky Demon launched like a cannonball straight toward Lu Ran.

"Lu Ran!"

"Back off, don't..." Amidst the cries of shock, Lu Ran, with a burst of Immortal Fog beneath his feet, made a rapid retreat.

"Baa!!"

The little sheep, so boldly defying the celestial stars!

He was not only unafraid, but he even bleated louder.

The Prison Sky Demon lunged, and Lu Ran flew backward.

Man and demon locked eyes...

More ferocious than the demon, more ruthless than the man!

No one knew that in the world of the Prison Sky Demon, the images in his eyes were rapidly changing.

"Baa~~~"

The bleating was continuous; Lu Ran didn't even give the Prison Sky Demon a chance to blink!

Lu Ran's unruly hair flew forward as he flew back to the school's gate.

Along the way, the mist of Immortal Fog whirled, and the frost and snow danced.

In the swirling snow fog, the maddened Prison Sky Demon charged forward, hunting Lu Ran.

"It's our turn, Silent Night," Lu Ran whispered lowly, his eyes sharpening.

At this point, the Illusion Technique was complete!

The strength of the Prison Sky Demon was obviously extraordinary, but the weakness of his clan was equally fatal.

Similar to the Barbaric Woman Clan, the mental fortitude of the Prison Sky Clan was somewhat lacking.

"Hu~"

Still retreating, Lu Ran suddenly stomped the snowy ground.

Within the enveloping mist, a wave of wind quietly supported Lu Ran's feet.

Night Charm Evil Technique·Night Dance!

Lu Ran's movements were similar to a sprinter's takeoff, with no inertia of retreat whatsoever.

He came to an abrupt halt and then shot out!

"Lu Ran!!"

"Lu..." As exclamations erupted, the supporting Moon Gazer team's expressions changed drastically.

Of course, they had heard this name.

These two characters were even tinged with a hint of legend.

From inviting Evil Demon-Yan Paperman on the first day of June to the most terrifying nights on the fifteenth of July following the patrol team into battle.

And then on the fifteenth of October, he slaughtered through the tribes of the Barbaric Woman on the Night of Ghosts.

The Moon Gazers stationed in Rain Alley City, even if they had not witnessed with their own eyes, had all heard the mysterious and profound rumors.

And tonight,

When the slight human figure, staring with a pair of lifeless Dead Sheep Eyes, charged towards that terrifying behemoth...

Just this scene alone told everyone:

Those rumors,

They were all damn true!

Chapter 182: eight-sword style?

The tiny Human Clan appeared like swallows returning to their nests, plunging headfirst into the embrace of the Prison Sky Demon.

Along with the plunge, a sharp Silent Night Blade followed!

"Zi!"

The slender and long blade of the knife, following the holes in the chains, pierced the chest of the Prison Sky Demon.

"Sss..."

The Prison Sky Demon didn't seem to cry in pain, but rather let out a roar of anger.

He was truly dumbfounded!

In the visual scope of the Prison Sky Demon, that insignificant human, who was clearly still on the charge, was at least twenty or thirty meters away from him.

So why was his heart hurting so much?

And where did that sharp blade come from?

"Ah!!"

The muscles on both arms of the Prison Sky Demon bulged, as if they were about to burst.

He no longer cared whether anyone was in front of him or not, embracing with both arms fiercely.

The Immortal Fog surged, and the shadow quickly retreated.

Before the giant arms embraced, Lu Ran had already withdrawn his blade and left.

And not just that!

Under the Divine Technique-Immortal Hoof, the rapidly retreating Lu Ran only took three or four meters back before stomping heavily on the ground and steadying his footing.

The huge inertia, the momentum of retreating, seemed like it didn't exist at all.

Lu Ran lunged forward again, his eyes cold and horizontal, flickering with a faint glow.

Evil Technique-Evil Sense helped him find the precise hole in the "chain clothing" amidst the intricate tangle.

Evil Technique-Evil Agility made his lunging blade exceedingly fast and even more precise.

Evil Technique-Night Dance... No!

Night Dance,

aided him to dance gracefully amidst this cold moonlit snowy field as if he were a creature of the night!

"Zi!"

The blade entered the flesh, and the Dawn Blade stabbed in from the rib area of the Prison Sky Demon.

"Ah, ah, ah!" The Prison Sky Demon raged in anger.

He hadn't reacted yet when his arms were already moving, flinging the chains in his hands violently!

"Pa!"

Lu Ran misted Immortal Fog under his feet and quickly retreated, hearing the heavy smack of the chains on the ground.

Those several autonomously moving arms were indeed troublesome.

Long ago, Lu Ran had already noticed this problem.

Though he had successfully attracted the attention of the Prison Sky Demon, Evil Technique·Heavenly Prison Hand actively slapped away spirit tokens and grabbed the flying sword.

"Be careful with the Lotus Flying Sword, halt it, stop the flying sword!" Prisoner Demon believers shouted loudly.

Lu Ran's speed was just too fast, dodging left and right, and the Moon Gazers were afraid the flying sword would impale Lu Ran.

Prison Demon Disciples kept summoning Blood Chains, trying to bind the Prison Sky Demon's six huge hands.

It was clear, with Lu Ran being this strong, the Moon Gazers decisively adjusted their tactics and began to assist.

Although Lu Ran was just a student, although he was an Immortal Sheep Believer... well, it didn't matter!

What mattered was, this boy was really damn fierce!

Hard on the frontal attack, yet with ease to spare.

"Roar!!"

Under the pull of the Blood-colored Chains, the massive body of the Prison Sky Demon suddenly arched backward.

"Crack! Crack..."

The six arms tore fiercely, and the Blood Chains continuously cracked.

"Zi—"

Immortal Fog carried a shadow fluttering through them.

The swallow returned to the nest once more as the blade stabbed again into the heart of the Prison Sky Demon.

"Crack!!"

Under the severe pain, the Prison Sky Demon tore apart the Blood Chains fiercely!

Because of his excessive force, all six arms bent and faced forward.

"Roar!!" The Prison Sky Demon completely lost it.

He hadn't made eye contact with Lu Ran for several seconds; the effects of the illusion were fading, and his brain was a mess.

At this moment, he didn't care what he saw either.

Those eight arms holding the chains went crazy, flailing everywhere, a picture of madness.

The swiftly retreating Lu Ran had his eyes sharpen.

An opportunity!

His sliding figure stopped suddenly; Lu Ran rapidly circled to the back, and then...

"Don't! Don't go!"

"You're looking for... you're crazy!!"

"Lu Ran!?"

At this time, the Prison Sky Demon was attacking indiscriminately, the chains thrashing everything around.

Even if Lu Ran attacked from behind, the output of the Prison Sky was just too chaotic.

Those six arms that just bent backward occasionally also struck backward.

But amidst the astonished eyes of the crowd and the voices of restraint...

With a grim face, Lu Ran just plunged into the chain formation!

The "Bloody Purgatory" constructed by the Prisoner Demon believers, I've broken through.

Is your black purgatory any harder, Prison Sky?

"Zi—"

At that moment, Lu Ran was like an incarnation of Night Charm.

Immortal Hoof full throttle!

Lu Ran charged alone into the chain formation, his feet stomping and darting left and right.

"Sss..." It wasn't a roar but the Moon Gazers gasping.

"Fuck!"

"Damn, really freaking evil!"

The Moon Gazers even felt as if they had seen a strong North Wind Believer!

Not just quick but also agile and swift.

Lu Ran seemed to hear the whispers of the wind, dodging every chain that whipped past.

Incredible!

At that moment, everyone finally understood how Lu Ran had slain the Barbaric Woman on the fifteenth of October.

However, the October Lu Ran certainly didn't possess the strength he had now.

It seemed like he was stepping on the ground, changing directions time after time.

But in the thick Immortal Fog, Lu Ran's feet were surrounded by gales, arbitrarily changing his direction of travel.

Why did he dare to break in here?

Because the Prison Sky Demon had gone mad.

If the Prison Sky Demon had let the six arms act on their own as before, Lu Ran would have been truly cautious.

But now, the Prison Sky Demon had obviously taken back control of the six arms.

All eight arms, eight chains, lashed out at random, without any method to the madness!

"Die."

Lu Ran's voice was soft, yet his strike was heavy.

He seized the opportunity, his feet stomping hard, and found a big gap in the chain formation that wasn't finely knit!

His right hand holding the Silent Night Blade directly stabbed into the back of the Prison Sky Demon's head!

"Zi!"

The dark blade emerged from the Prison Sky Demon's brow, stained with crimson blood.

In an instant, the ferocious Prison Sky Demon finally came to a stop!

Lu Ran was almost crouching on the robust back of the Prison Sky Demon and, with the huge impact, took the Prison Sky Demon forward.

The Prison Sky Demon raised a Gale, and frost danced in its path.

Lu Ran stomped hard on the back of the Evil Demon, with Immortal Fog rolling under his feet, Immortal Hoof revived!

Man and demon, from then on, parted ways.

One demon rushed towards the school gate, crashing heavily into the snow, piling into a mound of snow.

One person retreated towards the academic building, sliding backward in the snow, trying to slow down the momentum.

"Heh..."

Lu Ran let out a deep breath of relief.

You wretched thing,

You were damn hard to kill!

When I first slew the Barbaric Woman, I didn't have the Night Charm Evil Technique to help me.

It's not to say that the Prison Sky Demon was stronger than the Barbaric Woman.

But because the Prison Sky Demon really restrained my type of close combat.

Such Evil Demons not only have many arms and chains but also those arms can act autonomously.

Truly, it's an outrage!

Just a pity about those six arms.

If the Prison Sky Demon hadn't canceled the "trust," those six hands might have protected their master for a while longer.

Hmm... kind of interesting, huh~

Lu Ran couldn't help but contemplate deeply.

If I activated the Evil Sculpture of the Prison Sky Demon clan, I could also grow six arms.

Could these hands automatically protect me too?

When the time comes, could I hold eight swords?

After all, I don't need to worry about limited attention, since those six hands can be entrusted.

Good gracious~

Eight-sword style?

"Hu~~"

Lu Ran faintly heard the sound of the gale approaching.

He tensed up and immediately looked up at the night sky.

But he saw a woman wearing a woolen coat, holding a slim and long Night-slaying Great Saber, stabbing down rapidly.

As she got closer, the anxious color on her face gradually faded.

"Deng, Miss Deng."

"Miss Deng." A group of Moon Gazers immediately greeted her.

Deng Yuxiang slowed down abruptly, gliding to the ground, her gaze sweeping over the whole scene.

She saw her younger brother in the distance, and several students gawking both inside and outside the academic building doors.

She then scanned over Moon Gazers, their faces a mix of shock and disbelief as if they had yet to return to their senses.

Lastly, Deng Yuxiang saw the massive body lying in the snow at the school gate.

"Did you request reinforcements?" Deng Yuxiang gently landed, "Did they say here was a River Realm Rank 3~4 Prison Sky Demon?"

"Lu... Lu Ran has already resolved it," a Moon Gazer said.

The corner of Deng Yuxiang's mouth lifted slightly, her smile enchanting under the moonlight.

Unlike others, she knew well Lu Ran's strength and didn't doubt it for a moment.

Deng Yuxiang took two steps forward, extending a cool palm, tidying up Lu Ran's disheveled clothes:

"You've been showing off again?"

The content of these words was supposedly blameful.

But there was a touch of pride in the woman's tone, no matter how one listened.

Lu Ran shook his head: "Not at all, the Moon Gazers were backing me up."

That single comment made everyone blush with shame!

Some secretly felt guilty, while others believed that Lu Ran's words were quite offensive...

Actually, Lu Ran meant it from the bottom of his heart.

Just now, when the Prisoner Demon believers displayed their Divine Technique, binding the Prison Sky Demon's arms with chains, it was truly crucial!

Of course, if there had been no others on the battlefield, Lu Ran would have killed even quicker.

After all, most of his Evil Techniques must absolutely not be revealed to others.

He couldn't possibly slay a Prison Sky Demon in public, transform into Night Charm, and wield 8 Night Charm Blades...

If so, the Prison Sky Demon might have died cleanly, but so would have Lu Ran.

"Pfft~"

In the distance, the giant skeleton disintegrated into wisps of blue smoke.

Deng Yuxiang: "Looking at you, this battle was rather dangerous?"

Lu Ran, having found someone to confide in, couldn't stop himself: "He had too many hands!

The chains flailed about, crackling and snapping! Who could withstand that..."

Deng Yuxiang's eyebrows rose slightly: "But didn't you withstand it?"

Lu Ran pursed his lips.

Well, that's also true~

"Next time, you could wait for the patrol team to come to your aid; don't be so stubborn," Deng Yuxiang softly spoke.

"Oh, got it... By the way, where's your camera?" Lu Ran curiously asked, looking at the Big Nightmare's collar.

Deng Yuxiang smiled: "I'm now in the River Realm, I have more important responsibilities and can't participate in 'Heavenly Pride' anymore."

Lu Ran: "..."

So, no more believer points, no rewards, and all Divine Weapons and Magic Artifacts gone?

Deng Yuxiang suddenly said: "But they're very interested in you, 'Heavenly Pride.'

Remember? They specifically asked me to bring you along to join the battle."

Lu Ran: "Hmm..."

Deng Yuxiang turned her head, looking towards where the Prison Sky Demon's skeleton vanished: "Now you are also in the River Realm.

With your combat power, you are worthy of the 'Heavenly Pride' title."

Lu Ran clenched his twin sabers, his heart pounding!

"Carry out your missions well; after the fifteenth this time, I'll ask for you," Deng Yuxiang said and slowly rose into the air.

Lu Ran looked up at the woman, cautioning: "Be careful on your way."

Deng Yuxiang grinned, glaring at Lu Ran: "Are you telling me?

Next time something like this happens, wait for my support."

Lu Ran: "Oh."

Chapter 183: Midnight Specters

Lu Ran watched Deng Yuxiang fly away. Then, on the battlefield, he looked around and found the Heavenly Star Spear deeply embedded in the ground.

He hurried back in front of the teaching building and handed the weapon to Deng Yutang, "Here, Mr. Deng."

Deng Yutang took the weapon, his expression grave as he looked at Lu Ran and said solemnly, "Brother Lu, you're so strong!"

Lu Ran patted Deng Yutang's shoulder, "You can do it too."

Deng Yutang: "..."

He believed he understood Lu Ran quite well since they were both members of the same team and fought side by side every month.

However, the battle they had just witnessed had indeed opened a new world to Deng Yutang.

If even a teammate felt this way, not to mention outsiders.

"Once you advance to the River Realm, your combat power will soar as well," Lu Ran said, knowing that Deng Yutang had a strong sense of pride and continued to encourage him.

Deng Yutang neither agreed nor disagreed.

Of course, he knew that his combat power would skyrocket after advancing to the River Realm.

But Deng Yutang really didn't think his combat power could reach Lu Ran's level!

Lu Ran had just advanced to the River Realm-First Rank. Yet now, the general River Realm Believers couldn't keep up with Lu Ran's pace in combat!

No wonder his sister so admired Lu Ran.

Likewise, the majority of divine followers couldn't keep up with the North Wind Believers' pace in combat.

Deng Yuxiang stubbornly returned to her hometown to stay in this small city, and she had to accommodate her teammates.

With Lu Ran's arrival, everything changed!

One can imagine the thoughts running through Deng Yuxiang's mind at that moment; she was like discovering a treasure in the ruins.

Indeed, the two of them were of the same kind.

Chang Ying whispered in awe, "The Divine Technique of the Immortal Sheep sect is really powerful."

Everyone agreed, especially the team leader Zhang Feng, whose mind was filled with images of Lu Ran dashing back and forth fearlessly.

Zhang Feng really wanted to help, but he had to deactivate the Lotus Flying Sword for fear of injuring Lu Ran.

When Divine Technique-Immortal Hoof wasn't used to run away, but to fight...

Which of the followers in this world wouldn't be envious?

"Right, what did my sister just say?" Deng Yutang asked.

"She told us to be careful," Lu Ran replied casually, "and to wait for her support if that happens again."

Beside him, Zhang Feng spoke up, "Ms. Deng meant for you to be careful."

Lu Ran: "..."

Zhang Feng continued to advise, "Better listen to Ms. Deng's suggestion."

The team leader was being quite humble.

As a student, Lu Ran was supposed to obey the Moon Gazer team leader's commands unconditionally.

Zhang Feng held great power, being one of the assessors for Lu Ran.

But at that moment, Zhang Feng wasn't commanding but rather kindly advising.

Strength indeed forms the basis of everything!

"Yes," Lu Ran agreed with an appearance of being receptive, which contrasted starkly with his fierce demeanor on the battlefield.

"What else did my sister say?" Deng Yutang wasn't ready to give up.

Lu Ran hadn't caught on, "She didn't say anything else."

The Big Nightmare had indeed mentioned something about "Heavenly Pride."

However, since things were far from certain, Lu Ran didn't intend to spread the word.

What if it fell through? Wouldn't that be embarrassing?

"Oh," Deng Yutang replied, starting to clean his Heavenly Star Spear silently.

In his mind's eye, he saw his sister smiling gently as she straightened Lu Ran's collar.

She had never done that for her own brother.

Uncomfortable~

Thinking about this, Deng Yutang's expression gradually became strange.

He and Deng Yuxiang never got along well, growing up in the shadow she cast, wishing to keep as far away from her as possible.

Now, why did he find himself wanting her attention?

Such a conflicting mindset...

"Uh, that what!" Lu Ran finally caught on, his words stumbling, "Your sister also said, to tell you..."

"Brother Lu." Deng Yutang suddenly spoke up.

"Ah?" Lu Ran was startled.

Deng Yutang looked strangely, "Whatever you're about to say, do you believe it yourself?"

Lu Ran: "..."

Then why keep asking!

Outside the teaching building, everything fell into an eerie silence.

After a while, Lu Ran spoke up, "When we get back, I'll talk to her and tell her to pay more attention to you."

Deng Yutang felt numb!

You talk to her?

You? Talk to her?

Is that even human language?

"There's trouble!" Tian Tian suddenly spoke up, breaking the eerie atmosphere.

While Deng Yutang was still reeling from a ton of emotional blows, Tian Tian directed him, and the squad set off to fight again.

During the battle, everyone found that Deng Yutang's attacks were incredibly fierce!

Fighting the Evil Demons, he seemed like he was in a frenzy...

It turned out a person didn't need to advance to the River Realm to suddenly increase their combat strength!

Lu Ran saw all this and marveled at the effectiveness of the tactic.

Maybe he should use this approach more often in the future?

Under the mighty display of "Frenzy Hall," everyone firmly defended Rain Alley City's Fifth Elementary School.

The school's playground was like a battlefield carefully prepared in advance.

Within a few hours, many Evil Demons met their end there.

Lu Ran also clearly felt that the overall strength of the Evil Demon invasion had significantly increased.

Before, he had been assigned to the patrol teams, rushing around the city to extinguish fires and slay powerful Evil Demons.

Now, Lu Ran was staunchly guarding a schoolyard, returning to the usual battlefield.

Based on past experience, considering only Rain Alley City's battlefield, the Evil Demons invading the small city were mainly from the Mist Realm and Stream Realm.

But now, things were different.

Mist Realm Evil Demons were becoming less frequent, and Stream Realm Evil Demons had become the true main force.

Occasionally, there would be First Rank River Realm Evil Demons among them, signaling trouble indeed.

Because of this, a glimmer of hope rose in Lu Ran's heart.

He hoped that the lot Chang Ying drew and Bai Manni's restlessness were due to the overall increase in Evil Demon strength.

And hopefully not because of some special event.

The small Rain Alley City really couldn't withstand much more turbulence.

As time ticked past 11 p.m., everyone could clearly sense that the intensity of the Evil Demon invasion had increased further.

"Hehe..."

At the swing set, Deng Yutang gasped for breath.

As the Evil Demon's bones shattered into mist before him, he drew out a Divine Power Pearl, absorbing the energy.

"What time is it?" Lu Ran asked as he plopped down on a swing.

"Creak~"

The rusty iron chain screeched with ear-piercing friction as it swung back and forth.

"11:41 p.m.," Tian Tian quickly checked his watch, then cautiously scanned the surroundings.

"Good, 19 minutes to go, hold on," Lu Ran said gravely.

"Yeah, yeah," Chang Ying clenched her axe, half in anticipation and half in prayer, "We're close to victory!"

Everyone was well aware that once midnight passed, the Evil Demon Clan would become weaker and their numbers would dwindle.

Tian Tian suggested, "Let's head back to the entrance of the teaching building."

"Okay, we'll wait for Mr. Deng to finish absorbing..." Before Lu Ran could finish, he suddenly turned his head toward the direction of the school gate.

At that instant, everyone tensed up and turned to look.

At the school gate, a tall and thin figure suddenly appeared.

It was woven from dry yellow straw, and its joints were tied, showing the marks of binding.

Evil Demon Clan·Straw Demon?

Everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

This kind of Evil Demon was similar to a bamboo spirit, relatively weak in combat and a bit silly.

"Is it about six feet tall? Or maybe six and a half?" Chang Ying lifted her axe, "Anyway, it's Mist Realm, shall I go?"

Mist Realm Evil Demons had become a rarity on this night of the fifteenth.

"Wait, let's draw it over here," Tian Tian advised cautiously, not wanting to take risks, as she pushed a lotus petal towards the Straw Demon.

"Hm?" Lu Ran's brow furrowed slightly.

But then, as the energy swirled beside the Straw Demon, another tall and slim figure emerged.

"So many dumb things!" Chang Ying exclaimed in surprise.

In just a few seconds, a string of five or six Straw Demons appeared.

By now, it had become normal for Evil Demons to appear in groups.

The Straw Demons gathered at the school gate, not too bright, with eyes made of rice ears, examining one another.

They seemed to be contemplating whether to attack each other.

"Hm?" Lu Ran furrowed his brow again.

For some unknown reason, the dazed Straw Demons suddenly all lifted their heads in unison and looked up at the night sky.

Such a scene was quite eerie!

Lu Ran immediately looked up, squinting his eyes:

"That is..."

Chapter 184: Fifteen Scoops

"Rustle~"

"Rustle!" Sounds of straw rubbing against each other echoed through the air.

The group of Straw Demons raised their heads, lifting their hands in a gesture as if embracing the moon.

High in the night sky, a desiccated yellow figure began to slowly descend.

"So tiny? Is that a River Realm Straw Demon?" Chang Ying widened her eyes in surprise.

Straw Demons were distinctive. The closer they were to the peak of the Stream Realm, the larger their size!

But once they advanced to River Realm, their bodies, made up of tightly woven straw leaves, would shrink significantly in size.

For instance, the current River Realm Straw Demon in front of them was no more than 1.5 meters tall.

"Now with clothes, and it can even fly," Lu Ran stared intently at the Evil Demon descending from the sky.

It was draped in a desiccated yellow straw-leaf coat and wore a straw hat of the same color.

Beneath the brim of the hat, pupils made of many grains of rice gleamed with a sinister, dry-yellow tint.

Lu Ran knew that this was the River Grade Evil Technique: Withered Grass Clothing!

Its defensive capabilities weren't particularly outstanding; the key was that it granted the Straw Demons the ability to fly.

That was terrifying!

"Rustle~"

The small Straw Demon floating in the air continuously rubbed its straw hands together, producing rustling sounds.

"Rustle~"

"Rustle!" The mouthless Straw Demons responded to their leader with the sound of rubbing straw.

Being humans, everyone was clueless about what these Evil Demons were scheming.

"Rustle~"

Holding a sign cylinder, Chang Ying shook it gently while muttering softly, "They're so cute~"

"Whoosh~"

While she was speaking, a phantom sign flew out.

Chang Ying's eyes filled with anticipation. The sign hovered above her head then emitted wisps of fog that connected to her body.

An auxiliary sign from the Five Treasures!

Chang Ying: "... "

Lu Ran glanced at Chang Ying, "You're quite cute too."

Chang Ying shyly lowered her head, "Sorry."

Tian Tian hastily said, "Don't worry, we just happen to need a replenishment of Divine Power."

Chang Ying lowered her head even more, "This is a Five Treasures sign. It can only replenish my own Divine Power."

Lu Ran said nonchalantly, "We can just stay close to you... Here they come!"

In front of the school gate, entirely 8 Straw Demons, led by their chief, charged into the campus.

Tian Tian swiftly produced a nine-petal Lotus Shield, distributing two petals to Deng Yutang and Chang Ying, "Here."

"Whoosh~"

"Whoosh~whoosh!" Straws, like flying needles, were sprinkled towards the four of them.

Tian Tian raised her small hands slightly, controlling the seven petals of the Lotus Shield towards the upper diagonal direction, "Master, do you want it?"

"No need. I'll lure that River Realm Straw Demon away. Hurry up and kill," Lu Ran said solemnly and moved to the side.

On his body, a layer of waterflow armor had already appeared.

Listening to the peculiar sounds, the incoming straws could not penetrate the defense of the Lotus Shield and were deflected.

"Go, you two together!" Tian Tian commanded, "Show some spirit, they are very timid!"

"Yes!" Deng Yutang pushed the Lotus Shield forward, holding the spear as he charged like a tiger into a flock of sheep. The red glow on the tip of his spear directly opened a Straw Demon from chest to abdomen.

"Yes!" Chang Ying exclaimed in delight, rarely getting a chance for hand-to-hand combat.

She too supported herself with one hand on the Lotus Shield, like a terrifying war chariot, thundering forward!

With a "thud," a stifled sound!

Chang Ying exploded into the ranks of the enemy, blasting two Straw Demons away with force.

The spirit sign above her head continuously supplied her with Divine Power, while her hands were also overflowing with Divine Power, enveloping the Mountain Opening Axe.

"Zi!"

The barbaric woman swung the heavy axe, the sharp blade instantly splitting a Straw Demon into two halves!

Deng and Chang, with just one charge, had scattered the formation of the Straw Demons, taking two with them.

Moreover, the remaining few Straw Demons showed a look of shock.

Clearly, they had become timid!

Tian Tian, acting as the commander, displayed a solid foundation of knowledge, adapting the team's tactics to the enemy's traits, which turned out to be effective.

Barring any surprises, it was now time to reap the results.

"Rustle~"

The River Realm Straw Demon was not pleased.

Its desiccated yellow pupils emitted a splendid glow, its straw hands reaching downwards.

"Meh~~~"

Suddenly, a sheep's bleat sounded, causing the Straw Demon to abruptly turn its head.

Though this clan lacked noses and mouths, they had eyes and ears. They could hear each other's rustling leaves, naturally, they could also hear the sound of a sheep's bleat.

An energy surged in the Straw Demon's hands, immediately summoning a mass of straw, stabbing like flying needles towards Lu Ran.

"Zi——"

Lu Ran activated the Immortal Fog under his feet and flew backwards.

The Straw Demon resolutely pursued, continuously throwing out pieces of straw.

"Whoosh~whoosh~"

In a blink, Lu Ran's backwards sliding path was already lined with rows of desiccated straws, lingering for a long time.

Honestly, Lu Ran was in discomfort, merely on the receiving end of a bombardment.

He really wanted to summon the Night Charm Blade and kill the airborne Straw Demon chasing him, sending it chillingly through...

"Meh~~~"

Lu Ran kept crying out, the Straw Demon flying lower and lower.

Now is the moment!

Lu Ran's eyes narrowed, a breaker of waves cushioned beneath his feet, and his sliding halted abruptly.

Evil Technique·Night Dance!

At this very moment, the Straw Demon's body suddenly expanded!

"Huh?" Lu Ran was momentarily startled.

Originally, he thought to pierce the night sky and chop off the enemy's head.

But now, the Straw Demon's tightly-woven straw body had disassembled, becoming incredibly fluffy.

At a rough look, it seemed to be about ten meters in size!

The blade of a tiny human, how could it cut down such an enormous head?

As the Straw Demon's size grew too large, its clothes also burst apart, and it could no longer fly.

Lightly, it fell to the snowy ground, then...

"Whoosh~"

"Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!" Endless straws shot out from its body!

Evil Technique·Straw Dance!

"Good fellow~"

Lu Ran activated Immortal Hoof again, promptly backing away.

Even though he was donned in a layer of waterflow armor, he instinctively lifted his arms to shield his face.

Pieces of straw covered the sky densely!

Truly a full-scale, no dead angle output.

"Be careful!"

"Activate the defense formation!"

Before the school, all the Moon Gazers deployed various defensive techniques to prevent the straws from piercing through the windows and stabbing into the classrooms.

As for the giant Straw Demon in the snow, its body was continuously shrinking.

In just a few seconds, the ten-meter thick straw was reduced to just five or six meters.

Yes, the Evil Technique·Straw Dance was shooting its own body...

It was clear, this Straw Demon had completely lost its wits.

Also, a certain little lamb's technique was too cursed.

Truly, Divine Technique·Desolate Sound, but even more twisted than an Evil Technique.

"Whoosh~whoosh..."

When the Straw Demon's body shrank to two meters, the shooting straws decreased significantly, and its speed and force faltered.

It seemed, it was about to stop.

Lu Ran was moved!

He tilted his head, still watching the Straw Demon continue in the snowy ground, and uttered again, "Meh~~~"

"Whoosh! Whoosh!!"

Immediately, the shooting speed of the straws picked up.

The Straw Demon shrunk further.

One meter six... one meter three... one meter one...

"Meh~~~"

Lu Ran stepped forward, one hand on his chest, pulling out a straw that was stuck in his waterflow armor.

"Puff~"

The straw in his hand vanished without trace, Lu Ran stood next to the Straw Demon, looking down at this little fellow.

The little Straw Demon lay weakly in the snow, its energy almost entirely dissipated, no longer bearing the grace of River Realm.

Lu Ran couldn't help but sigh internally.

What exactly defines an Evil Technique?

See this Straw Dance, can you not acknowledge it?

It literally played itself out!

"Whoosh!" the little Straw Demon shot out another straw, although deeply injured, still thought of slaughtering the human clan.

Lu Ran silently nodded.

Don't rush, I'll help you!

He softly spoke, "Meh~"

"Whoosh! Whoosh~"

The little Straw Demon "revived!"

Encouraged by the villainous little lamb, the Straw Demon responded like a reflex, shooting out a few more straws.

But its attack was utterly feeble; this time, the straws couldn't even penetrate Lu Ran's waterflow armor.

Lu Ran watched intently as it got smaller and smaller, and smaller, until...

"Meh~"

"Puff~"

The less than 30 cm tall Straw Demon, transformed into a wisp of smoke, and dissipated into nothingness.

Lu Ran stood with his hands on his hips, his expression peculiar.

This Evil Demon, it turns out, was rather easy to kill?

"Woo~~~"

Quite abruptly, a low warning siren rang out across the city!

Lu Ran's expression turned alarmed, his playful thoughts instantly dispersed, swiftly surveying his surroundings.

A special event?!

It was nearly midnight, the most perilous time interval was about to pass.

The intensity of the Evil Demon invasion could only weaken from this point, and you choose now to throw a special event at me?

Not just Lu Ran, everyone both inside and outside the campus, all had their expressions change drastically.

"Must it be so, no please!" Chang Ying grimaced, her earlier composure during the confrontation with the Straw Demon completely vanished.

Deng Yutang clenched the Heavenly Star Spear, searching amidst the surrounding rustling of the grass.

"Long-short, long-short..." Tian Tian looked at her wristwatch, her voice growing significantly louder, "Alternating long and short, Night of Ghosts!"

No more absorbing energy, let's quickly head back in front of the school building!"

The trio hastened towards the school building, while Lu Ran stood in the middle of the playground, waiting for them.

As the two parties were about to reunite, a strange phenomenon suddenly occurred!

A surge of intense energy abruptly whirled up, blocking the trio's path.

"Don't panic, step back..." Lu Ran's words cut off abruptly.

Because four Straw Demons had emerged, eyes wide open, scanning the surroundings.

Upon spotting Deng Yutang and the others, the Straw Demons immediately attacked.

Lu Ran did not step forward to assist but looked towards the southeast side of the playground.

Besides the swings, another small group of Straw Demons appeared.

Lu Ran: "..."

Honestly, the moment he heard the siren, his heart had plummeted.

Lu Ran had considered a raid by the Night Charm Clan, he thought of an assault by the Barbaric Woman Clan.

He even imagined the rarely seen Prison Sky Clan, returning to Rain Alley to trample this city once again!

Lu Ran never expected that this Night of Ghosts would bring an onslaught by the Straw Demon Clan...

"Whoo!!"

"Kill!" Lu Ran surged with Immortal Fog beneath his feet, holding twin blades, and charged towards the squad's battleground.

Since this is the case,

Then don't blame me for going mad scoring points on this exam night!

Straw Demon Clan... knows their stuff!

Chapter 185: Solitary Night

In front of the teaching building, Zhang Feng's expression was solemn, and he was very hesitant in his heart.

The Straw Demons had low intelligence and lacked tactical training, so a student team should naturally be able to handle them.

However, this was a special event—the Night of Ghosts—and logically, they should call the squad back.

"Uh!" On the playground, Tian Tian suddenly let out a soft cry, her little face turning deathly pale.

Unintentionally, she had made eye contact with the rice spike eyes of a Straw Demon.

Evil Technique·Rice Spike Eyes!

The Straw Demon's rice spike eyes could emit a dry yellow glow, which instilled fear in the enemy.

This evil technique was adapted by the Straw Demons in the Stream Realm.

But it was difficult for Straw Demons to learn it.

Whether it was Divine Technique or Evil Technique, anything involving "Pupil Skill" generally required a high level of ability from the caster.

Straw Demons were very dimwitted; forget the Stream Realm, even Straw Demons from the River Realm struggled to master this technique.

"Zzsh—"

Immortal Fog swept past like a shadow.

The Silent Night Blade targeted the enemy's life directly, severing the tall, lanky Straw Demon at the waist!

"Red Cloth Order!" Lu Ran shouted loudly.

"Fight!!" Deng Yutang immediately obeyed the order, roaring out loud.

The rousing Battle Roar invigorated both friend and foe on the battlefield!

Tian Tian's expression went from rigid to fiery, as if she had moved from one extreme to another.

"Clink, clank~"

Chang Ying fiercely smashed a Straw Demon and immediately picked up a summoning sign.

Three minutes were up!

It was time to draw a hand!

Amidst the distraction caused by the Red Cloth Order, Chang Ying's voice rang clear and strong: "May the spirits of the summoning signs bless me!"

Output control Summoning Sign, please come forth as you wish!"

"Swoosh~"

The summoning sign flew up, hovering above Chang Ying's head.

A supporting summon from the Pentacle!

The supporting summon that had just disappeared was renewed once again.

Chang Ying widened her eyes, her boiling fighting spirit somewhat doused.

The greater the expectation, the greater the disappointment...

Suddenly, a figure rushed towards her, startling Chang Ying into a cold sweat.

With one hand on the Lotus Shield, she instinctively turned to block.

However, Lu Ran slid sideways, passing in front of Chang Ying.

A flash of blade light severed four incoming straw spikes.

Only then did Chang Ying realize that Lu Ran was protecting her, helping her deflect the Straw.

"Straw Demons are indeed very weak, but you can't afford to be distracted," Lu Ran said, his expression stern as he looked up at Chang Ying.

Chang Ying slightly lowered her eyes, not daring to make a sound.

Lu Ran was usually too easy-going and good-tempered; when had he ever glared at her so sternly?

Actually, Chang Ying felt bad too.

The sign she drew did not match her boiling fighting spirit, instead feeling like a bucket of cold water had been poured on her.

From a distance, Zhang Feng's loud voice carried: "Squad 98, regroup at the teaching building!"

"Go." Lu Ran lifted his blade and pointed towards three Straw Demons clustering together ahead.

"Yes." Between obeying the Moon Gazer leader and Lu Ran, Chang Ying decisively chose the latter.

She grabbed her great axe, striding forward with long legs, pushing the Lotus Shield towards the enemy.

At this moment, her identity as a believer in the summoning sign didn't help her much.

Chang Ying, pushing forward with the shield of the Sword Lotus sect and wielding her own great axe, relied on her own qi and martial skills to overturn and smash one Straw Demon after another.

Two Straw Demons became the dead souls under her axe.

The last Straw Demon was crushed underfoot by her as she fiercely crushed its head!

Lu Ran couldn't help but inwardly sigh; Chang Ying's combat style was indeed fierce.

Did she really join the wrong line,

Maybe she should have apprenticed under the Barbaric Woman?

"Uh-huh." After killing the enemy, Chang Ying sneakily glanced at Lu Ran.

The cautious look, contrasting massively with her fierce combat stance.

Lu Ran nodded gently, "We are retreating to the teaching building."

"Oh, okay!" Seeing Lu Ran nod, Chang Ying felt as if she had been pardoned and immediately caught up with him as he retreated.

It was evident that Lu Ran held a very high place in her heart.

"Lu Ran!" Zhang Feng called out again, very sternly.

"Present!" Lu Ran sidestepped toward the direction of the teaching building, turning his head to look at Zhang Feng.

And Zhang Feng's next words surprised everyone: "I just received orders from higher up, you are now summoned to join a patrol team!"

"Patrol team?" Tian Tian felt a twinge of reluctance.

Who would want their team's main support to be called away like that?

Lu Ran immediately asked, "Which team? Where should I assemble?"

But Zhang Feng, one hand pressed to his ear as if listening to orders from an invisible earpiece, said:

"Centered around the Fifth Elementary School, extend three street blocks in all directions, start patrolling immediately!"

Lu Ran looked perplexed, "What does that mean, am I meant to form a team by myself?"

Zhang Feng did not respond to Lu Ran, his speech rapid as he reiterated the orders from above:

"Using your speed advantage, kill as many Straw Demons as possible, and all demon races with fire-based evil techniques.

Remember, these two types of demons are your targets, with the highest priority!

If you encounter other demons along the way, try not to engage them!"

Such special orders left the crowd in surprise.

Encounter other demons and try not to engage them?

"Start the mission immediately!" Zhang Feng looked up at Lu Ran, urging, "We're here, you go quickly!"

"Yes!" Mist swirled under Lu Ran's feet, and he leapt up to the second-floor platform of the teaching building.

With everyone watching in astonishment, Lu Ran's Immortal Hoof acted again, shooting straight up to the rooftop of the fourth floor!

You know, Lu Ran usually used Immortal Hoof for lateral movements.

He rarely traversed vertically!

Now, seeing Lu Ran reaching the rooftop of the teaching building in two steps, everyone was somewhat shaken.

Yes, Lu Ran was now a River Realm believer!

His Divine Technique-Immortal Hoof had advanced to River Grade, allowing him this "Heavenly Flying and Earthly Escaping" capability.

But while flying was easy, landing required utmost caution.

Your Immortal Hoof could only help decelerate your fall; if you were careless or fell from too high, you could still be smashed or killed.

"Be careful!"

"Master, don't rush!" Everyone couldn't help but shout.

"Rest assured." Atop the teaching building, Lu Ran used his Extreme Vision to scan the surrounding streets.

Standing high naturally allowed him to see farther.

Lu Ran immediately targeted several clustered Straw Demons at the street corner.

Just as he took a step forward, he suddenly heard a loud bang.

Lu Ran turned his head and saw, two streets away, a towering 10-meter-tall Straw Demon suddenly appear.

This behemoth was blazing fiercely, flames reaching to the sky!

Hot waves spread all around, with endless sparks covering the sky.

Lu Ran: !!!

That's right, the characteristic of the Straw Demon clan—high flammability!

And demon races with fire-based evil techniques, such as Blood Disaster Dogs, get even more excited when they see Straw Demons than when they see humans!

A Blood Disaster Dog would not hesitate to set a Straw Demon on fire at the first opportunity.

In extreme pain, the Straw Demon would fall into a frenzied state and flee in panic.

At this moment, the Straw Demon became a massive source of fire, igniting everything in its path!

Its randomly shot straw was equally threatening.

Once it pierced someone's glass window and the fiery straw fell inside a house, it could potentially cause a fire, even igniting an entire building!

"Huh!!"

A sign of ice frost suddenly covered the madly flaming Straw Demon.

The net was quite strong, pressing the Straw Demon to the ground, preventing it from reaching the buildings on the street side.

"Zzsh—"

Lu Ran's expression was ugly; he stepped on the edge of the fourth-floor rooftop and leapt towards the school's exterior.

He knew he had made a mistake.

A grievous mistake!

Straw Demons might indeed be weak for the believer community.

But for human cities, the impact of Straw Demons could be catastrophic!

"Sss, sss~"

"Sss!" At the street corner, three Straw Demons saw a member of the Human Clan appear and immediately threw out handfuls of straw.

Lu Ran's feet moved continuously, appearing to emit intense swirling Immortal Fog to slow his landing, but in reality, he was already cushioned by layers of wind waves beneath him.

He rapidly maneuvered around, not even dodging, directly plunging his twin blades into two Straw Demons.

Handfuls of straw pierced Lu Ran, superficially embedding into his water flow armor.

The twin blades, however, pierced through the chests of the Straw Demons, and with a lift from Lu Ran's blades, they tore open their straw chests and ripped apart their straw heads.

"Sss!"

The remaining Straw Demon, utterly terrified, began to back away and propped up a Straw Shield.

Lu Ran broke the shield with one stroke, cleanly and deftly decapitating the head of the Straw Demon.

"Plop~"

The Straw Demon in front of him suddenly turned into a puff of smoke.

And the true body of the Straw Demon flew backward.

"Damn!" Lu Ran couldn't help but curse out loud.

The more urgent, the more you hinder me, right?

This guy actually knew the Evil Technique-Straw Substitute!

This technique, like Evil Technique-Rice Spike Eyes, was also adapted for the Stream Realm.

The technique allowed a Straw Demon to leave a straw shell of its body in its place for a very short time to confuse the enemy.

The true body of the Straw Demon could then quickly escape from this shell.

Generally, the low-intelligence Straw Demons found it difficult to learn this technique.

That's why those blazing Straw Demons couldn't disengage and escape, only to be burned to death.

"Baah!"

Lu Ran let out a sheep's bleat and dashed towards the enemy.

The initially retreating Straw Demon immediately changed its mind and threw out several straws again, attempting to kill Lu Ran.

"Zzsh—"

A shadow dashed through, and with a swift movement of his hands, Lu Ran cut down.

Gliding backward on the snow, he looked up at the distant flames.

He stopped and rushed forward as fast as he could.

In his sight, the burning Straw Demon was firmly pressed on the street.

The flaming straw shooting out through the net holes was a terrifying sight.

Another woman was flying around the head of the flaming Straw Demon.

She had a pair of icy blue butterfly wings on her back, beautifully patterned.

Beneath her feet were clusters of ice-blue flowers, crystal clear and densely packed.

Her one hand released a thick frost, sprinkling it on the fiery body of the Straw Demon, while the other hand sent out countless ice crystal butterflies, impacting the Straw Demon's head.

A follower of the Fifth Order God·Ice Butterfly?

Lu Ran's eyes hardened, then he suddenly roared, "Baah!!"

The woman immediately turned her eyes towards him, only to see a figure rapidly approaching, the slender blades flashing a terrifying cold light.

The woman's eyes widened, instinctively raising her hand, releasing ice crystal butterflies from her palm.

Even though anger rose from her heart, she suppressed her killing intent towards this Human Clan young man with her rationality.

She recognized him.

He was the pride of Rain Alley City!

He was the true Heavenly Pride!

"You..." The woman didn't understand what Lu Ran was up to, nor did she want to harm him.

She could only try her best to dodge, controlling the ice crystal butterflies to scatter.

"Zzsh—"

The young man slashed through the night sky, flashing by her side.

The woman turned her head just in time to see Lu Ran's Tang blade beheading a Straw Demon.

Her pupils shrank slightly; was this Straw Demon the one that had just appeared behind her?

Judging by its attire, it was clearly a River Realm demon.

"Plop!"

The beheaded River Realm Straw Demon did not immediately turn into mist.

Without a head, its straw body instantly disassembled and expanded, crashing towards the still-burning Straw Demon.

The woman immediately raised her hand, throwing another strong ice frost net, carrying the large but light headless grass corpse, flying together into the night sky.

At the same moment, the diagonally slashing Lu Ran had already reached the highest point.

He scoured the area for demons, loudly asking, "Where are your teammates?"

The woman was a bit taken aback.

As a Moon Gazer, wasn't that a question she should be asking?

Chapter 186: That Glimmer of Light

"Our side is short-handed, so we've split up to search for the Straw Demon."

The woman, seeing Lu Ran land steadily, responded.

Lu Ran nodded silently, no wonder the Divine People Bureau had come to him.

The Moon Gazers had even split up their teams, truly risking their lives.

It seemed the threat the Straw Demon Clan posed to the city was far greater than he had imagined.

"Be careful," Lu Ran said in a deep voice as mist spewed from beneath his feet, propelling him forward along the street.

The woman, watching Lu Ran's retreating figure speed away, couldn't help but sigh inwardly.

She had finally seen this legendary Immortal Sheep Believer.

Indeed, beneath the fame there was no lack of substance!

He truly did not fear battle, even daring to venture alone on this night of the fifteenth.

"Huff..."

Lu Ran moved from east to west, arriving at the crossroads and sharply turned northward.

Right there on the side street, in front of Wang's Big Bone Store, three Straw Demons lay scattered.

Lu Ran's blades lit up as he charged straight at them.

Further down the street, two Moon Gazers, taken aback, exclaimed, "Who is that?"

"Swish~"

The Dawn Blade, with its gleaming edge, sliced through, bisecting a Straw Demon at the waist!

Lu Ran's feet crumbled beneath him, changing direction instantly, bursting forward a good 7 meters to the right.

"Zzzt!"

The Silent Night Blade plunged forward, slicing open a Straw Demon and viciously ripped through the head of the Evil Demon.

Lu Ran didn't pause, his movements fluid like clouds drifting water, abruptly charging ten more meters to his left!

"Crack!"

The Dawn Blade's edge was incredibly sharp, cleaving through the Straw Shield and decapitating the Straw Demon in one swift motion.

In just a couple of seconds, three Straw Demons were linked by a path of Immortal Fog and all met their demise.

The two Moon Gazers stopped in their tracks.

They watched the misty path "connecting the dots" and looked at the twin-bladed youth who had suddenly stopped.

Lu Ran nodded at the two, but then tilted his head, as if he heard something.

"Zzzt—"

In a flash, Lu Ran darted to the right, charging into the small alley beside the restaurant, disappearing from view.

"Who is this kid?"

"It should be Lu Ran, right? The student from Yuxia Middle School!"

"Oh, right! Lu Ran, it has to be him..."

Meanwhile, Lu Ran, along the small alley beside the restaurant, plunged directly into the backyard.

Behind the restaurant lay a row of old residential buildings with garages in front.

Between the buildings and the garages, a pack of Evil Dogs was gathering.

"Heh." Lu Ran breathed a sigh of relief.

The calls of the Evil Dogs were the same as those of the Blood Disaster Dogs, so it was easy for Lu Ran to mistake one for the other.

Don't blame him for being so anxious; whether or not there were Straw Demons present, Blood Disaster Dogs were a great threat.

And, on a night like the fifteenth, such Evil Demons were particularly common!

Just in the past few hours, Lu Ran had slain more than a dozen Blood Disaster Dogs on the playground of the Fifth Elementary School alone.

"Woof!"

"Woof! Woof!" Seeing an attacker from the Human Clan, the four Evil Dogs all opened their jaws wide.

One after another, the Evil Technique·Evil Tooth was executed quickly and neatly.

"Shut your mouths!"

Lu Ran commanded coldly as his figure rapidly advanced.

He didn't use his blade to slash but rather stomped towards the head of a dog.

"Bang!"

The head of the leading Evil Dog was crushed under Lu Ran's foot, blood and brains splattering everywhere.

The sight was, perhaps, a bit too gory...

The surrounding Evil Dogs were blown away by the violent air currents.

Evil Technique·Soul-splitting Demon Hoof!

Lu Ran decisively chose "War Trample," achieving excellent results.

The three Evil Dogs howled in pain, bodies hit by the shockwave of energy, unable to execute their Evil Teeth from the agony.

Once again, the youth with twin blades darted about!

The Evil Dogs flying left, right, and forward were each turned into "points," connected by a path of white mist.

The figure flashed past, blade in hand.

Lu Ran exhaled a breath of relief, shaking off the blood from the Silent Night Blade in his right hand.

"Hum~"

Suddenly, the Dawn Blade in his left hand trembled slightly.

"Hm?" Lu Ran reacted for a moment, then chuckled and shook his head.

Was it jealous?

Surely not!

Well... it was a good sign.

The more intense and frequent the Dawn Blade's reactions, the closer it was to gathering an Artifact Spirit!

Lu Ran shook the Dawn Blade as well, flicking off the blood from the edge.

Just as he made his move, Lu Ran seemed to sense something and suddenly turned his head to look down an adjacent corridor.

His brows furrowed slightly, he stepped forward, and with one thrust of his blade, he pierced precisely into the gap of the building door and pried it open with a forceful twist!

"Crack~"

The decrepit door of the building was forcibly opened.

In an instant, Lu Ran and a Straw Demon inside the corridor faced each other.

"Rustle rustle~"

The Straw Demon reached out, straw spikes flying towards him.

"Whoosh!"

Lu Ran, clad in his water armor, stepped into the darkened corridor.

With a fierce swing of his hand, a Night Charm Blade flew out.

The first floor was unoccupied, just a stairwell, so Lu Ran dared to act so boldly.

The Night Charm Blade instantly penetrated the head of the Straw Demon, nailing it straight to the wall!

"Puff~"

A moment later, the figure of the Straw Demon shattered into mist and disappeared without a trace.

With a casual wave of his hand, the wall with the Night Charm Blade embedded quietly shattered into wind.

In places without people, Lu Ran was indeed the strongest!

Just now, in front of the garages outside the building, Lu Ran had only dared to use a different form of the Immortal Hoof (Soul-splitting Demon Hoof) to blast the area, then picked off the members of the Evil Dog Clan one by one.

If it were an environment where people were not around, Lu Ran would probably throw out a whole bunch of Night Charm Blades...

"Thud!"

Lu Ran exited the corridor, and the door of the building closed with a heavy thud.

He stretched out his hand to touch the place where the door had been pried open, as if comforting it, and then turned and left.

Lu Ran had no time to absorb the remains of the dogs, merely quickly extracting the Demon Crystals from the four Evil Dogs before returning to the brightly lit streets.

"Crack~"

"Crack!" The Evil Dog Demon Crystals in his palm shattered one by one, their energy drained by Lu Ran.

"Hmm..." Lu Ran let out a satisfied hum.

He looked around and then dashed off again to the north.

For the next 2 hours, with the Fifth Elementary School at the center, the streets to the east, south, and west were all marked with Lu Ran's presence.

At every street corner and alleyway, Immortal Fog drifted.

Within and outside residential areas, swords flashed.

The Moon Gazers stationed in this area and the residents living here saw Lu Ran bravely fighting the enemy more than once.

Whenever Immortal Fog appeared, it meant that the little sheep lad had made another kill!

The thoughts of the people also changed again and again.

From the initial "Who the hell is this?" to the end, filled with nothing but gratitude and admiration.

Lu Ran did not let down the Divine People Bureau, nor did he fail the city.

In this "Night of Ghosts," Lu Ran alone held up an entire patrol team!

For a full 2 hours, not a single blaze rose into the sky within these streets.

Of course, this was not solely Lu Ran's achievement.

The Moon Gazers, who had scattered and disregarded their own lives to expand the area of control, did so to prevent the Evil Demons from finding an opportunity!

"Heh... heh..."

Once again, Lu Ran, in front of East Water Bay community's entrance, chopped down a Straw Demon with his blade.

He gasped for air, drawing energy quickly as the Straw Demon disintegrated into mist.

This was also the first time Lu Ran felt he was running out of energy!

Lucky for him that morning, he had obtained a full-energy River Grade Divine Power Pearl.

Otherwise, he truly might not have held up.

"How is this not over yet," Lu Ran murmured to himself.

The continuous hard work was exhausting him both mentally and physically.

The duration of the Night of Ghosts was indeed not fixed; it could be as long as possible.

How many more Straw Demons were there?

Inside Lu Ran's Sculpture Garden, that Evil Demon-Straw Demon sculpture had long been ready to activate.

He was starting to worry that if he kept on killing like this, the Straw Demon itself might realize that something was amiss...

"Careful!"

"Kill the dogs! Kill the dogs first, don't let them..." All of a sudden, a series of faint voices reached his ears.

Lu Ran whirled his head around, looking into the interior of the community.

The community was not small, and the shouts of the Moon Gazers had to be loud, which is why Lu Ran could barely hear them.

Without a word, Lu Ran charged straight into the residential community.

He needed no guidance and soon saw flames reaching towards the sky!

"Damn!" Lu Ran's expression turned grim, and he rarely let slip a curse.

He and the Moon Gazers had given so much, jointly defending this area for so long, was it all to be for naught?

Such flames meant a giant Straw Man had been ignited!

And crucially, it had appeared in this not-so-small residential community!

If it went mad, who knew how many flaming straw pieces would smash through windows, igniting home after home...

"Zzzt—"

Lu Ran sped up and, as he passed a building, witnessed an astonishing scene.

A Straw Demon, ten meters tall, was indeed ablaze, and indeed in a frenzy.

But this flaming Straw Demon was enveloped in a light red cover!

Red Cloth Divine Skill·Red Cloth Domain?!

A light red cover with a radius of 20 meters, shaped like a hemispherical dome, firmly trapped the giant Straw Demon within.

Red Cloth Believers, real men!

The man with the red cloth around his head was also trapped inside, suffering the mad onslaught of the River Grade Straw Demon.

How fearsome was the output of a River Grade Evil Demon being consumed by flames and struggling on the brink of death?

"Crack!"

"Crack! Crack..." Endless fiery straw spikes struck, and cracks spread relentlessly over the cover.

It seemed on the verge of breaking at any moment!

Lu Ran's eyes sharpened, and he shot forward.

He saw the fire Straw Demon, still three stories tall but shrinking, and likewise, he saw inside a third-floor apartment a stunned old lady standing by the window, her hand over her mouth, staring dumbly at the horrific scene outside.

The old lady seemed paralyzed with fear, as still as a wooden chicken, unmoved.

"Leave!"

Lu Ran yelled fiercely, leaping diagonally towards the window of the third-floor residence.

"Thud" was the sound of impact.

Lu Ran landed on the outer wall of the building, jolting the old lady inside awake.

He squatted on the wall without wasting a moment, then jumped again.

With a burst of Immortal Fog billowing, Lu Ran turned back, stabbing straight at the cracking light red cover!

Evil Technique-Soul Splitting Power, activate!

Evil Technique-Soul-splitting Demon Hoof, activate!

"Crack!"

Without Lu Ran needing to break the cover, the Red Cloth Domain had already shattered.

Clad in his water armor, Lu Ran plunged into the raging flames, his feet stomping heavily on the fire Straw Man.

"Bang!"

Beneath the Soul-splitting Demon Hoof, the Straw Demon's fluffy head burst apart!

The fire Straw instantly ceased its wild shooting.

Under the violent swirling of energy, Lu Ran was blasted back two meters.

Conversely, the massive corpse of the Straw Demon fell towards the direction opposite the residential building, crashing into the snow-covered flower bed.

"Spurt!"

The vast Straw Demon exploded on impact!

Endless sparks scattered, like fireflies dancing in the night sky, stunningly beautiful.

Lu Ran landed with a stumble, a hand shielding his face.

The myriad sparks that filled the sky covered his water armor and dusted the Dawn Blade.

"Hum!!"

Lu Ran's heart trembled slightly, sensing something.

He abruptly lifted his gaze to look at the Dawn Blade in his hand.

"Dawn Blade," Lu Ran murmured softly.

The icy, clear Black Ice Blade, now speckled with red stars, bloomed with a brilliance unmatched in the somber night...

Chapter 187: Xia

"Buzz!!"

The Dawn Blade experienced another violent tremor, radiating light.

Lu Ran's face brightened with joy, "Yes, this is the momentum!"

He gripped the handle tightly, gradually entering the realm of Heart and Sword Unity.

The sword, an extension of the Sword Holder's thoughts.

"That's right, the morning glow is not waited for, but fought for."

Lu Ran slowly raised the Dawn Blade, observing the blade that sparkled like the stars.

If so, why wait for daybreak?

Dawn, dawn...

Lu Ran murmured in his heart, lost in his world.

In the dark hues of the Night of Ghosts, where the brilliant flash of swords vanquished Evil Demons wherever we tread.

Perhaps, people living here, in our repeated onslaughts, have glimpsed the brightness of the dawn.

"Huff!!"

A somewhat clear night sky suddenly filled with layers of mist.

Lu Ran's eyes widened in surprise.

Clearly, this was the prelude to a weapon's elevation to Divine Weapon!

Lu Ran knew this because he had witnessed the entire process of the Night-cutting Blade becoming a Divine Weapon at Wu Lie Bridge Head.

"Lu, Lu Ran?" A voice called out.

With Heart and Sword Unity, connected tightly to the weapon in his hand, he didn't hear the call.

"Lu Ran!!" The Moon Gazer's volume suddenly increased, realizing what Lu Ran was experiencing.

But Lu Ran could not progress his weapon here!

It was the night of the fifteenth!

And the Night of Ghosts was not yet over.

The anomalies in the sky caused by the Dawn Blade made the surrounding energy churn.

This would draw numerous Evil Demons to this residential area!

"Lu Ran, take the blade and leave, go somewhere uninhabited!" the Moon Gazer shouted, "There are many ordinary citizens here!"

Lu Ran suddenly snapped to his senses.

Without a second thought, he grasped the buzzing Dawn Blade and darted out.

The East Water Bay community was located in the east of Rain Alley City, near the eastern suburbs; Lu Ran decided to keep heading east, until there was no paved road, until a Snow Forest appeared.

Now, the night sky was shrouded in fog, the bright moon no longer in sight.

Dense fog tumbled, chasing the silhouette of a man and his sword.

"Hisss..."

"Roar!!" Hissing roars followed, putting a grave expression on Lu Ran's face.

A weapon alone could not gather an Artifact Spirit.

A warrior and his weapon needed complete focus, and unity of mind and heart.

But here with Lu Ran, the violent surge of energy was bound to attract many Evil Demons...

"Alright, then let's do it like before," Lu Ran spun the blade, "and carve out a swath... huh?"

"Huff!!"

A gale erupted, whipping up a fierce whirlwind.

Lu Ran's face lit up, hearing not only the storm raging through the dense fog but also several Wind Blades cutting through.

"Whoosh!"

The Night-slaying Great Saber moved rapidly, carrying a thrilling sonic boom, streaking past Lu Ran's side, heading towards the mist behind him.

In an instant, Lu Ran heard the sound of blades penetrating flesh.

"Why don't you call me when there's trouble?" came a familiar female voice, tinged with a hint of reproach.

"Sis." Lu Ran tightened his grip on the Dawn Blade, finding her voice incredibly soothing.

In this perilous night, he felt an unexpected peace.

The peace,

stemmed from recognizing her strength, and from his utter trust in her.

In the thick fog, Deng Yuxiang's voice came again:

"Focus, I'll protect you."

"Okay." Lu Ran, of course, didn't hesitate, lifting the Dawn Blade.

"Buzz!!"

The Dawn Blade trembled violently, furiously drawing in the swirling energy of the universe.

Enveloped in fog, Lu Ran couldn't see the full spectacle.

At this moment, the phenomena in the night sky were astonishing.

The incoming fog spun on its own, forming countless "fog tornados," enveloping a man and his sword.

Lu Ran and his Dawn Blade seemed to have opened numerous paths to the heavens.

He stood in this bitter mortal world, tightly connected to the heavens.

"Mm..."

Lu Ran's body trembled slightly, overwhelmed by the fierce energy permeating his entire being, his flesh already filled to the brim.

Yet the Dawn Blade acted like a bottomless pit, greedily swallowing everything.

Under the guiding will of Lu Ran, the icy, translucent blade of the Black Ice Blade continuously shimmered with dazzling light.

"Whoosh~Whoosh~"

Deng Yuxiang stood in the fog, her fingertips gently stirring, as exactly 16 Wind Blades crisscrossed through the air.

She closed her eyes, listening to the battlefield.

The sounds of blades piercing, blood spraying, Evil Demons wailing.

And also the soft sighs of Lu Ran.

A smile gradually spread across Deng Yuxiang's face.

There was pride, and there was sentiment.

Since meeting Lu Ran, it had only been half a year.

But inexplicably, she felt like he had already accompanied her on a very long journey.

Night after night of the fifteenth, time and again through the Night of Ghosts, from rainy nights to snowy nights.

At Wu Lie Bridge Head, achieving great success with the Night-slaying Great Saber.

By the banks of Wu Lie River, ascending to the River Realm, becoming a Jiang Realm Great Power observed by the world...

It truly had nothing to do with time.

He had indeed walked a long path with her.

Now, at last, she was also protecting him, embarking on an important journey.

"Huff!"

Deng Yuxiang suddenly raised her hand, unleashing a storm into the night sky.

Several flying Straw Demons from River Realm, enveloped by the fearsome storm, were instantly torn apart, leaving no trace.

The celestial phenomena caused by Lu Ran actually made Rain Alley City more secure.

Because many Evil Demons were drawn here.

The dense fog also blinded most Evil Demons, giving the North Wind Believers an advantage.

Deng Yuxiang, this towering Jiang Realm Great Power, ruthlessly slaughtered the night-dwellers.

Until...

The fog suddenly thinned, and the Dawn Blade's energy absorption accelerated enormously.

The speed of incoming energy couldn't keep up with the Dawn Blade's absorption rate.

In just over ten seconds, the heavens and earth returned to their prior clarity.

Deng Yuxiang immediately changed tactics, casting spell after spell, deliberately causing chaos on the battlefield.

"Buzz!!!"

The Dawn trembled.

The swirling currents tousled Lu Ran's short, messy hair.

His dark pupils sparkled brilliantly.

"Huff..."

Suddenly, a tremendous phantom spread out from the Dawn Blade.

It was... the silhouette of Lu Ran.

Lu Ran was somewhat stunned, always assuming the Artifact Spirit of the blade would resemble his father's generation.

He had even considered addressing the Artifact Spirit as "uncle"...

But unexpectedly, the Artifact Spirit of the Dawn Blade was Lu Ran himself.

And not the stern, cold-eyed version he showed to enemies.

It was more like the amiable, brightly smiling self he was with friends and family.

No,

he seemed too "bright."

Even though the Artifact Spirit flashed by in an instant, as the weapon's master, Lu Ran could distinctly feel all of its aspects.

As Lu Ran grew to understand it more, the more astonished he felt.

This Artifact Spirit...

Its brilliance was dazzling, like a flame reaching for the sky!

Lu Ran pursed his lips, indulging in his world under the protection of Big Nightmare.

That's right,

a sword is the physical manifestation of the Sword Holder's will.

The radiance it displays naturally represents Lu Ran's expectations for it, as well as his own desires.

Earlier in Beifeng City, when Lu Ran was receiving the nourishment of the Divine Ruins Fragment with the Dawn Blade, he had achieved Heart and Sword Unity, his emotions churning repeatedly:

We will break through the mist with the golden light of the rising sun time and again.

And gift the dazzling dawn behind the mist to the myriad souls suffering in this world.

"Spurt!!"

On the battlefield ahead, a loud burning sound abruptly came.

Lu Ran, startled, immediately looked up.

There before him raged a giant Straw Demon, already in a frenzied state, flailing its arms madly.

The flammability of its species was indeed astounding.

Straw Demons seemed like they were covered in accelerant; when hit with flames of a certain magnitude, they would "boom" into combustion, even faintly causing an explosive blast of air.

"Hmph."

Deng Yuxiang coldly snorted and casually tossed a hand.

A massive storm instantly enveloped the Straw Demon, transforming it directly into a fire tornado.

Lu Ran finally witnessed the majesty of Big Nightmare!

Fully 16 blades, crisscrossing through the air, she seemed to have opened a "Domain of Blades"!

Jiang Grade-Flying Wind Order!

Blade after blade slaughtered the surrounding Evil Demons, interweaving countless trails of blood, a sight truly heart-stopping!

More significantly, a long, thin Night-slaying Great Saber targeted the larger, stronger Evil Demons for slaughter.

Universally lethal, brimming with killer intent!

Concerning the term "Jiang Realm Great Power," Lu Ran gained an even more vivid impression.

He looked around, storm after storm forming a defensive formation, also constantly snatching the lives of Evil Demons.

"Master." Suddenly a voice echoed in Lu Ran's mind.

The voice was exactly like Lu Ran's, which slightly disoriented him.

"Kill?" Lu Ran lifted the Dawn Blade.

The Dawn Blade suddenly trembled, lightly flicking away Lu Ran's hand, hovering on its own above the palm of his hand.

"Hmm?" Deng Yuxiang slightly turned her head, glancing behind with the corner of her eye.

She saw the Dawn Blade suddenly fly out of Lu Ran's palm, rapidly moving through the air!

Deng Yuxiang's beautiful eyes sparkled!

In the dim night, she felt as if she really saw the beautiful dawn.

The Dawn Blade, obviously made of black ice material, pitch-black and translucent, yet the blade itself shimmered with bright luster.

The colors of the morning glow are ever-changing.

Sometimes light red, sometimes golden red, sometimes orange-red, sometimes deep red...

But whatever the red, all are brilliantly dazzling, radiant and overflowing with light.

The energy surge of the Dawn Blade left dreamlike trails of mist wherever it passed.

Like the spreading dawn in the world, lingering long.

"Huff!!"

Deng Yuxiang, full of Divine Power, surged along the trajectory of the speeding Dawn Blade, reinforcing the eight storms encircling them.

Until she faced Lu Ran, their eyes burning into each other, her smile playful:

"I might be hallucinating, but isn't it still dark outside?"

The Beifeng Clan naturally held a special affection for blades.

The woman's teasing words were filled with love and appreciation for the Dawn Blade.

"Yes, it is indeed not yet dawn."

As he spoke, Lu Ran suddenly reached out and grasped the flying Dawn Blade.

Why wait for the generous sun for the morning glow?

The world has its own blade of old friends.

Chapter 188: Winter Snow, Old Friend

As the sky phenomenon vanished, the Evil Demon Clan ceased their mad rush toward the eastern suburbs.

Deng and Lu fought fiercely, wiping out the Evil Demons completely,

and the nearly 3-hour Night of Ghosts did not leave the city engulfed in flames.

After the Big Nightmare flew away, Lu Ran did not return to the Fifth Elementary School; he continued to patrol the nearby three street blocks.

He looked for any lingering remnants of the Evil Demons and, along the way, nodded his greetings to the Moon Gazers as he passed by.

There was a sense of joy among the survivors, visible on their faces to varying degrees.

Especially when Lu Ran walked past residential areas, he frequently saw citizens watching from behind windows,

their faces filled with a deeper sense of relief.

Some smiled at Lu Ran; others waved from afar.

In the East Water Bay community, an elderly lady on the third floor even opened her window to repeatedly thank Lu Ran.

When Lu Ran left the community, he had acquired two more sugar cakes...

Hmm... given by the old lady.

The cakes were thrown down directly from the third floor, making Lu Ran look like he was begging.

But hey, they were pretty tasty~

Until the sun began to rise, Lu Ran finally witnessed a glorious dawn.

It was indeed beautiful,

but Lu Ran had seen even more beautiful scenes in the dark hours around two or three in the morning.

Indeed, he had even held that swash of rosy clouds in his hand.

...

In front of the main door of the building at Fifth Elementary School,

Deng Yutang held the Heavenly Star Spear, leaning casually against a front column.

Suddenly, he heard Chang Ying exclaim lightly, "Ah, Ran is back!"

"Oh?" Deng Yutang lifted his head and looked toward the gate.

"Master!" Tian Tian's face was full of delight as she saw the familiar figure return safely.

Then, everyone's expressions changed to astonishment.

They saw the young man holding a black Silent Night Blade, and behind him, another blade was hanging upside down, floating.

Following? Floating?

What's this...?

"It really is him, it really is that blade!" Zhang Feng praised with admiration in his eyes.

When the Dawn Blade was being upgraded, the sky phenomenon appeared over the eastern suburbs, and everyone stationed at the school was aware of it.

"Morning," Lu Ran approached with steady steps.

However, only Tian Tian called him "Master," joyfully welcoming Lu Ran.

Team leader Zhang Feng, Chang Ying, and Deng Yutang were all staring in awe at the Dawn Blade.

"Be careful, it's very sharp," Lu Ran looked at Deng Yutang, "It would be bad if you got hurt, I wouldn't know how to explain to your sister."

"Ah." Deng Yutang was a bit embarrassed, quickly withdrawing his hand before it touched the blade's edge.

The more beautiful things are, indeed, the more deadly.

Currently, the Dawn Blade was not in battle mode and was not radiating rosy clouds.

But it was, after all, a Divine Weapon!

With its unique divinity, and under the illumination of the red sun, it shimmered with a strange luster, shining brilliantly.

"It really did!" Chang Ying closely examined the Dawn Blade, then looked back at Lu Ran.

Like Tian Tian, admiration filled the depths of her eyes.

In the past, Lu Ran might have felt uncomfortable or thrown in a joke to shift everyone's attention.

But now, Lu Ran was clear about what he wanted.

Loyal companions, devout believers!

Thus, Lu Ran did not disrupt the emotions spreading among his teammates.

"Right!" Deng Yutang suddenly spoke, "Brother Lu, the sky phenomenon you caused must have attracted quite a few Evil Demons?"

You weren't hurt, right?"

Lu Ran shook his head, "Sister Yuxiang came to help me, truly a Jiang Realm Great Power, so fierce!

She flung sixteen wind blades, tearing out streams of blood, weaving layer upon layer of nets.

So strong it's almost shameless..."

While he said he wouldn't throw in jokes, a person's character is indeed hard to change.

Deng Yutang blurted out, "I'll pass on these exact words to her."

Lu Ran: "..."

Chang Ying pursed her lips, "You're supposed to be a devout Believer, why are you snitching~"

Deng Yutang: ???

"Lu Ran, you might want to seriously consider the Divine Weapon Domain," Zhang Feng spoke opportunistically.

"Hmm." Lu Ran regained his composure, reaching towards his right.

The Dawn Blade moved with his will, its handle gently falling into his palm.

"Divine Weapon Domain." Lu Ran muttered to himself in his heart.

He didn't know what the Dawn Blade's Divine Weapon Domain would be.

If it was a completely new Divine Weapon Domain, that was one thing.

But if it overlapped with the domain of some deity/Evil Demon's weapon...

That would require a fight.

A thought crossed Lu Ran's mind, and he looked up distantly at the sky:

"Perhaps, your Divine Weapon Domain is also related to the rosy clouds?"

"Perhaps." The Dawn Blade responded softly.

Lu Ran lifted the blade, peering through its ice-clear body at the distant rosy clouds, "What form will it take, I wonder?"

The group watched Lu Ran silently, not daring to disturb his train of thought.

It must be mentioned that with the Divine Weapon in hand, Lu Ran was tinged with a bit of "divinity."

Much like Deng Yuxiang who had stood at the Wu Lie Bridge Head in days past.

At this moment, merely standing there, Lu Ran was enough to cause inner trembling secretly.

No one knew how long it had been before Lu Ran broke the silence, "Tonight, were you all guarding the school gate?"

"Yep," Tian Tian responded, "Team Leader Zhang led us in defeating many Evil Demons."

"Ha, our share can't be low this time," Lu Ran said with a laugh.

Normally, when Night of Ghosts occurs, students should take refuge in shelters.

However, this situation was special, as the Straw Demon Clan was comparatively weak, and Squad 98 was fortunate enough to participate throughout.

Tian Tian looked at Zhang Feng hopefully, "Can Lu Ran get full marks?"

Zhang Feng just smiled.

He didn't dare to declare how many points Lu Ran would ultimately receive.

Although Zhang Feng didn't see how Lu Ran patrolled, he was certain that this night Lu Ran had made significant contributions to Rain Alley City.

So for this semester's final exam...

Full marks would probably be hard for Lu Ran to escape?

Lu Ran was also quite anticipatory, turning his gaze toward Zhang Feng.

"I can't decide that." Zhang Feng chuckled, "But your performance tonight will be reported in detail and truthfully."

Lu Ran nodded silently, that was enough.

Speaking of which, this night he had seen quite a lot of Moon Gazers, and he had helped quite a few people.

When they reported the situation, they ought to put in a good word for him, right?

Everyone stayed guarding the gate until about eight o'clock, and then under the organization of the Moon Gazers, they switched shifts collectively and went to rest on the fourth floor.

Due to the special events of the last night, the students were instructed to stay in the shelters for an additional day.

Naturally, everyone had no objections.

Lu Ran, tired both physically and mentally, sent a text message to his family to report his safety, then fell into a deep sleep.

This sleep lasted until dusk.

Lu Ran was awakened by hunger.

The old lady's sugar cakes could only suffice for one meal, clearly not for an entire day...

As he groggily woke up, he picked up his phone to check the time but saw several missed calls and many messages.

Little Yuanxi?

His sister's series of text messages seemed to carry her tone, making Lu Ran smile.

"Did you get safely through the fifteenth? Congratulations~"

"When do you plan to come home for the New Year?"

"My cold-hearted brother, speak up!"

"You didn't fall asleep again, did you?"

"Really, what seventeen or eighteen-year-old guy needs to catch up on sleep after staying up all night... Can you handle it?"

"Hey! I just saw that Rain Alley City experienced another Night of Ghosts?"

"Why won't you answer the phone?"

"Jerk, I'm ignoring you."

"Hmph

Lu Ran looked at the string of messages on his phone; he hesitated for a moment but still made a call back.

After a while, from the other end of the phone, a groggy voice came: "Huh?"

Lu Ran asked in confusion, "What are you doing?"

"Sleeping..." Qiao Yuansi's voice was soft and sweet, sounding quite amusing.

Lu Ran: "..."

And you were this worried about me?

He paused for a moment, still shaking his head with a smile: "Alright, then I'll call you tomorrow."

Qiao Yuansi: "Hmm, okay... Wait, who are you?"

Lu Ran couldn't help but say, "I'm your brother!"

"Oh, my brother... Eh? My brother!" Qiao Yuansi suddenly sounded much more animated.

Lu Ran hummed: "Sleep then, we'll talk tomorrow."

"I'm awake, I'm awake!" Qiao Yuansi hurriedly said, "Are you hurt?"

Hearing his sister's concerned voice, warmth filled Lu Ran's heart, and his voice softened quite a bit:

"The night the Barbaric Woman invaded, I fought them off, not to mention the Straw Demon Clan?"

"Cut~ Showing off," Qiao Yuansi muttered under her breath, "You never tell me anything, always making me find out on my own."

Lu Ran: "Isn't that because I didn't want you to worry?"

Qiao Yuansi suddenly became displeased: "When you went to Qiantang River Province, went to Bamboo Sea Demon Cave for a vacation without telling me, was that also because you didn't want me to worry?"

Lu Ran was momentarily stunned, then immediately said, "Don't wrong me! Didn't I look for you?"

"Huh?" Qiao Yuansi also sounded unsure, "When did you look for me?"

Wasn't it after you came back that we got in touch?"

Lu Ran paused.

Oh, right!

Before going to Bamboo Sea, didn't I call Si Xianxian?

Hmm... Not important!

Qiao Yuansi pouted, "You didn't look for me."

Lu Ran got up and walked toward the outside, speaking softly, "Do you want a burger?"

"Want... um." Qiao Yuansi blurted out, then held her tongue, seemingly not ready to calm down so quickly.

Lu Ran continued, "Two?"

In the end, Qiao Yuansi couldn't resist, "Yes, yes~"

"Hehe." Lu Ran chuckled lightly, stepping down the stairs, his mind filled with the charming and lovely image of his sister.

"So when are you coming back?"

"What's the rush, it's still half a month till New Year's Eve."

"But I want to eat now!"

Hearing this, Lu Ran was quite helpless: "Fine, wait at home, I'll order it right away... no, wait, the city is under lockdown now."

Qiao Yuansi discontentedly said: "Is this how you charm girls?"

My foolish brother, how will you ever catch up to Sister Ruyi like this?"

Lu Ran pushed open the school building door, a cold wind hitting him, just like his sister's current words.

He stepped onto the playground, humming, "Sister Ruyi? Your dear sister ran off with our family's Cold Night Sword!

After the New Year, I plan to report it to the police."

"Haha~" Qiao Yuansi laughed tenderly, "You want the Divine People Bureau to help you bring her back to Rain Alley?"

Lu Ran: "..."

Qiao Yuansi muttered softly, "Such a scheming man."

Lu Ran: ?

As they talked, Lu Ran crossed the playground and stopped in front of the swing set.

The setting sun, a single shadow, an empty swing.

The swing with only chains and no wooden seat was where Lu Ran used to sit.

The one with the old wooden seat was where she had sat.

Qiao Yuansi's eyes flickered: "You can come to Beijing a few days late, provided that you go to Yumen Pass."

Yumen Pass?

The place where Third-class God-Jade Token resides and where Jiang Ruyi underwent her ordeal.

"Screech~"

The swing's chains shook, rubbing together with an ear-piercing noise.

Lu Ran looked at the two swings but still chose to sit in his usual spot.

"Bro?"

"Never mind." Lu Ran looked at the empty wooden seat beside him.

"You really! It's just a few hours flight, isn't it?"

"Don't bother her," Lu Ran murmured lowly.

Qiao Yuansi was also quite helpless: "It's almost New Year, meeting during the holidays, what's there to bother about?"

"Screech~"

A cold wind blew, carrying frost and snow.

The wooden seat beside him gently swayed back and forth.

As if an old friend had arrived.

Lu Ran watched the wooden seat, his gaze slightly raised, sketching out a faint silhouette in his mind:

"I'm afraid if I go there, she won't be able to calm her heart, and she'll want to come back."

Qiao Yuansi, holding the phone, opened her small mouth slightly.

After a long while, her face broke into a sweet smile: "Wow, how sweet!

Say more, say more, I want to keep listening~"

"Beep... beep... beep..."

Chapter 189: Yiren's Invitation

On the seventeenth day of the lunar calendar, at dawn, Lu Ran returned home.

His first act was to worship at the shrine with due reverence,

"Lord Immortal Goat, your disciple has returned."

The sonorous voice echoed in his mind, "With the Divine Weapon by your side, good."

The tone of the deity carried unmistakable approval.

"I hope Lord Immortal Goat will forgive me," Lu Ran grasped the Divine Weapon floating beside him, "the Dawn Blade has quite the divine nature and is not particularly talkative."

"It matters not," the White Sheep Jade Carving spoke gravely, "as long as it is loyal to you, there is no need for it to greet me."

Lu Ran nodded earnestly, "My spirit is linked with the Dawn Blade, our thoughts are one.

I have also specifically instructed it not to reveal our little secrets."

"Hmm," the White Sheep Jade Carving responded in a low voice, holding no great concern in its heart.

An Artifact Spirit must merge with the will of its master to take shape.

In such a case, their objectives, philosophy of existence, and so on, would naturally stem from the same source.

The sense of belonging to the Divine Weapon would of course be infinitely magnified.

Unless Lu Ran underwent a drastic change in character, a complete transformation, it was impossible for the Divine Weapon to abandon its master.

"Go," Lu Ran held the hilt and gave it a gentle push forward.

The Dawn Blade drifted slowly, following Lu Ran's thoughts, to the master bedroom, returning to hang in its familiar place.

"Meow?"

The little tabby cat looked up curiously at the floating blade.

It even stood on its hind legs, its paws playfully reaching up in a symbolic attempt to catch it.

The conflicting desire to touch yet fear of doing so was quite amusing.

"Oh right, Lord Immortal Goat," continued Lu Ran, "can the Straw Demon's Evil Sculpture be activated now?"

"It can, but the Straw Demon Clan is of little help to you."

"Hmm, I was just wondering," Lu Ran mused, gently nodding.

Indeed, the Straw Demon Clan could not offer much to him.

The fearsome Evil Technique·Straw Needle that cast straw, the Evil Technique·Straw Shield that wove shields.

The terrifying Evil Technique·Rice Spike Eyes, the retreating Evil Technique·Straw Substitute,

The aiding flight of Evil Technique·Withered Grass Clothing, and the disappearing act of Evil Technique·Straw Dance...

Of the entire six Evil Techniques, only Rice Spike Eyes were somewhat usable, compatible with Lu Ran's Divine Technique-Immortal Pupil, allowing for a smoothly executed small combo.

First using Rice Spike Eyes to instill fear, then the Immortal Pupil to magnify it.

Beyond that, the rest of the Evil Techniques were useless.

It's worth mentioning that "Straw Substitute" seemed powerful, but that was relative to Evil Demons,

The Straw Demon Clan was made of pure energy!

After being stabbed, it could leave behind a shell and retreat, as if it gained a brand new body.

Essentially, it was exchanging energy for wounds.

Lu Ran, however, had a body of flesh and blood!

If Lu Ran were stabbed, he too could leave behind a shell,

But the wounds on his retreating body would not heal.

In other words, the greatest effect of Evil Technique-Straw Substitute could not be realized by the Human Clan.

Lu Ran could only use this technique as a deception.

The White Sheep Jade Carving spoke, "Currently, you have activated four Evil Sculptures, with a sufficiency of Evil Techniques.

Now, activating another Evil Sculpture requires careful selection, rather than an obsession with quantity."

"Yes!" Lu Ran nodded decisively.

Since ascending to the River Realm, he could activate five more Evil Demon Sculptures.

But for now, Lu Ran only opened one Night Charm Sculpture, leaving four slots remaining.

Among these four, Yan Zhi is certainly meant to take one!

Lu Ran was indeed craving the Evil Techniques of the Yan Zhi Clan!

Just speaking of Evil Technique·Paper Mache, when combined with the Forget Spring Sect's Divine Technique·Body of Sin (scapegoat), Lu Ran could really work wonders.

This combination could even become the core technique in Lu Ran's future battles!

Not only saving lives but also wreaking havoc on others...

The problem was, the Demon Cave where the Yan Zhi Clan resided was not open to the public.

"Annoying," Lu Ran felt rather helpless.

Li Rouyin from the Forget Spring Believers didn't have a copper coin string of Yan Zhi either.

Considering this, aside from encountering the special event, Night of Ghosts, it seemed Lu Ran had no other channels for acquisition?

Fortunately, paper mache and scapegoat were both techniques suitable at the River Realm·Third Rank.

Currently, Lu Ran still had some time to prepare.

Some Evil Sculptures lacked Dead Souls, while others were already fully prepared—the Barbaric Woman Clan!

Undoubtedly, the Barbaric Woman was extremely strong, and her Evil Techniques were utterly terrifying.

Wherever the great axe passed, the land split apart, sandstorm roiled, its might formidable!

Lord Immortal Goat did agree for Lu Ran to activate the sculpture of this clan,

But it also made clear, hoping Lu Ran would treat the Barbaric Woman as a servant, not to indulge in Barbaric Evil Techniques.

The Barbaric Clan was too reckless!

Their domineering Evil Techniques gave them the capital to be so.

The core philosophy behind Lord Immortal Goat's training of Lu Ran was for him to survive better, not to become a brute.

"Lord Immortal Goat, your disciple encountered the Prison Sky Clan last night,"

Lu Ran's thoughts grew keener as he continued, "Isn't their Evil Technique well-suited to my battle style?"

Lord Immortal Sheep agreed, "A few more arms would indeed offer you additional protection."

Upon hearing this encouraging response, Lu Ran began to sell the idea vigorously, "That's right, I can have these arms hold the great axes of the Barbaric Woman in the future.

Moreover, the Prison Sky Clan can use chains to burn and extract energy from living enemies.

Even better than the Divine Power Pearl!"

The White Sheep Jade Carving commented dispassionately, "In half a year, you have only managed to capture the soul of one Prison Sky Demon."

Lu Ran gave a muted response,

Da Xia Country had sealed off many Demon Caves of powerful Evil Demons to avoid unnecessary casualties.

The Prison Sky Demon's Demon Cave was, of course, among them.

"Lord Immortal Sheep," Lu Ran pondered for a moment before asking cautiously, "You and Lord Wang Quan are old acquaintances.

Do you think, if I were to ask Lord Wang Quan for it, she would give it to us?"

White Sheep Jade Carving fell silent,

Now it was the deity's turn to become wordless.

Lu Ran's question was essentially asking Lord Immortal Goat: If I exploit your face, would Lord Wang Quan honor it...

"Lord Immortal Sheep?"

"His deity, not mine," suddenly, the voice transmission fell.

"What?" Lu Ran didn't fully understand.

The White Sheep Jade Carving conveyed, "The favors you've received from Wang Quan, one day, you must repay."

Lu Ran silently rolled up his sleeve, looking at the Magic Artifact·Rebirth Coin on his wrist.

She's given me quite a lot, hasn't she?

Including the Night Charm Evil Sculpture in the garden, reaching River Realm·Fourth Rank was also due to the strong support of Lord Wang Quan.

Although Wang Quan didn't know Lu Ran was cultivating Evil Sculpture, thinking he just liked eating Dead Souls,

Objectively, Lu Ran had received immense help from the Wang Quan Sect.

So... does being heavily in debt mean one feels no burden?

White Sheep Jade Carving spoke, "As for how to proceed, consider it yourself."

Lu Ran stated gravely, "I will repay what should be repaid, without delaying my growth."

The divine voice transmission descended, with just a brief word, yet it carried a hint of approval:

"Good!"

Only then did Lu Ran realize, was Lord Immortal Goat testing him?

At heart, Lord Immortal Goat actually agreed with this decision.

"Your disciple understands," Lu Ran placed his palms together, bowed to the small shrine, and headed for the bathroom.

He took a thorough bath with the little tabby cat, changed into fresh clothes, and began a major cleaning of the house.

While cleaning, Lu Ran couldn't help but think of the Evil Demon-Barbaric Woman.

If he could summon one...

Lu Ran could leisurely sit on the couch, watching the Barbaric Woman sweep the floor, wipe the tables, and change the cat litter.

Unfortunately, only in the River Realm could he create and control minion Evil Demons.

Currently, the Barbaric Woman sculpture should be in the early stages of the River Realm.

According to Lord Immortal Sheep, Lu Ran had only five activation slots in the River Realm, having already opened a Night Charm sculpture.

The road of the River Realm was naturally long.

Throughout his growth, Lu Ran might encounter new issues.

The most correct action would be to preserve the sculpture slots, continuously adjusting based on his development.

Or wait until there were enough dead souls in the Barbaric Clan to ascend to the River Realm, then activate it in one fell swoop.

The Barbaric Clan's Evil Techniques were indeed powerful, but for Lu Ran, they were not essential.

And once a sculpture was activated, to close it again would require a great deal of effort from Lord Immortal Goat, which was something Lu Ran did not want to see.

Since his deity had spoken thus, there was not much Lu Ran could say.

After the thorough cleaning, Lu Ran returned to his small bedroom, collapsing onto his little bed.

Just as he was drifting off to sleep, his phone suddenly buzzed.

Curious, Lu Ran picked up the phone and saw it was his sister's call.

"Little Yuanxi?"

"Bro!" This time, Little Yuanxi's voice was full of energy, "When are you coming over?"

Lu Ran helplessly said, "The city won't lift the lockdown until the nineteenth of the lunar calendar, I can't even if I want to."

"Oh..." Qiao Yuansi dragged out the word, then asked, "Then what time will you arrive in Beijing on the nineteenth?"

But Lu Ran just laughed, "So eager for hamburgers?"

"I do want it, but that's not it." Qiao Yuansi explained, "My teammates heard you were coming to Beijing and want to invite you out."

Lu Ran hesitated for a moment before declining, "Let's not. I'm coming home to spend time with you and Mom for the New Year, no need to go out."

Qiao Yuansi quickly said, "It's not 'going out to play', but heading to a Demon Cave."

"Oh? With the New Year almost upon us, your school is still assigning tasks?"

Qiao Yuansi answered, "No tasks, it's Sister Yiren who wants to go to a special Demon Cave to strengthen herself."

"A special Demon Cave?" Lu Ran's interest piqued, "How special are we talking?"

Qiao Yuansi's voice lowered, laced with mystery, "You know, the ones that aren't open to the public on regular days~"

Lu Ran: ???

Not open to the public?

How can you go in?

Just because you're from Beijing... well, fine, forget I said anything.

In this world, where is fairness to be found!

Lu Ran pursed his lips but in just a few seconds, his skepticism turned into excitement!

Is there a chance, are you heading to the Prison Sky Demon Cave?

Lu Ran immediately asked, "Which Demon Cave do you plan to go to for strengthening? Also, with the New Year close at hand, will there be enough time?"

Qiao Yuansi responded, "You think it's an ordinary Demon Cave, to stay for ten or twenty days?"

If Sister Yiren can take us in, and we stay for a week, that'd be great already."

Lu Ran spoke, "I get it... but which Demon Cave is it?"

"Hehe~" Qiao Yuansi teased with a flirtatious laugh, "Why don't you guess, big brother?"

"What's there to guess, just tell me!" Lu Ran feigned a threatening tone, "If it's too dangerous, I might not go."

Qiao Yuansi replied, "You've already slain your way through an army of Barbaric Women, is there anywhere you'd fear to tread?"

Lu Ran's eyes lit up, "The Barbaric Woman's Demon Cave?"

Qiao Yuansi retorted, "That's not it~"

"Cough, cough." Lu Ran was genuinely choked up, nearly out of breath.

Qiao Yuansi giggled, "There, there, my impatient brother~"

I'll tell you, it's the Night Charm Demon Cave!"

Lu Ran "thump" sat straight up.

He hadn't expected his heart to flutter twice within just a few sentences!

Night Charm,

My Night Charm...

You are already at River Realm-Fourth Rank.

If you reach the River Realm, won't I be able to summon you?

Then, I can finally unveil your black shroud, to gaze upon your mysterious visage...

"Do you want to come, big brother?" Qiao Yuansi waited a moment, seeing no response from Lu Ran, she added, "Sister Yiren rarely makes requests, I don't want to refuse her.

Don't worry, we'll hire many soldiers as bodyguards."

Lu Ran thought it over and said, "It's still too dangerous, how about I accompany your Sister Yiren instead, and you stay put?"

Qiao Yuansi: ???

Chapter 190: Dust Shadow Heavenly Pride

December 19, at the west station of Beijing.

The crowd was bustling at the exit, and among them was a young man in black, silently moving forward with a pair of swords wrapped in cloth.

"Ah." Lu Ran sighed inwardly.

A mere hour's journey, yet it felt like he had been transported to a different world.

From the desolate rain-drenched alleys to the bustling city of Beijing.

"Brother!" A pleasant female voice called out from afar.

Lu Ran turned and his eyes swept across the crowd, landing on a delicate face.

Just like Lu Ran, many turned to look.

The young girl stood gracefully, charming, and beaming like a flower, as if she existed on a different plane from the other travelers.

She seemed accustomed to being the center of attention, her eyes fixed on Lu Ran as she waved energetically.

"Mm." Lu Ran also smiled, hastening his steps.

Beautiful things really do soothe the body and mind.

"My reserved brother, finally willing to see me!"

Qiao Yuansi stepped forward and grabbed Lu Ran's arm.

Lu Ran: "..."

He hadn't expected that one day he would be described as "reserved."

"Did you bring me something delicious?" Qiao Yuansi looked up at Lu Ran's profile.

As she spoke, her hands reached for the bulging pockets of Lu Ran's coat.

Sure enough, there were treats!

Lu Ran: "It's cold."

"No worries!" Qiao Yuansi was thrilled, pulling a small box out of Lu Ran's pocket.

A hamburger from the small town's rainy alleys had the fortune to enter the belly of Beijing's young miss, well... except for the lettuce.

From the window of a black sedan parked on the street, Guan Yiren looked out at the siblings approaching.

Rarely did the truly reserved Sword One Believer show a faint smile.

The usual Qiao Yuansi was cheerful and lively, but Guan Yiren could tell that her joy was heartfelt at the moment.

"Let me go greet them." Niu Zhengzheng who was sitting in the passenger seat turned and looked towards the back seat.

Guan Yiren said nothing but continued to watch through the window, gently nodding.

Niu Zhengzheng was used to the attitude of his teammates.

As he opened the door and got out, on the driver's seat, a young man looked outside: "That is Lu Ran."

Guan Yiren silently ignored him.

The young man eyed the black-clad youth approaching the car, but Niu Zhengzheng, being broad and tall, obstructed the view even more.

"Ran bro, how come you've lost even more weight?" Niu Zhengzheng laughed heartily.

His large hands rested on Lu Ran's shoulders, lightly squeezing, as if measuring their thickness.

Lu Ran looked up at the towering strongman and remarked, "You've gotten even sturdier, haven't you?"

Qiao Yuansi's cheeks puffed up as she mumbled, "Must be the bullhead he ate."

Lu Ran turned to his sister and replied with a smile, "You're not far behind."

In just a short walk, Qiao Yuansi's hamburger box was already empty, only some fried chicken fillet crumbs remaining.

Qiao Yuansi looked at Lu Ran unhappily.

"Ah!" She gestured for Lu Ran to open his mouth while she picked up the crumbs with her fingers and aimed for his mouth.

Lu Ran: "..."

"I heard from Yuansi that you've reached River Realm," Niu Zhengzheng looked admiringly at Lu Ran.

His heart had completely changed.

Since their last training session together, Niu Zhengzheng no longer regarded Lu Ran as merely an Immortal Sheep Believer.

But rather with a few words added: The Immortal Sheep Believer who refused the Yan Zhi.

With the "Yan Zhi" prefix, Lu Ran's potential and strength became clearer.

"Aren't you too?" Lu Ran casually commented, eating the crumbs beneath his sister's curved smiling eyes.

These past few days, Lu Ran had been texting frequently with his sister.

He knew that among the team of three, both Guan Yiren and Niu Zhengzheng had advanced to River Realm.

The two, being First-class God and Second-class God Believers, indeed possessed extraordinary talents.

Within the team, only Little Yuanxi, a Third-class God Believer, remained at Stream Realm-Fifth Rank.

Given such a rank, Lu Ran was even more reluctant for her to enter the Night Charm Demon Cave.

Unfortunately, as his sister was the team leader and the three formed a team, she couldn't leave the group.

"Get in the car!" Qiao Yuansi urged, "We'll talk on the way."

The tall and burly Niu Zhengzheng naturally took the front passenger seat.

Lu Ran casually opened the rear door and saw Guan Yiren already seated inside.

In this cold December, Beijing was also covered in snow.

However, the Sword One Believer, dressed in a white ancient-style long dress, seemed quite resistant to the cold...

"Morning." Lu Ran greeted.

Guan Yiren didn't move from her seat, looking up at Lu Ran: "Long time no see."

"Yo?" Qiao Yuansi clicked her tongue in surprise, looking at Sword One Believer, "Sister Yiren said four words!"

Unable to help, Guan Yiren gave Qiao Yuansi a little smile.

Sword One Believer might strive to be closer to their own god but, when facing close ones, they still showed some expression.

"Slam."

Qiao Yuansi closed the car door and tugged Lu Ran around the rear of the car: "I want to sit by the window."

"Stop fooling around." Lu Ran opened the door and unceremoniously pushed Little Yuanxi inside.

"Hey?" Qiao Yuansi quickly ducked and plopped down onto the rear seat, tumbling into Guan Yiren's embrace.

She pouted, looking back at Lu Ran: "I'm this tiny, but you're still quite strong."

Lu Ran: ?????

What does that even mean!

"Ha ha ha ha!" Niu Zhengzheng burst into laughter, "Ran bro really needs to eat more, haha!"

Lu Ran felt uncomfortable and settled into the car.

Truly, his cultivation often made him neglect his sleep and food.

On the contrary, each time he entered the Demon Cave for training, he ate quite a lot and slept more regularly at the stone inn.

"Um." Qiao Yuansi shifted slightly but didn't get up, comfortably leaning into Guan Yiren's embrace.

Guan Yiren looked at the mischievous girl with some helplessness.

One hand rested on Qiao Yuansi's cheek, somewhat like a rebuke, she pinched Little Yuanxi's earlobe gently.

"By the way." Qiao Yuansi covered her ear, "This brother's name is Xiao Yusong, he's Sister Yiren's...um."

"Childhood friend." The young man named Xiao Yusong cut in, "Grew up in the same compound."

Lu Ran observed the young man through the rearview mirror.

He appeared to be in his early twenties, with medium-length hair, and had quite an artistic vibe.

Qiao Yuansi continued, "Hearing that Sister Yiren is going to the Night Charm Demon Cave, he volunteered to protect us."

"Nice to meet you." Lu Ran spoke politely.

Xiao Yusong looked up at the rearview mirror, locking eyes with Lu Ran: "I've heard much about you."

"Kind of you to say." Lu Ran nodded lightly.

Xiao Yusong scrutinized Lu Ran, his gaze unabashed.

The silence stretched within the car, and after about seven or eight seconds, Xiao Yusong suddenly spoke: "Nice swords."

Lu Ran was slightly surprised.

His twin swords, still wrapped in cloth, hadn't been shown to anyone.

Lu Ran said, "They were gifts from my father."

Unexpectedly, Xiao Yusong spoke, "I meant you."

Niu Zhengzheng, scratching his head, turned to look at Lu Ran: "I knew something was off, but now that Xiao bro mentioned it... it does seem true?"

Guan Yiren toyed with Little Yuanxi's earlobe, turning slightly to look at Lu Ran.

After several months apart, Lu Ran's aura had indeed undergone a dramatic transformation.

For the Believer community, such changes were common.

Everyone was continually improving, and advances in strength and realm naturally manifested in a person's spirit.

"Have I turned into a sword?" Qiao Yuansi didn't feel quite the same.

Since seeing Lu Ran, he was still the brother she remembered.

Always sharp-tongued, with no lessening in his indulgence towards her.

"Are you a North Wind Believer?" Lu Ran inquired.

"I've had no such fortune." Xiao Yusong smiled and shook his head, his demeanor quite carefree.

Qiao Yuansi quickly added, "Xiao bro is a legendary figure! On the Worship God Platform, he managed to attract the attention of the First-class God-Martial Artist!"

"Oh?" Lu Ran understood his sister's point, "Didn't you join the Martial Artist afterward?"

Xiao Yusong shook his head: "I am a Dust Shadow Believer."

Lu Ran was taken aback, what had he just heard?

Eight-class God-Dust Shadow?

Damn, this guy's a rare find?

Dust Shadow was a plant-type god, appearing as a massive gray-black flower.

On the flower, energy occasionally flowed, revealing shadows of the mundane world.

It could be mountains and rivers, bustling cities,

celestial bodies, or mundanities such as alleyways and houses.

Thus, people also called it "Dust Shadow Flower."

As an Eight-class God, Dust Shadow dared to compete with a First-class God for a Believer?

The only possibility was: Perfect fit!

It's worth mentioning that although Dust Shadow ranked eighth, its Divine Technique was indeed top-notch!

Regardless, if you are a First-class God Believer or a Second-class God Believer, in terms of value to Da Xia Country, you really can't compare to a Dust Shadow Believer.

Because a powerful Dust Shadow Believer could open a teleportation array!

Such Divine Technique had transcended the usual scope of strength and weakness, moving instead into a realm of "strategic value."

Just like the Seventh-class God, Lietian, Dust Shadow's low ranking was for a specific reason.

At its core, the reason was the scarcity of disciples in the Dust Shadow sect.

Whether it's that the Human Clan's physique wasn't suited to Dust Shadow Believers, or if Dust Shadow itself had high standards for disciples, was unknown.

Either way, the Dust Shadow sect suffered from a dearth of talent.

Moreover, the god Dust Shadow itself preferred a more neutral position, liking the role of an "Observer."

This also led to an even bigger problem:

Indeed, the disciples of Dust Shadow sect possessed incredible skills, but only a minority served Da Xia.

Most disciples, taken by their god into different paths, ended up being "human cameras."

Pretty... well, very much like minstrels.

"Yuansi said you volunteered to protect us," Lu Ran asked, "you don't mind joining worldly affairs?"

Xiao Yusong shrugged his shoulders, his nonchalance as charming as ever.

Worthy of the man who rejected a First-class God to "marry down" to an Eighth-class God.

He truly had some uniqueness.

Lu Ran also smiled: "If you're willing to partake in worldly conflicts, then you are a treasure of Da Xia.

Don't bother protecting us; let me protect you."

Upon hearing this, Xiao Yusong couldn't help but make a weird face.

Even though he knew about Lu Ran, he still couldn't help but chuckle silently.

"Brother, be a bit humble!" Qiao Yuansi poked Lu Ran's shoulder, "Xiao bro is not just unconcerned about joining worldly affairs, he also participated in 'Heavenly Pride'!

By the way, bro, do you know about the Heavenly Pride show?"

This time, it was Lu Ran's turn to wear a puzzled look.

Just yesterday afternoon, Deng Yuxiang had called, saying that 'Heavenly Pride' had agreed to Lu Ran's participation.

She had also laughed, saying that Lu Ran's Divine Weapon - Rosy Clouds Blade had earned him quite a few points.

Lu Ran nodded: "I've heard a bit about it."

"Uh?" Qiao Yuansi was at a loss for words, "You already know?"

Lu Ran: "My teammate's sister, representing Wu Lie River University, participated in the beta."

"So you know how prestigious it is, and you still want to protect others!"

During the conversation, Qiao Yuansi sighed deeply: "Those who can participate are indeed the best of Da Xia's young generation."

Lu Ran looked at Qiao Yuansi's admiring expression and couldn't help but smile:

"Why don't you ask if I'm participating?"

"You?" Qiao Yuansi looked at Lu Ran, "No matter how skilled, you're only at River Realm First Rank!

Besides, you're still a high school student, without a university..."

As she spoke, Qiao Yuansi suddenly stopped.

Looking at Lu Ran's indulgent smile, she opened her mouth slightly: "You... ah?

You really are participating... ah?

Ah???"

...