

Old Gods 221

Chapter 221: Wronged Fairy

The next morning, at Rain Alley City station.

Outside the exit, Lu Ran stood beside a van, chatting leisurely with Deng and Chang.

"So you mean, every even-numbered month, you and Sergeant Jiang go on patrol?" Deng Yutang leaned against the van, his arms crossed in front of him.

"Yep," Lu Ran nodded, "you guys shouldn't have any problems, right?"

"Of course not!" Deng Yutang decisively nodded. "Besides, we also have Moon Gazer as the team leader from the River Realm!

Just focus on Heavenly Pride with Sergeant Jiang and don't worry about things here."

The invading Evil Demons mostly had strength between the Mist and Stream Realm, and even at this time, their overall strength had only risen to mostly Stream Realm.

And Deng, Tian, and Chang had already reached Stream Realm·Fifth Rank!

If they encountered higher-ranked Evil Demons from the River Realm, the Moon Gazers would naturally request support from the patrol team.

"Ah..." A sigh came from beside him.

Compared to the spirited Deng Yutang, Chang Ying felt a sense of loss.

She squatted beside Lu Ran's feet, her hands cradling her cheeks, sighing deeply.

"What's wrong?" Lu Ran kicked the girl's shoe lightly.

Chang Ying pouted, "If only I were also at the River Realm, I could follow behind you and take pictures."

Lu Ran looked down at the girl, sighing internally.

For nearly forty years, Stream Realm·Fifth Rank had trapped many heroes.

Chang Ying, being a fourth-class Divine Believer, was quite talented, definitely more so than followers of the Six-class God·Bi Wu like Sun Zhengfang.

But the "sudden enlightenment" she needed was unpredictable.

"Try not to be so carefree every day," Lu Ran advised, "and seek your own insights."

"I am not carefree," Chang Ying retorted sulkily, "look how worried I am."

Lu Ran bent down and patted Chang Ying's head, "My sudden enlightenment was based on my feelings for my hometown..."

Chang Ying looked up at Lu Ran with wide eyes, listening intently to Master Ran's teachings.

Beside them, Deng Yutang also listened quietly with a serious expression.

On the van, Jiang Ruyi suddenly raised a finger to her lips, signaling Tian Tian beside her to be quiet.

Tian Tian instantly became more engrossed in what Lu Ran was saying.

After a long while, Lu Ran finished imparting his valuable experiences.

He added, "Everyone's growth experiences are different; my insights can be a reference for you but don't take them as the absolute truth.

You must walk your own path."

"Brother Lu," Deng Yutang spoke solemnly, clasping his fists in an ancient manner, "I've learned a lot!"

"Don't mention it," Lu Ran replied with a smile.

Lu Ran naturally hoped his friends would advance in rank quickly.

They were not only his friends but also his comrades.

As they shared more life-or-death experiences and their bonds deepened, they could potentially become his followers in the future.

"Thanks, Ran!" Chang Ying still squatted beside Lu Ran's legs, gently bumping against his leg with her shoulder.

"It might be the right answer," Tian Tian whispered softly.

"Hmm?" Jiang Ruyi glanced at the young girl beside her.

Tian Tian held Jiang Ruyi's hand, playing with the Goddess's slender, pale fingers:

"We do have many differences, but there's also one thing we share."

"Right." Jiang Ruyi nodded thoughtfully.

Indeed.

Everyone here was born in Rain Alley and still lived in Rain Alley.

Maybe those who had left all harbored a question: what are you still holding on for?

"We've reached the station, let's get off," Deng Yutang's voice came from outside the vehicle.

A train arrived, but only a few passengers alighted.

One particularly striking figure stood out completely from the other disembarking passengers.

First and foremost, people would notice the huge hammer she carried!

The long-handled war hammer was taller than a person, at least two meters long.

It was clearly made of black luminous stone, completely black with deep purple patterns on it, odd yet beautiful.

"Lu Ran!"

Her sweet face matched her sweet voice.

The gloomy Rain Alley City seemed to brighten up.

However, Lu Ran knew well what kind of fierce heart lurked beneath that beautiful exterior.

"Got a new weapon?" Lu Ran looked up slightly and greeted her.

"No, this is the one I lost at Black Grave Mound, the soldiers helped me find it!" Si Xianxian said cheerfully.

"Congratulations!" Lu Ran sincerely congratulated her.

Regaining what was lost was indeed a good omen!

Weapons, for some believers, were quite significant.

To give an example, if Lu Ran lost his Silent Night Blade and had to buy another black luminous stone blade to replace it, could it?

Certainly not!

Lu Ran had been with the Silent Night Blade for so long, investing a lot of effort in it and advancing toward becoming a Divine Weapon!

If the Silent Night Blade was lost, Lu Ran would be devastated...

"Thanks~" Si Xianxian smiled sweetly, clearly in a very good mood.

She didn't look at the three people outside the van but turned to peer inside through the open door.

Jiang Ruyi didn't put on airs, this being Lu Ran's friend after all.

She stepped down from the van, drawing admiring tsk-tsks from Si Xianxian.

"Tsk-tsk~" Si Xianxian's eyes shone as she examined the girl in a white dress, "Not bad, Lu Ran!

I told you, the person you've been thinking about all this time must be some divine being.

Now I see, I understand."

Lu Ran: "..."

Si Xianxian took a step forward and extended her hand: "Si Xianxian."

Jiang Ruyi, graceful and poised, shook hands with her: "Jiang Ruyi."

"Tsk~" Si Xianxian turned to Lu Ran, her lips curling slightly, "Her voice is also very pleasant!"

Lu Ran helplessly said, "Mind your manners, you're already judging her the moment you meet."

This arrogance was undisguised.

Jiang Ruyi joked, "If you upset me, we won't take you out to play."

"Hmm?" Si Xianxian looked at Jiang Ruyi, "You knew already?"

Jiang Ruyi nodded gently, "Lu Ran told me a lot."

Si Xianxian suddenly turned to Lu Ran, her eyebrows rising: "Spilling my secrets, huh?"

Her demeanor made Deng Yutang tense up and Chang Ying a bit uneasy.

Fierce Heavenly believers were notoriously infamous.

Moreover, they had teamed up with Si Xianxian before and had seen her explosive output and fierce temperament firsthand.

Yet Lu Ran seemed unaffected by any threat, smiling, "Aren't you trying to appease her? Go ahead."

Si Xianxian was slightly upset, "I didn't offend her, why appease?"

Lu Ran shrugged, "Trust yourself, you're bound to make a mistake; might as well get ahead of it."

Si Xianxian: ? ? ?

Jiang Ruyi chuckled and glanced at Lu Ran, whispering, "Let's talk in the van."

"Hmm..." Si Xianxian watched Jiang Ruyi's retreating figure as she boarded the van, her mind whirring.

Truly a divine and gentle beauty.

No wonder Lu Ran stayed chaste, not even willing to accompany me to an amusement park.

"What are you dawdling for, get on the van!" Lu Ran approached Si Xianxian.

Si Xianxian lowered her voice, whispering, "I have a feeling!"

"Hmm?"

"Wherever I want to go in the future, I'll be able to go~"

Lu Ran looked puzzled, "Why?"

Si Xianxian grinned, "I feel like she's easier to coax than you are.

Once I win her over, you'll just be a little minion taking orders~"

Lu Ran: "..."

"Hehe~" Si Xianxian patted Lu Ran's shoulder and stepped onto the van.

At that moment, her gaze towards Jiang Ruyi resembled someone looking at a plane ticket to anywhere in the country.

As a powerful martial artist, Jiang Ruyi naturally felt the intense gaze of the young girl.

Her expression became slightly awkward as she found a topic: "What realm of power is Sister Xian?"

"I'm not much older than you, just call me Xianxian," Si Xianxian casually placed the huge hammer on the floor.

Jiang Ruyi thought for a moment, then said, "Perhaps I should call you Sister Xian'er."

"That works too." Si Xianxian sat in the front row, looking back, "Following what Lu Ran calls me is also fine~"

"What realm are you at now?" Lu Ran sat down beside Si Xianxian, also curious.

Aside from him, no one else dared sit there.

Naturally, it was best for Lu Ran to be close, always keeping this explosive barrel under control.

"River Realm Third Rank," Si Xianxian replied offhandedly.

"Did you advance?"

"Advanced a while ago! Right after we returned from North Wind City."

Speaking, Si Xianxian looked at Lu Ran, "I owe you credit for that!"

Lu Ran raised an eyebrow.

Si Xianxian smiled, "Traveling made me feel happy! The moment I felt joyful, I advanced."

Lu Ran laughed outright, "For the sake of fun, you really can spin a yarn!"

From behind, Jiang Ruyi's voice carried forward, "Have you mastered the Divine Technique·Thousand Miles of Barren Land?"

Fierce Heavenly Divine Skill·Thousand Miles of Barren Land: Fierce Heavenly believers can throw a blazing hammer into the sky.

Targets illuminated by its fiery glow would suffer continuous burns.

Once this technique advances to Jiang level, it becomes even more formidable!

The blazing hammer could even alter the environment of a region, drying up rivers and scorching the earth!

Undoubtedly, Si Xianxian was a powerful weapon!

And one with extremely high potential and capability.

Lu Ran grew even more eager to bring her into the Ran Sect.

This way, he would gain a powerful ally, and she could avoid the drastic mood swings of the gods.

Saving her from uttering things like "live one day less for each day lived."

From another perspective, Si Xianxian having such thoughts clearly understood what her end would be.

"I have," Si Xianxian responded immediately, "but this technique drains a lot of Divine Power and energy, and can't be used as a regular combat method.

Since mastering it, I've only used it once and not again."

Lu Ran nodded repeatedly, "Perfect, it'd allow you to vent all that pent-up energy, saving you from exploding at the slightest touch."

Si Xianxian immediately objected, her eyes fiery as she looked at Lu Ran.

From behind, Jiang Ruyi's voice followed up on what Lu Ran said, "Once we enter the buffer zone, we won't have to fear the dark environment or being ambushed by the Evil Dog Clan."

Si Xianxian: "..."

After a few seconds, Si Xianxian whispered, "Alright, then I'll use it."

Lu Ran was astonished, his eyes wide as he looked at Si Xianxian, "How badly do you want to go out and have fun?"

Si Xianxian said aggrievedly, "Shut up."

I'm just trying to make your girlfriend happy!

What are you nagging at...

Chapter 222: local tyrants?

In the west of Rain Alley City, under the feet of the crow.

Lu Ran had come to Evil Dog Demon Cave again, but this time, the military no longer provided a free instructor for the team.

Why?

Lu Ran, Jiang Ruyi, and Si Xianxian were River Realm First Rank, Second Rank, and Third Rank, respectively.

Who needed an instructor anymore?

Although the two, Jiang and Lu, were powerful, they were still high school students with free admission. As for Si Xianxian, who was tagging along, she had to pay for a ticket...

And it was while buying the tickets that a problem arose!

"Fierce Heavenly believer·Si Xianxian!" In the central building, the female soldier at the registration desk furrowed her brows as she looked at the student ID card.

"What's wrong?" Si Xianxian said with a displeased expression.

Why shout so loudly? What's wrong with being a Fierce Heavenly believer?

Clearly, Si Xianxian's sweet smile was almost exclusively for Lu Ran.

When dealing with others, this Lie Tian Girl did not wear a friendly face.

"Don't talk." Lu Ran immediately stepped forward, blocking Si Xianxian, "I'll handle this."

The female soldier looked at Lu Ran, "Si Xianxian is on the blacklist and is not allowed entry into the Demon Cave."

A statement that stunned both Lu Ran and Si Xianxian.

Right!

How could they have forgotten that?

Last time, Si Xianxian had roughed up Kou Yingquan here, slapping him several times.

The result was Si Xianxian being detained for five days and deported, banned from entering Evil Dog Village for six months.

"Blacklist?" Jiang Ruyi stepped forward.

"Back in the beginning of October, Sister Xian'er had a conflict with someone in Evil Dog Village," Lu Ran said distressedly, rubbing his forehead.

It's not even past the New Year yet; the six-month ban obviously hasn't expired.

"It's my fault, I forgot about this," Lu Ran looked at Si Xianxian, "why didn't you remember either?"

Si Xianxian snorted, "I've fought countless battles in my life!

How could I remember every little skirmish?"

"Hehe~" Jiang Ruyi couldn't help but snicker, finding Si Xianxian increasingly amusing the more she interacted with her.

She looked at the female soldier, asking, "Is there any way we could make an exception?"

"No, that's the rule," the female soldier responded with a matter-of-fact demeanor.

"Should we try another Demon Cave?" Jiang Ruyi looked at the others.

Chang Ying blatantly said, "But our training assignment is to get Evil Dog Demon Crystals... Uh."

She stopped mid-sentence and closed her mouth.

For Si Xianxian had suddenly turned and glanced at Chang Ying.

"Don't mess around, she's my friend," Lu Ran said sternly, speaking in a low voice.

"Ah, got it," Si Xianxian turned to look elsewhere.

Lu Ran took out his phone, "I'll check where the nearest Evil Dog Demon Cave is from here."

Suddenly, a male voice came from behind, "Your team's configuration isn't bad."

"Hm?" Lu Ran turned around to see a male soldier.

Judging from the insignia on his shoulder, he seemed to be someone in charge?

The male soldier looked Lu Ran up and down, clearly recognizing this notable person from Rain Alley City, "People on the blacklist are not allowed to do field training in Evil Dog Village.

But there's an exception."

Lu Ran, "What?"

Si Xianxian looked distressed and without waiting for an answer, said directly, "Labor reform."

Everyone: "..."

Lu Ran looked at the male soldier oddly, "What kind of labor reform?"

The patient soldier explained, "This Fierce Heavenly believer can go between the Fifth and Sixth Walls, in what's called the buffer zone.

Under the supervision of our soldiers, she needs to find Evil Dogs of River Realm Second Rank or lower.

Without harming them, she must drive the Evil Dog Clan towards the direction of the Fifth Wall until they are expelled from the buffer zone."

Lu Ran nodded thoughtfully.

It was essentially helping the military with their work!

Beginner believers also had a stable training environment under careful protection from the military.

Thinking this, Lu Ran asked, "What if we encounter Evil Dogs of River Realm Third Rank or higher?"

The male soldier, "You can eliminate them right there."

"This is some good work!" Lu Ran looked at Si Xianxian.

"What's good about it!" Si Xianxian looked at Lu Ran as if he were simple-minded, "It's so troublesome being cautious!

If I accidentally hurt an Evil Dog, all work for the day is wasted, and I might even get penalized!"

The male soldier nodded, "It seems this Fierce Heavenly believer knows the rules well."

Si Xianxian rolled her eyes, "Lu Ran, labor reform really isn't for me. You know my Divine Technique involves area attacks.

Killing, I'm capable! Not killing, too difficult..."

Lu Ran, "Listen to what you're saying."

Si Xianxian helplessly said, "Really! Those Mist Realm Evil Dogs, if I accidentally touch one, it will die!

What do you want me to do?"

Everyone: "..."

Lu Ran said irritably, "Don't we have each other?

I'll lure all the low-level Evil Dogs away.

Ruyi will pick out the River Realm Third Rank ones and freeze them on the spot, waiting for you to smash, alright?"

Si Xianxian looked surprised, looking at Lu Ran.

She, who had no friends before, was indeed full of habitual thoughts, only thinking of the days when she had to "labor reform" alone.

Hearing Lu Ran say that, her mind rapidly flashed through many thoughts.

Lu Ran wasn't just boasting—he indeed had such ability!

Si Xianxian felt a sweetness in her heart and whispered, "Is it really you two doing the labor reform, or is it me?"

"We're here to train our skills, aren't we!" Lu Ran said nonchalantly, happy to take on this challenge.

Now, having reached River Realm, slaughtering the carefully selected Evil Demons by the soldiers didn't seem to bring much honor.

Lu Ran looked at Jiang Ruyi, asking, "What do you think?"

Jiang Ruyi wasn't interested in slaughtering low-level Evil Demons.

Moreover, she didn't want to dampen Lu Ran's spirits.

Jiang Ruyi turned to the male soldier, asking, "Can we help our companion redeem herself?"

The male soldier nodded, "You can. While assisting the Fierce Heavenly believer with her labor reform, you are also helping our troops filter out Evil Demons.

Thus, for you, this counts as an upgraded training assignment.

As I mentioned earlier, your team configuration is excellent, qualified for this task; our side will also draft an evaluation report based on your performance.

After the training is finished, you can submit it to the school for extra Believer points."

Extra Believer points?

Lu Ran was greatly moved and immediately replied, "We'll do it!"

The male soldier smiled, "However, these three Stream Realm·Fifth Rank students are not allowed in the buffer zone."

"Yeah!" Tian Tian nodded repeatedly, "We won't cross the city walls."

Jiang and Lu were originally heading for the buffer zone.

In the team's plan, the two would accompany everyone to Fifth City, then split from the team to broaden their horizons and make a killing.

"Okay, Xiao Zhang!"

"Present!"

"You escort them into Evil Dog Village to the transfer point."

Lu Ran was curious, looking at the male soldier, "Transfer point?"

The male soldier nodded, "This Fierce Heavenly believer is not allowed to train."

Lu Ran, "So?"

"So, we'll transfer her directly to the labor reform area to prevent her from slaying Evil Demons on the way to the buffer zone."

Lu Ran hurriedly said, "Then we..."

"Lu Ran." The male soldier took Lu Ran's student ID, glanced at it deeply, then handed it back, "You all go to Fifth City together."

"Thank you!" Lu Ran suddenly realized that he had been given a lot of consideration throughout this series of events.

Within the bounds of Rain Alley City, he had indeed made some name for himself.

But mere renown was not enough.

Perhaps, he was gradually becoming the pride of the city, with expectations from many.

Thinking of this, Lu Ran sighed inwardly.

"What's wrong?" Suddenly, a soft voice came from beside him.

Lu Ran came out of his reverie and looked at Jiang Ruyi's concerned face, whispering:

"The concern of strangers comes too suddenly, it's a bit hard to adapt."

Jiang Ruyi also saw how the "upgraded training assignment" had fallen upon them.

She smiled softly, saying, "Tian Tian told me a lot, said you've done a lot for this city."

Lu Ran grinned.

That's true~

Especially on the night of the fifteenth of the twelfth lunar month, I patrolled the streets, turning my knives into Divine Weapons...

Jiang Ruyi walked forward with Lu Ran, jesting, "This kind of situation will likely become more frequent.

After you participate in Heavenly Pride, wherever you go in Rain Alley City, there will probably always be someone looking out for you."

Who in the world doesn't know of you?

Lu Ran pursed his lips, whispering softly, "That makes me feel a bit pressured.

You have to help me a lot on February fifteenth, I can't afford to lose face!"

"Don't worry!" Jiang Ruyi's voice was soft yet firm.

Unexpectedly, Lu Ran muttered, "Let's work hard, try to become a local tyrant of this broken city!

Then I won't have to pay for cat food, and I can just grab cans of SPAM~"

Jiang Ruyi glanced at Lu Ran with a smile, "Is that your ambition?"

"Then... let's first become the pride of Rain Alley City."

Lu Ran said quietly, adding mentally: And then become the totem of Rain Alley City!

A totem,

An object of reverence and worship, the guardian spirit of the people.

Hmm... that sounds somewhat rebellious, doesn't it?

Chapter 223: Restart as a person

Unsurprisingly, the so-called teleportation array was activated by a Dust Shadow Believer.

As a Other Shore Flower expanded and then contracted, the group traversed the lengthy journey, arriving directly at the fifth city.

"Fierce Heavenly believers, Si Xianxian."

On the empty training ground, three soldiers were facing the group, led by a middle-aged male soldier.

If nothing unexpected happened, he should be the coordinate for the teleportation.

The man had a square face, expressionless, scrutinizing the six young people with an inspecting gaze.

"It's me." Si Xianxian waved her hand.

The male soldier nodded, and his gaze also fixed on Lu Ran.

"Hello, may I know your surname?" Lu Ran took the initiative to say.

"No need for formalities, my surname is Zhou, Zhou Tian."

"Teacher Zhou," Lu Ran stepped forward, "This girl in the white dress and I want to help our companion with rehabilitation..."

After Lu Ran explained in detail, Zhou Tian nodded, "I know, I have just received the notification."

Lu Ran: "..."

Then why let me talk so much!

Do you enjoy hearing me speak that much?

Zhou Tian looked to the three behind him, "All of you are Stream Realm Fifth Rank, and you are not allowed to cross the fifth city."

This is the North Fifth City, and if you wish to seek experience, you can only go through the south gate."

"Yes!"

"Understood." They all responded one after another.

Zhou Tian gestured to the side, "This is your accompanying instructor."

From the side, a female soldier raised her hand, "You three, follow me later."

Due to the special situation of the squad, the three River Realm students were to go to the buffer zone to carry out a mission. To be on the safe side, Jiang Ruyi hired an instructor for Deng Tian Chang.

Zhou Tian then waved at Lu Ran and the others, "You three, follow me."

Jiang Lu Si promptly followed.

"Be careful!"

"We'll see you at the fifth city tonight!" From behind, Tian Tian and the others called out with concern.

Jiang Ruyi turned to look back, smiling and nodding at them.

Watching the trio leave, Chang Ying sighed deeply, "Ah..."

A Stream Realm·Fifth Rank, like an impassable gulf, completely split the squad apart.

According to their original plan, everyone was to experience together and travel for several days before briefly parting in this fifth city.

However, plans can't keep up with changes.

The "rehabilitation criminal" Si Xianxian directly took Jiang Lu away.

Lu Ran, by virtue of "face recognition," received great care from the military, skipping the journey and being directly teleported to the fifth city...

The female soldier, seeing the disappointed looks on the three, could imagine what the trio was going through.

Such situations were common in this realistic and cruel world.

The female soldier spoke, "You can level up at any time, own the Water Flow Armor, and then qualify to enter the buffer zone.

Rather than dwelling on sad and meaningless emotions, it's better to focus on the present and level up as soon as possible."

"Yes," Deng Yutang nodded heavily.

As a proud Red Scarf Believer, he didn't need much comfort or motivation.

"Thank you, Sister, for the advice," Tian Tian said softly, her gaze, however, continuously followed Jiang Ruyi's departing figure.

It's such a pity.

I could have spent several more days with Sister Ruyi.

It's all about strength, strength...

Chang Ying, leaning on her great ax, remained silent, her eyes filled with longing as she watched their figures grow further away.

Lu Ran and the others walked out of the training ground and hurried to the northern gate.

When they reached the gate, two soldiers transformed into crows.

"Flap flap flap~"

One crow flew up high into the sky, while the other landed on Lu Ran's shoulder.

The black crow spoke in a human voice, "The city wall is 2 kilometers from here; my companion and I will lead the way for you.

Let me remind you that, due to your special situation, you are absolutely not allowed to harm any Evil Demon during the journey.

If you violate this, your offense will be upgraded by one level."

"We got it, we got it," Si Xianxian waved her hand impatiently.

She had partaken in rehabilitation in other Demon Caves before.

It was these rules that made her offenses greater as she "rehabilitated"...

After being slapped in the face by reality several times, Si Xianxian stopped trying to change.

Tired of it,

Whatever, just let it be~

Zhou Tian suggested, "I recommend you speed up and avoid contact with the Evil Dog Clan as much as possible."

"Here," Lu Ran passed the Dawn Blade to Si Xianxian.

"What for?" Si Xianxian was curious but honestly gripped the handle of the sword.

She was habitually following Lu Ran's orders.

Lu Ran said, "To avoid contact with the Evil Dog Clan."

Si Xianxian, "I... oh!"

Suddenly, the Dawn Blade took flight, carrying Si Xianxian up into the night sky.

On Lu Ran's shoulder, the black crow looked up, its pupils faintly twinkling.

A Divine Weapon!

Indeed, it's the one known as "The Unmatched Lu Ran" of Rain Alley City.

Nearly forty years have passed since the God Demon appeared.

Counting over these forty years, among the generations born within the borders of Rain Alley City, Lu Ran was the most shining one!

Lu Ran spent all his days immersed in cultivation and trials, unaware of the lofty status that Rain Alley's various circles had raised him to.

The Unmatched of Rain Alley!

Especially after the night of the fifteenth of the twelfth lunar month, this claim spread even wider.

This student, who should have been taking the final exam, defended block after block in the presence of countless citizens and Moon Gazers, centered around the fifth elementary school.

What added a touch of legend to the name "Lu Ran" was:

That night, he created a heavenly phenomenon in the sky!

Then, returning to the city with a Divine Weapon, he continued his patrolling duties.

After that night, even the slowest to grasp began to understand that Rain Alley City had hit the jackpot, producing a true Heavenly Pride!

"Could I borrow the Cold Night Sword for a moment?" Lu Ran turned to the girl in the white dress beside him.

Jiang Ruyi smiled at Lu Ran with a hint of playfulness, "Would you plead with it?"

"Heh heh," Lu Ran chuckled as well.

Truthfully, he really liked this side of Jiang Ruyi.

After all, when she faces others, she always appears elegant and serene, like a Fairy untouched by the mundane world.

This made Lu Ran feel very special.

Hmm... just very happy~

"Come here," Lu Ran beckoned to the Cold Night Sword.

Under the astonished gaze of Zhou Tian, the Cold Night Sword flew up on its own, landing in Lu Ran's hand.

Zhou Tian was completely dumbfounded!

It was enough of a shock that Lu Ran could nurture a Divine Weapon.

How did another one just appear?

Did Rain Alley City turn a corner?

Could this small place really be a hub of Heavenly Prides?

"Phew~" Around Jiang Ruyi, four White Jade Stone plates also appeared.

"Let's go, Teacher Zhou," Lu Ran tightened his shoulder to signal the black crow.

"Whoosh~"

The Cold Night Sword shot into the night sky, with Lu Ran gripping the hilt tightly and soaring high.

The mere two kilometers arrived in the blink of an eye.

Lu Ran used his Extreme Vision, gazing down at the majestic city wall below, his heart full of awe!

How massive was the construction effort for these thick walls, nearly twenty meters tall and stretching beyond calculation to both sides, disappearing into the night?

The torches flickered on top of the city wall.

Like a flame dragon coiling within this desolate border, its majestic body barred the invasion of petty Evil Demons.

What generations must have worked together to complete this feat?

"Flap flap flap~"

The black crow descended and transformed back into a human on the city wall, negotiating with the guarding soldiers.

The soldiers, looking at the young Believers holding Divine Weapons and flying in the air, were also a bit stupefied.

Such powerful Believers... coming here for rehabilitation?

I mean, do you really have to insist on entering Evil Dog Village?

Making mistakes is normal.

Instead of rehabilitation, wouldn't it be better to train in other Demon Caves?

When the guards heard that the group was here not just for labor rehabilitation but also to complete a special training mission, the soldiers nodded inwardly.

Yes, that makes more sense.

Although... uh, it's still very strange that the Divine Weapons are in the hands of a few young people!

"Flap flap flap~"

The black crow flew back to Lu Ran's shoulder, "Go, cross the city wall, and land directly in the buffer zone."

"Yes!" Lu Ran pulled on the Cold Night Sword, "Let's descend."

"Hum~"

Although it was Jiang Ruyi's Divine Weapon, it listened well to Lu Ran's command.

Besides not being spiritually connected to the Cold Night Sword, Lu Ran was no different from its master.

The trio landed steadily, and Si Xianxian's face was full of excitement, obviously having rarely flown before.

Without saying anything else, just the close contact with a Divine Weapon alone made her trip worthwhile!

"Lu Ran, how come you didn't tell me the Dawn Blade became a Divine Weapon?" Si Xianxian, still excited, punched Lu Ran's shoulder.

Lu Ran smiled and countered, "Was it fun?"

"Mhm mhm." Si Xianxian nodded vigorously, "Thrilling!"

Lu Ran casually said, "You should nurture your Black Luminous Stone Hammer well. In the future, it can also take you flying."

Si Xianxian: "..."

You make it sound so easy!

Do you think Divine Weapons are common as dirt?

"Listen up." Zhou Tian transformed back into human form, landed solidly, and pointed to the side, "You need to drive the Evil Dogs into that prison."

Lu Ran turned to look and saw an iron gate set at the base of the city wall.

On the opposite side of the wall, there was another iron gate.

The thick Stone City wall, at least 15 or 16 meters wide, with the iron gates on both sides, formed a simple prison.

Zhou Tian said, "After you drive the Evil Dogs into the prison, our people will inspect them.

Only after confirming there are no Evil Dogs above River Realm Third Rank will we open the other iron gate.

Then, you need to continue driving the released pack of Evil Dogs towards the direction of the fifth city.

Only when the pack scatters and stops circling the city wall will you be considered successful."

Lu Ran nodded, "Teacher Zhou, how many Evil Dogs do we need to drive?"

Zhou Tian said, "Si Xianxian needs more than two months to be removed from the blacklist, you need to drive 400 Evil Dogs to help her complete the rehabilitation task.

As for your own training mission, there's no upper limit.

The more Evil Dogs you drive away, the higher the evaluation will naturally be on the report issued by our side."

"Got it!"

"Evil Dogs of River Realm Third Rank are over 2.8 meters in length," Zhou Tian said. "I will accompany you the whole way to help you identify them."

"Thanks, Teacher Zhou, no time like the present, let's get to work!" No sooner had Lu Ran's words fallen than mist churned under his feet.

"Zzi—"

Lu Ran darted forward, heading straight for a pile of scattered rocks.

Zhou Tian: "..."

He waved his hand in front of his face, trying to clear away the fog and dust.

The environment inside the buffer zone was different from the open wilderness, filled with strangely shaped rocks and heaps of stones.

Obviously, this was an environment specially arranged by the military to better filter out the Evil Demons.

Lu Ran leaped onto a massive rock, using his Extreme Vision to survey his surroundings.

Near the city wall, everything was quiet; no Evil Dogs were in sight.

"Block your ears!" Lu Ran shouted, "If you do hear, control yourselves, don't come after me!"

Everyone: "..."

The next moment, a piercing sheep's bleat echoed through the dark rocky wilderness:

"Meh~~~~"

Lu Ran stood on high, becoming a vulnerable lamb, bleating loudly, tempting the ferocious Evil Dogs to come for a meal.

"Lurk!"

"Woof! Woof!!" Beneath the night sky, a dog's bark faintly emerged.

Lu Ran narrowed his eyes, quickly scanning and spotting one thin dog after another.

Tsk, quite a number, eh?

Just 400 Evil Dogs to complete the rehabilitation task?

Lu Ran turned his head, looking at Si Xianxian, and gave her a thumbs-up.

Si Xianxian, firmly covering her ears, exhibited self-awareness.

Seeing Lu Ran's gesture, she released her hands, shouting, "What is it?"

Lu Ran bellowed back, "Just wait, in no more than three hours, I'll let you start afresh!"

Si Xianxian: ???

Everyone: "..."

Chapter 224: River... River Realm?

Seven days later, in the buffer zone.

"Silence..."

High above, two crows circled continuously, their eyes shimmered with a strange gleam as they intently watched the battlefield below.

To this day, team leader Zhou Tian had no idea how to describe these young people anymore.

Lu Ran and his companions had completed their reform tasks early on, successfully helping Si Xianxian to turn over a new leaf and start anew.

In the following days, they didn't stop but came to the buffer zone daily to display their talents and assist the troops with their missions.

That wasn't the issue, the issue was the way Lu Ran carried out his missions...

It was so demoralizing!

"Hiss—"

Far below, a figure resembling a specter dashed through the tumultuous rocks on the ground, his feet emitting dense fog.

More than ten Evil Dogs roared angrily, chasing after the figure in front.

"Crack!"

"Crack!!" Amid the annoying barking, canine teeth appeared out of nowhere, snapping at Lu Ran.

Yet Lu Ran seemed to have eyes on the back of his head!

He continued charging forward, sometimes darting left, sometimes veering right.

The canine teeth snapped viciously, but no matter what, they just couldn't catch Lu Ran.

"Silence!"

In the night sky, Zhou Tian couldn't help but shout.

He had seen such a scene many times before.

But no matter how many times he saw it, he couldn't help but feel deeply moved.

Was Lu Ran simply completing a training mission?

No!

He seemed more like he was giving a lecture to the soldiers on guard duty, and it was a high-end version of a "masterclass"!

Question:

How can missions be completed more efficiently?

What is the ultimate form of employing the skill of Sound Positioning in real combat?

How can we minimally move, expend the least energy, and perfectly dodge the enemy's repeated attacks?

Watch carefully!

I'll only teach once... no, I'll teach you for a few more days!

Ran Sect masterclass, unparalleled teaching!

Watch closely, learn well~

Over these days, team leader Zhou Tian also had a few exchanges with Lu Ran.

According to Lu Ran himself, he was indeed exceptionally talented, born with the makings of a "Swordsman."

He also continuously trained hard to listen to the wind.

Is this...

Even human speech?

You'd better off saying you secretly worshipped Lord Beifeng, we'd find that more acceptable.

Undeniably, there were geniuses in this world.

And the gap between people was visibly devastating, making it even more disheartening.

"Thud!"

Lu Ran stomped his foot, and his entire body lunged forward.

Four canine teeth emerged abruptly; Lu Ran darted right through the center just as the teeth viciously snapped together.

"The third Evil Dog seems like it's River Realm Third Rank!" echoed the voice of Jiang Ruyi from high above.

She had been following all the way and finally confirmed that this Evil Dog's strength was exceptional.

It's no wonder people had difficulty recognizing it.

Evil Dogs of River Realm Second Rank and River Realm Third Rank only differed in size by about 10 centimeters.

Even if two Evil Dogs stood still, people would still have a hard time distinguishing them, not to mention when the Evil Dogs were leaping up and running at full speed.

"Baah~~~" Lu Ran immediately produced a sound like a sheep's bleat.

The sound was not loud but was clear enough for even the finer dogs to hear.

The Evil Dog Clan had been wanting to tear Lu Ran apart, but now, hearing this sound, they threw caution to the wind even more!

Thanks to this, Jiang Ruyi flew even lower, targeted, and with a flick of her jade hand;

"Whoosh~!"

She tossed a Frost Talisman, hitting the third Evil Dog squarely.

Instantly, frost spread rapidly, enveloping the body of the Evil Dog.

"Woof! Woof!!"

Since Jiang Ruyi deliberately reduced the grade of the Divine Technique·Frost Talisman, the Evil Dog wasn't frozen stiff.

However, as the pack of Evil Dogs was running fast, this one slowed a bit and got dumped by the main group.

"Are you sure, Ruyi?" came Si Xianxian's distant inquiry.

"Resistance matches, size is correct." Jiang Ruyi assessed the isolated Evil Dog, feeling it was beyond help.

Her Frost Talisman had hit it, but it still pursued Lu Ran, ignoring everything else.

"Good!" Si Xianxian shouted shrilly, swinging her massive hammer fiercely.

Fierce Heavenly Divine Skill·Bursting Sky Vault!

A colossal hammer shadow, three meters in diameter, surrounded by roaring flames, blasted straight towards the increasingly sluggish Evil Dog.

"Boom!"

Amidst the fiery light, the Evil Dog exploded.

The air was filled with the scent of charred dog meat...

Meanwhile, atop the tall wall.

Two soldiers on duty saw the Immortal Fog coming from afar and whispered softly, "Little Lamb is coming again."

"There are quite a few this time, must be twelve or thirteen."

"This taunting skill is really godly! How many days has it been, and not a single Evil Dog has escaped... wow!"

The soldier exclaimed as he saw Lu Ran leap forward, twisting his body like a gymnast.

Under the sharp bite of the canine teeth, Lu Ran forcibly carved out a path of survival.

The sound of teeth clenching seemed more like cheering for Lu Ran.

In the moment he landed, he faced the pack of dogs, constantly sliding backward toward the city wall.

"Whew..."

Once again, Lu Ran slid back into the prison, the sheep's bleating resounded:

"Baah~~~"

The mentally inferior Evil Dogs had already lost the ability to think and were frantically flooding into the prison.

Rather than a prison, it looked more like a gap in the city wall.

For at that moment, the large iron doors on both sides of the wall were raised.

"Close the gates!" as Lu Ran passed through the thick wall and slid out, he shouted loudly.

"Bang!" with a loud sound.

The heavy iron gate fell, hitting the ground and raising a cloud of dust.

"Woof!"

Chapter 225: River...River Realm?_2

"Woof!" the leading Evil Dog fiercely pounced onto the iron gate, barking madly.

Lu Ran, while dodging the dog's teeth, muttered softly, "Baa~"

Another loud crash was heard as the large gate on the other side of the city wall fell heavily.

More than ten Evil Dogs were thus confined within the prison, creating a chaotic scene as they awaited inspection by the soldiers.

Once deemed qualified, they would be released and led by Lu Ran toward the direction of the fifth city.

"Is it okay?"

Lu Ran loudly inquired, quickly sidestepping to take cover under the city wall to avoid attacks from the Evil Dog Clan.

He did not receive a response from the soldiers, but instead, a beautiful figure appeared.

"Why are you here?" Lu Ran asked curiously.

Jiang Ruyi, still not having touched the ground, paused above Lu Ran's head upon hearing his words.

And right in front of Lu Ran was the gently fluttering hem of her dress.

The young girl looked down at Lu Ran with a deep, silent gaze.

"Uh," Lu Ran realized his words had been inappropriate and immediately corrected, "I was worried something might have happened to Si Xianxian."

Jiang Ruyi responded indifferently, "You care about her a lot, can't stand being parted for even a moment."

"It's not like that," Lu Ran looked up at the girl in the white dress, hastily adding, "You've had little contact with the Fierce Heavenly believers."

The Si Xianxian you see has been tamed by me... ahem, influenced by me, after which she sometimes shows a smiling face to us.

When she is with others, she can get into a quarrel at the drop of a hat."

Saying that, Lu Ran raised his hand to catch the girl's hand.

However, Jiang Ruyi slightly lifted her hand, not giving him the chance.

How quick was Lu Ran?

He stood on tiptoe and seized the girl's hand.

Cool and soft.

Just like he remembered.

Lu Ran gently pulled her hand downward and pressed his lips to the back of her hand:

"Mua~"

Jiang Ruyi's expression instantly changed!

The high and mighty fairy turned into a somewhat flustered mortal girl.

She instinctively pulled back her hand, her heart startled and ashamed.

This guy was really becoming more and more excessive.

Lu Ran chuckled, "Be good, go keep an eye on her so she doesn't cause any trouble.

After I lead away the Evil Dogs, I'll regroup with you."

"Hmph," Jiang Ruyi turned her head away from Lu Ran and flew towards the city wall.

Watching the girl flee in panic, Lu Ran's smile grew even broader.

Little Ruyi,

Isn't it easy to coax you?

Following the girl's graceful figure, Lu Ran saw a soldier on the city wall lean out halfway and give a thumbs up with a cheerful smile.

Lu Ran: "..."

Whenever the gate was opened to release the dogs, the soldiers operated strictly by the book, making hand gestures.

But never before had they smiled and given a thumbs up like now.

"Click! Click..."

The iron gate slowly rose.

The Evil Dog Clan, like rabid dogs, crazily squeezed out.

"Baa~~~"

Lu Ran swiftly darted toward the direction of the fifth city.

High upon the city wall, Jiang Ruyi silently watched Lu Ran's figure until he disappeared into the night, then she descended towards the buffer zone.

"Did it work?" Si Xianxian saw Jiang Ruyi come down and asked with a smile.

"Mhm," Jiang Ruyi nodded lightly, "Let's wait for him to return."

"Okay," Si Xianxian said, casually spinning a heavy hammer in her hand, looking completely relaxed.

After more than a week of interaction, the two had become much closer.

The Si Xianxian of the past had neither teammates nor friends and had endured the hardships of reformation through labor.

Now, receiving the full care and concern from both Jiang and Lu, her heart increasingly favored them.

The only downside was that Jiang Ruyi had started to restrain her as well...

As the commander, Jiang Ruyi naturally issued orders to the squad.

However, the commander's orders had gradually extended from battle commands to everyday life.

This made Si Xianxian feel somewhat demeaned!

After all, Jiang Ruyi was younger and slightly inferior in strength and realm.

Hmm... What to do!

Si Xianxian could only try her best to endure and slowly adapt.

Who made her dependent on these two people?

"Sister Xian'er~" Si Xianxian moved closer to the girl.

"Mm?"

"Where shall we go next month?"

Jiang Ruyi, seeing the hopeful eyes of Si Xianxian, smiled and asked, "Where would Sister Xian'er like to go?"

Si Xianxian instantly perked up, "Can we go to the big cities?"

To a warm place, a lively place, to a bustling and brilliant place!"

Hearing this, Jiang Ruyi softened internally.

She had heard many of Si Xianxian's stories, and couldn't help but pity her.

Jiang Ruyi nodded gently, "Okay, I'll talk to Lu Ran about it."

"Truly the good Ruyi of Sister Xian'er!" Si Xianxian affectionately wrapped her arms around Jiang Ruyi's arm.

Everything was as Si Xianxian had expected, Jiang Ruyi was even more gentle and easier to speak with.

"It's a reward for you," Jiang Ruyi suddenly said.

"What?" Si Xianxian was a bit puzzled.

Jiang Ruyi couldn't help but chuckle, "Last night in the restaurant, you endured quite hard."

"Ah!" Si Xianxian realized, snorted, "If it weren't for you stopping me, I would have cursed that little brat... cough cough."

Jiang Ruyi reproached, "In the future, try not to swear."

Si Xianxian snorted, "I'll try my best."

Ruyi, you're still too gentle. Some people really need a beating, a slap would make them talk nicely."

Jiang Ruyi helplessly shook her head; where was the reformed Si Xianxian?

Hmm... that's true.

Lu Ran was definitely the main force in driving away the Evil Dogs, and this trip to Evil Dog Village seemed more like Lu Ran undergoing reformation through labor...

"Whew~" A figure swiftly flew across the sky.

"Let's lure one more wave, then end today's task, shall we?" Lu Ran, grasping the Dawn Blade, slowly descended.

"Okay," Jiang Ruyi nodded in agreement.

Si Xianxian asked, "By the way, how many Evil Dogs have we driven away? You guys must be almost done with the task, right?"

"Once we hit two thousand, we'll stop," Lu Ran said casually, "Let's go!"

"That many already?" Si Xianxian was secretly amazed and quickly followed.

Several minutes later, after the trio had ventured deep enough into the buffer zone, Lu Ran once again stood on a huge rock.

Jiang and Si were standing far away, each on guard as usual.

"Baa~~~"

The sound of a lamb echoed across the rocky wilderness, as Lu Ran vigorously activated the Evil Technique-Evil Sense, scanning his surroundings.

"Whew~"

Suddenly, a surge of intense energy burst forth, and two rows of dog teeth rapidly emerged, viciously aiming for Lu Ran.

Lu Ran's expression changed drastically, and he explosively recoiled backward.

"Crack!"

The rows of dog teeth violently snapped shut, producing an extremely harsh sound.

Jiang Ruyi's eyes narrowed, and Si Xianxian held her breath!

Two rows of teeth?

Not four individual teeth, but two rows?!

Under River Grade, the Evil Technique·Evil Tooth usually manifested as four teeth.

Only when this technique advanced to Jiang Grade would a qualitative change occur, with the dog teeth forming uneven rows!

This meant...

A Jiang Grade Evil Dog had been lured by Lu Ran?!

"Retreat! You guys retreat quickly!" Lu Ran's face was extremely tense.

"Zzz—"

In the midst of speaking, Lu Ran's body tensed as he abruptly darted to the right.

Always walking by the river, was he finally going to get his shoes wet today?!

"Crack!"

Another two rows of dog teeth rapidly emerged.

At the point where the Evil Teeth snapped shut, a wave of energy churned as if rending the very space apart.

Lu Ran: !!!

Suppressing his palpitations, he pushed the Evil Technique·Evil Sense to its limit, acutely aware of every subtle movement around him.

Please no!

Don't let it be...

A Jiang Grade Evil Dog from outside the Six Walls selection area had leaked into the buffer zone?

You better not have the Evil Technique·Evil Shadow Flash!

Please don't have Instant Teleportation!

The more Lu Ran thought about it, the more panicked he became.

Over the past seven days, the trio had encountered a few River Realm Third Rank and Fourth Rank Evil Dogs.

The Evil Dog Clan indeed had low intelligence, but inevitably, there were the rare few that possessed this technique!

It would not be an exaggeration to say: Evil Dogs capable of Instant Teleportation and those without it were entirely different species!

"Swoosh..."

Vaguely, Lu Ran heard the deep growl of a dog on the hunt.

That sound was incredibly deep, chilling to the bone!

High in the sky, two crows spoke in human tongues, shouting sternly:

"Immediately pause the task!"

"Abandon the task! Go, Lu Ran! Run!!!"

Chapter 226: The Majesty of River Realm!

"Zzz—"

Lu Ran couldn't afford any delay, the mist swirling around his feet as he fled towards the fifth wall.

Ahead and to the right, another wave of violent energy fluctuation erupted.

Standing on a layer of stormy waves, Lu Ran immediately changed direction, swiftly darting to the front left.

Night Charm Evil Technique·Night Dance!

"Crack!!"

As expected, two rows of uneven canine teeth rapidly emerged, fiercely snapping together.

The harsh sound was so jarring that Lu Ran was terrified.

If he were to be bitten, wouldn't his body be torn to shreds?

Fortunately, whenever Jiang Pin·Evil Teeth appeared, it triggered particularly intense energy fluctuations, allowing Lu Ran to more clearly detect the enemy's attacks.

"Gurgle..."

No sooner had the Evil Teeth passed than a deep throat sound resonated from the side.

Lu Ran's hair stood on end.

What are you afraid of, that's exactly what comes!

This River Realm Evil Dog truly possessed Evil Technique·Evil Shadow Flash!

It could really teleport instantaneously!

Thinking about it, without Instant Teleportation, how could this Evil Dog have crossed the city walls of the screening area and sneaked into the buffer zone?

"Lu Ran!"

"Lu..." Both Jiang and Si panicked.

The Evil Dog appeared instantly, blocking Lu Ran's path and catching him off guard.

Its gaping maw seemed to be waiting for the taste of delicious human flesh.

Lu Ran's heart rose to his throat!

Almost reflexively, his feet solidified the storm below and he dodged to the right front again.

In just a moment, while dodging the canine teeth and Evil Dog, Lu Ran dashed left, then right, drawing a symbol akin to a bolt of lightning.

To think, Lu Ran was in constant high-speed motion!

Had it not been for his body's instinctive reaction, he would probably have met his end in the jaws of the beast by now.

It was truly a close call!

"Gurgle..." The Evil Dog crouched slightly, its throat sounds growing deeper.

"Argh!"

"Argh!!"

At the same time, two crowing sounds echoed through the night sky.

The noise was piercing, carrying an invisible sonic wave that enveloped the pitch-black Evil Dog.

Witch Crow Divine Technique·Witch Cry!

The Witch Crow Sect wasn't known for its offensive capabilities, and this skill, one of their rare output techniques, was... well, complex.

This technique could unleash a sonic attack over an area, causing mental damage to any target struck.

"Damn!" Lu Ran rarely swore.

His head buzzing, he suddenly tripped and fell.

But his forward momentum kept him moving!

Like a stone skipping across the surface of a lake, he repeatedly bounced and kicked up clouds of dust on the ground.

He had been grazed by the sonic attack!

Such an output technique might not cause substantial damage to ordinary people.

But against Lu Ran, it was lethal...

Lu Ran was operating the Evil Technique·Evil Recognition at full blast throughout!

"Ooow... woo..."

While Lu Ran was in a sorry state, the Evil Dog nearby also howled miserably and vanished instantly.

From an Evil Technique perspective, Lu Ran was no different from that dog.

The technique was a great bane to Lu Ran, and equally so to the Evil Dog!

And compared to Lu Ran, the River Realm Evil Dog's Evil Technique·Evil Recognition grade was even higher, meaning it should have suffered even more.

With a "thud," Lu Ran crashed heavily onto a large rock.

His physical body wasn't much harmed, as his watery armor remained nearly intact.

But his brain buzzed, and his head throbbed painfully.

"Lu Ran!" Jiang Ruyi swiftly flew over, grabbing Lu Ran in her arms.

Still floating around her body were four White Jade Stones, one of which also touched Lu Ran's body.

But under her control, the White Jade Stone didn't shatter.

"Woof!"

For the first time, everyone heard the call of the Evil Dog.

Ever since it had appeared, this River Realm·Evil Dog had only emitted hunting throat sounds and had never howled like it did now.

Anyone could hear its extreme anger.

"Get up!" Jiang Ruyi picked up Lu Ran and quickly flew away.

Recalling the night of August fifteenth, it was Lu Ran who had held Jiang Ruyi, dodging the pursuit of the Night Charm Clan.

And now, it was Jiang Ruyi tightly holding Lu Ran, trying to escape from the jaws of the beast.

Lu Ran shook his head vigorously, trying to clear his senses.

His gaze swept over Jiang Ruyi's shoulder, looking back to finally see the true face of the River Realm·Evil Dog.

It was over three meters long and over two meters tall at the shoulder!

Though slim everywhere, its massive size was enough to be profoundly oppressive!

Its fur was pitch black, its pupils shimmered with a daunting red glow, and its face was utterly ferocious.

Unlike other Evil Dogs, the legs and joints of this River Realm·Evil Dog were entwined with thick black energy.

The energy was part smoky, part misty, and partly like black flames, swaying with the Evil Dog's movements, very eerie!

"Crack!"

The canine teeth struck again.

But this time, it wasn't attacking Lu Ran, but tearing at the black crows in the night sky.

Since Lu Ran had been silent for a long time, and with the attacks from the Witch Crow Believers, the hatred of the Evil Dog had been diverted.

"Flap flap flap..."

In the night sky, two black crows frantically flapped their wings, dodging in panic.

For a moment, countless feathers scattered, the two crows desperately parted ways.

"Damn!" Lu Ran felt a sinking feeling.

As the effects of Divine Technique·Witch Cry on him subsided, Lu Ran realized the severity of the situation.

Sure enough, the Evil Dog teleported high into the air!

It snapped its gaping maw at a black crow.

The crow dodged repeatedly, floating up and down, but...

The Evil Dog kept flickering, and in less than 2 seconds, its mouth viciously clamped onto the wing of the black crow.

Of course, the Evil Dog Clan couldn't fly, but this River Realm·Evil Dog, by incessantly flickering, stubbornly "stood" in midair, wreaking havoc.

Lu Ran's pupils slightly contracted: "Witch Shadow Replacement! Quick!!"

"Flap flap flap~"

There was no need for Lu Ran to remind him, as the crow that was bit already had energy surging over its body.

Suddenly, a black crow flew out from the torn body of the bitten crow.

Divine Technique·Witch Shadow Substitute!

This technique was similar to the Straw Demon Clan's Evil Technique·Straw Substitute.

However, when Human Clan believers performed this technique, there was one prerequisite—it had to be in the form of a crow.

"Hiss! Hiss!!"

The Evil Dog, heedless of consequences, bit the "Crow Substitute," violently shaking its head left and right, determined to completely tear apart this annoying creature.

"Croak~~~"

"Croak!!" The two black crows cried out again.

Divine Technique·Witch Cry!

Their choice was certainly correct. To deal with the Evil Dog Clan, sonic shockwaves should be used.

It was clear that, to protect these students, team leaders Zhou Tian and his comrades were truly risking their lives!

The two had made up their minds to draw the Evil Dog's attention to themselves, to buy time for the students to escape.

But facing the River Realm·Evil Dog, how long could these two River Realm·Fifth Rank warriors last?

"Whoosh~"

The Evil Dog teleported again!

Driven by pain, the dog's ferocity surged, and it instantly appeared behind a crow.

"Whoosh~"

Suddenly a blade, carrying a terrifying sound of breaking the air, stabbed directly at the black crow from behind.

The Evil Dog's speed and reaction were astonishing.

It flickered in place!

The Dawn Blade seemed to pass through the Evil Dog's body, leaving a trail of rosy clouds in the night sky, but it failed to harm the Evil Dog in the slightest!

This...?

Flickering in place?

The Evil Dog Clan was undoubtedly low in intellect.

But it had, by virtue of its fierce battle instincts, inadvertently performed such an astonishing maneuver!

It was truly dumbfounding!

If all went well, in the future, Lu Ran could also perform such exquisite maneuvers.

That is... if he could survive this battle.

The Cold Night Sword followed closely, but the Evil Dog abruptly vanished.

This time, it didn't flicker in place, and its whereabouts were unknown.

"Forget about us, you guys go!" Zhou Tian shouted sternly.

From the moment the Evil Dog had attacked the black crow to now, no more than 10 seconds had passed!

It was also in this short span of 7 or 8 seconds that Zhou Tian had walked through the Ghost Gate over and over again.

Such a towering warrior of the River Realm was being wantonly tormented by the Evil Dog, at risk of dying at any moment!

Perhaps in the next second, Zhou Tian's body would be torn apart, unable to even perform a substitute, and he would be utterly dead.

"No way, Ruyi!" Lu Ran broke free from Jiang Ruyi's embrace, "If we leave, Teacher Zhou and the others will certainly die!"

"Hoof~"

Jiang Ruyi's figure steadied, her expression extremely grave.

Escaping was indeed unwise.

Given the Evil Dog's rapid flickering just now, who could escape?

Even if Lu Ran's speed was fast, it couldn't match Instant Teleportation.

Could the two crows in the sky last another 8 seconds?

In no time, the Evil Dog would kill its way back to Lu Ran's side!

"My control!" Jiang Ruyi struggled to calm herself, quickly coming up with a strategy, "Sister Xian'er's output!"

"Yes, let her unleash Fiery Fire Heavenly Leader!" Lu Ran spoke rapidly, scanning the surroundings.

Within the buffer zone, torches inserted everywhere illuminated the bleak wilderness of rocks, with no sign of the Evil Dog.

Silence,

A bone-chilling silence!

"Lu Ran?" From the night sky, a voice shattered the deadly silence, "You damn well follow my orders! Get back to the fifth wall!"

"Baa~~~"

Responding to Zhou Tian was a familiar bleating sound, accompanied by the spray of mist.

The hatred must be pulled, and quickly!

Because Lu Ran couldn't gamble!

If the Evil Dog was allowed to freely attack, its teeth might tear at the crows or Si Xianxian.

Even the Evil Dog itself might appear directly behind Jiang Ruyi!

"Baa~~~"

"Woof!"

With the sheep's bleat, the dog bark followed.

The ferocious and brutal aura completely clouded what little reason the Evil Dog had left, preventing it from lurking in the shadows for an ambush.

Supporting its massive body, the Evil Dog starkly appeared directly in front of Lu Ran!

Its eyes glowed crimson, filled with fierce light, its mouth dripping saliva, emitting an extremely dangerous throat sound...

Chapter 227: said to kill, so he killed

Lu Ran's feet tapped rapidly as he suddenly darted to the front-left.

"Woof!" The Evil Dog leapt at him, its jaws gaping wide.

It was apparent that the Evil Dog Clan relied purely on instinct in battle.

Their combat had no set pattern; when and what abilities they used were unpredictable.

If roles were reversed, Lu Ran would definitely not leap forward to bite his enemy; instead, he would instantly unleash the Evil Technique·Evil Tooth.

"Meeeh~" Lu Ran's feet tapped again, taking the opportunity to retreat diagonally backwards.

Shockingly, the Evil Dog vanished without a trace.

"Grrr..."

Low growls emanated from behind Lu Ran, and the proximity felt dangerously close.

In fact, Lu Ran sensed that the dog's mouth was almost on the back of his head...

His pupils nearly shrank to the size of pinpricks!

"Hisss—"

At the critical moment, Lu Ran erupted with a startling desire to survive.

He came to an abrupt halt and then sped forward, as mist swirled around his feet and his body leaned forward.

The Evil Dog's mouth, mere centimeters away from Lu Ran's spine, clenched onto thin air.

Speaking frankly, it was only because the Evil Dog Clan's intelligence was limited.

If it were Night Charm with such an instantaneous movement ability...

She would appear behind Lu Ran without making a sound and would simply and cleanly slice Lu Ran's throat!

Unlike this Evil Dog, which couldn't help but emit a throaty sound just before it bit its prey, as if to warn Lu Ran:

I'm about to bite you~

"Yap!"

"Yap~~~" In the night sky, two circling crows cast spells with all their might.

Below them, white fog churned beneath Lu Ran's feet like ocean waves.

And Lu Ran himself seemed like a small boat tossing and turning amidst the raging storm.

He swayed back and forth, drifting to and fro.

His directions of evasion and body tilts seemed to change three times a second.

It was truly like dancing on the blade's edge, a desperado clinging to life!

Such a scene left the team leader, Zhou Tian, with his heart in his throat.

Amidst such miraculous performance, neither Zhou Tian nor his comrades had any mind to appreciate or commend it; all they felt was deep anxiety.

"Woo~ Woo..."

The Evil Dog howled in pain, its brain feeling as if it were being pricked by thousands of needles under the invisible sonic attack.

It twisted its body crazily, and its figure flickered inconsistently, like a television with a poor signal.

The scene was exceedingly eerie.

"Hisss..." Lu Ran inhaled a breath of cool air, his face contorting.

He too was badly "pricked" by needles, his vision blurring.

Only the thought of survival reminded Lu Ran to exert his full magic, fleeing in panic.

"Huff!"

The pitch-black night sky suddenly lit up with a flaming hammer!

"Ahhhh!" In the wilderness, Si Xianxian raised her hand high and bellowed loudly.

"Boom, boom, boom!!"

The hovering giant hammer exploded in the high sky, with flames shooting up high, reaching for the clouds.

Fierce Heavenly Divine Skill·Thousand Miles of Barren Land!

Instantly, the temperature between heaven and earth rose dramatically.

The water armor that Jiang Ruyi was covered in emitted a sizzling sound as if it were being scorched.

In fact, every creature illuminated by the giant hammer's flames was being burned.

The difference lay in the fact that the Human Clan believers were protected by water armor, while the Evil Dog Clan had no armor to guard their flesh, which would continue taking damage.

"Flap, flap, flap~"

In the night sky, two crows screeched chaotically, also being scorched.

While morphed into crows, the Witch Crow Believers couldn't activate their water armor.

But at this moment, Si Xianxian could no longer care about that.

"Fiery Fire Heavenly Leader!" Jiang Ruyi floated behind Si Xianxian, casting her hand downwards.

The Quicksand Talisman hit the ground, transforming into a sandy river, with endless yellow sand churning and undulating.

Si Xianxian's beautiful eyes were fierce as she held the Black Luminous Stone Hammer, and violently tapped it on the ground with the handle.

"Whoosh!!"

In a flash, flames burst forth from Si Xianxian's feet, enveloping her body.

In the blink of an eye, a stunning flame goddess stood majestically in the wilderness.

Divine Technique·Fiery Fire Heavenly Leader, while being a technique suited for River Realm·First Rank, its effect was extremely terrifying!

This technique also drained Divine Power and Qi tremendously, and once activated, it couldn't be stopped voluntarily.

Only when the caster was drained of Qi and used up the last bit of Divine Power, would the flames on their body dissipate.

And the efficacy of this technique was quite straightforward and rough—amplifying the output of Divine Techniques!

If you want to experience the thrill of killing across levels,

If you want to become a believer with extreme explosive output...

Then Divine·Lie Tian would be your perfect choice!

The Fierce Heavenly Sect was born solely for slaughter!

Killing the enemy,

And sacrificing oneself!

"Fierce Earth Thousand Flames, get ready," Jiang Ruyi loudly ordered, raising her voice another notch, "Lu Ran!!"

"Uh..." Lu Ran, propping up his groggy head, rolled and crawled until he finally found the correct direction.

After being struck by the sonic waves, Lu Ran got a moment of respite.

In fact, the Evil Dog's Evil Technique·Evil Recognition was indeed of a higher grade, and it was more severely injured than Lu Ran.

The Evil Dog blinked out of sight, its whereabouts unknown.

The Dawn Blade and Cold Night Sword, which were pursuing it, had lost their target.

"Hisss—"

Lu Ran dared not delay, rallying his spirits, and dashed in Jiang Ruyi's direction.

In his field of vision, yellow sand filled the air and the quicksand moved rhythmically.

A beautiful goddess of flame, holding a fiercely burning hammer, stood proudly amidst the quicksand.

"Ru...Ruyi?" Si Xianxian's voice trembled slightly.

Had it been anyone else, she wouldn't have hesitated to smash down with her hammer.

But this was Lu Ran!

Si Xianxian had never had teammates, not even a friend.

She was a Fierce Heavenly believer, facing nothing but hostility wherever she went.

It was contemptuous stares, disdainful expressions, and an atmosphere filled with enmity...

And the arrival of Lu Ran was a beam of light in her dark life.

Such feelings were beyond the understanding of others.

No one knew how important Lu Ran truly was to Si Xianxian's heart.

But now, Jiang Ruyi ordered Si Xianxian to activate Divine Technique·Fiery Fire Heavenly Leader, greatly enhancing her output.

Not only that!

Jiang Ruyi also explicitly commanded her to drop the hammer in the direction where Lu Ran was coming from!

"Ruyi?" Si Xianxian watched Lu Ran getting closer and called out again.

Jiang Ruyi's voice was terrifyingly calm and icy, "The enemy is an Evil Dog from the River Realm and has the core Evil Technique Evil Shadow Flash.

Hurt, or die.

We have no second choice."

Yes, compared to death as an outcome, Lu Ran being seriously injured was naturally more acceptable to everyone.

Jiang Ruyi's voice was icy cold, but that was just for show.

The thought of what was about to happen made her heart bleed.

But everyone had to do it, they'd all seen the perils that surrounded Lu Ran.

Lu Ran couldn't possibly be this lucky forever, escaping death time after time.

Death, really, was just a momentary affair.

"Mehhh!!" From afar, suddenly came the cry of a sheep.

Si Xianxian's eyes snapped open, instantly thrown into a fierce inner struggle.

The frail cries of the young lamb made her want to tear Lu Ran apart with her own hands.

Yet the profound emotional bond between them made her forcefully suppress that desire to inflict pain...

Si Xianxian might have held back, but the Evil Dog couldn't!

Grievously wounded, the Evil Dog had entered a frenzied state.

It wasn't even clear where it had teleported to, but upon hearing the sheep's cry, the Evil Dog charged over without a second thought.

"Woof!"

The Evil Dog, with its gaping maw of sharp teeth, appeared ten meters behind Lu Ran.

"Fiery Earth Thousand Flames!" Jiang Ruyi exclaimed in alarm.

"Fiery Earth Thousand Flames!" Lu Ran yelled loudly.

"Ah!!" Si Xianxian, holding the heavy hammer, viciously slammed it forward.

Divine Technique·Fierce Earth Thousand Flames!

"Boom boom boom!!"

The earth trembled, and flames surged.

Like ferocious tidal waves, the fiery inferno raged forward.

"Mehhh~~~"

Lu Ran cried out, a mist swirling at his feet as he charged straight into the towering tides of flames.

High above, the crows, transfixed, watched Lu Ran, forgetting even to flap their wings.

Time seemed to freeze at that moment.

The little lamb, using itself as bait, dashed into the terrifying waves of fire raised by the Fierce Heavenly believers.

Behind, the nearly mad Evil Dog, now dominated by violent rage, snapped and bit indiscriminately.

At this moment, the Evil Dog couldn't possibly have any reason left.

Yet, as it leaped forward, it also unleashed Evil Technique·Evil Tooth!

It's over...

Zhou Tian felt as though the sky had fallen!

Lu Ran, the pride of Rain Alley City, with his rise, could potentially become the pride of the entire Da Xia.

That's why Zhou Tian had risked his life for a chance that Lu Ran might escape.

However, Lu Ran didn't leave, whether out of pride and stubbornness, or in a gesture of repaying kindness.

Not only did Lu Ran not flee, but he also attempted to rescue everyone.

And such a choice was about to completely sacrifice his life... huh?

"Whoo!"

Lu Ran suddenly came to a halt!

Yes, Lu Ran had abruptly stopped, without any momentum.

As strong and fast as his forward charge had been before, the image of him stopping was just as abrupt!

At a moment of life and death, Lu Ran couldn't afford to hold back.

Night Charm Evil Technique·Night Dance!

Within the thick Immortal Fog, Lu Ran's feet rustled with wind as he firmly steadied himself!

Two rows of Evil Teeth appeared in front of Lu Ran and snapped viciously.

Shocking and perilous!

"Ah!" Zhou Tian exclaimed, his heart like riding a roller coaster.

Yet before he could catch his breath, Lu Ran lunged forward again?!

Was passing through this sea of flames so necessary?

Was this life destined to be squandered here?

"Meh! Meh!! Meh!!!"

Lu Ran bellowed madly, the Immortal Hoof beneath him surging, desperately activating the flow of water armor as he plunged headfirst into the fire.

"Woof! Woof!!"

The completely irrational Evil Dog, already in a headlong charge, leaped even more ferociously now!

With a crisp "snap,"

In the night sky, a Frost Talisman struck first, directly hitting Lu Ran.

Jade Talisman Divine Skill-Ice Frost Talisman, though meant to be a controlling spell, was fiercely turned into a defensive measure by Jiang Ruyi.

Lu Ran's body was rapidly encased in frost as he charged into the layers of flames.

In an instant, Lu Ran's forward momentum sharply decreased, almost flipped out by the waves of fire.

"Sizzle~"

The frost covering Lu Ran melted instantly, and the water armor he wore evaporated in moments.

However, what no one could see...

Within the layers of fire, a Night Clothes quickly appeared on Lu Ran.

Night Charm Evil Technique·Night Charm Robe!

"Crack! Crack..."

The River Grade·Night Charm Robe indeed had impressive defensive power.

But it met the ultimate assault from the Fierce Heavenly Sect!

Bamboo hat, black veil, and Night Clothes, all became riddled with cracks, bursting apart.

And at that moment, the surging sands beneath pulled Lu Ran into the earth, burying him alive.

"Woo~~"

The utterly irrational and charging Evil Dog was blasted away by the waves of fire, left stunned.

After all, it had no Immortal Hoof, merely making a big leap forward and thus was blown away so clearly.

The Evil Dog did not possess any defensive techniques.

Meaning, it didn't even have a half-second reprieve from taking damage.

The roaring flames erupted with terrifying ferocity, not only dizzying the Evil Dog's brain but also smothering it with flames, burning from the inside out.

Worse still was the continual assault from Jiang Ruyi.

First came the Frost Talisman, affixing itself to Lu Ran, followed by the Electric Shackles Talisman detonating at the edge of the firewave, expanding into a Thunder Ball five meters in diameter.

"Sizzle~"

The Evil Dog was covered with tendrils of electricity, its body rigid, convulsing uncontrollably out of control.

"Whoosh~"

"Whoosh!!" The Dawn Blade and the Cold Night Sword in pursuit formed an X-shape inside the Thunder Ball.

In the instant the Evil Dog was blown backward, a blade pierced its head, and a sword pierced its body.

Blades glinted, and blood sprayed.

At the same time, buried in the sands beneath, inside the earth,

Lu Ran, his consciousness blurred, received the emotions transmitted from the Dawn Blade.

Huh,

Lu Ran smirked, his mouth suddenly filled with sand.

River Realm?

To kill, just kill.

Chapter 228: Master's wife?

"Uh..."

Lu Ran groggily opened his eyes and looked around blankly.

Is this the Stone City inn?

Seeing the familiar room, he relaxed and slowly sat up.

"Ugh." Lu Ran rubbed his head, recalling everything.

Had he lured the River Realm Evil Dog into the flames and then been dragged into quicksand, buried alive?

"Hmm?" Lu Ran suddenly noticed that he was wearing camouflage shorts and a T-shirt and seemed to have been cleaned up.

"Click~"

The bathroom door suddenly opened, and a beautiful figure walked in.

Lu Ran looked up and saw a charming, fair face, still showing a hint of surprise.

"You're awake," Jiang Ruyi said hurriedly, approaching with a wet towel.

"Ah." Lu Ran stared dumbly at the girl in the white dress, a thought uncontrollably rising in his mind.

It seemed Jiang Ruyi must have been in the room the whole time, taking care of him.

So this clean set of clothes and my washed body...

"Still feeling dizzy?" Jiang Ruyi asked the dazed Lu Ran, sighing softly, "Sister Xian'er's attack was too fierce.

My Quicksand Talisman wasn't fast enough; if I could have pulled you underground sooner, you could have suffered less."

"Mm." Lu Ran looked somewhat uncomfortable.

People might not believe it, but Lu Ran was blushing for the first time ever!

Jiang Ruyi sat by the bed, her expression filled with concern: "How do you feel now?

The military doctor said you're okay and just need a good sleep."

"I'm fine," Lu Ran promptly nodded, asking, "What time is it now?"

"You've been asleep for a full day; it's dinner time now, are you hungry?"

"Not really." Lu Ran took the wet towel from the girl and wiped his face.

Jiang Ruyi suggested, "Let's call Sister Xian'er, and go have something to eat."

"Okay." Lu Ran got out of bed and couldn't help but ask, "Were you staying in this room?"

Jiang Ruyi replied, "No, Yutang took care of you at night."

Lu Ran felt a bit uneasy inside: "Then my clothes?"

Jiang Ruyi, not sure why Lu Ran asked, answered honestly, "A soldier checked your wounds and helped you change them."

Lu Ran: "..."

Crap!

All that affection wasted.

So, it was the soldiers who washed my body?

Jiang Ruyi saw a hint of disappointment on Lu Ran's face and after a pause, seemed to realize something.

"I'll go call Sister Xian'er." Jiang Ruyi glared at Lu Ran teasingly and headed for the door.

"Wait for me." Lu Ran hurriedly wiped his face with the towel and quickly followed her.

Si Xianxian's room was next door; Jiang Ruyi went straight in while Lu Ran stopped at the door.

Moments later, Si Xianxian leaned on Jiang Ruyi, her steps unsteady as she walked out.

Seeing this, Lu Ran chuckled: "Tired, huh?"

Si Xianxian weakly glared at Lu Ran. Her sweet voice usually filled the air, but this time she was too lazy to even speak.

Clearly, the Fierce Heavenly Divine Skill·Fiery Fire Sky Leader took a lot out of her.

One use of the skill required several days to recover.

However, the power of this skill was truly terrifying, especially in boosting the output of the Fierce Heavenly Divine Skill!

Lu Ran's River Grade Evil Technique·Night Charm Robe and River Grade General Divine Skill·Water Flow Armor were shattered to bits by Si Xianxian in an instant!

Jiang Ruyi smiled at the girl beside her, "This time, we owe our lives to Sister Xian'er."

"Still..." Si Xianxian held Jiang Ruyi's arm, resting her cheek on the girl's shoulder with difficulty speaking, "still... Ruyi is better."

Not like some people, who are... heartless."

Lu Ran blurted out, "Stop talking in this state."

Si Xianxian's eyebrows shot up: "I will... I will speak!"

Jiang Ruyi raised her hand, patting Si Xianxian on the head: "Ignore him."

Si Xianxian closed her eyes, her cheeks rubbing against Jiang Ruyi's shoulder, seemingly enjoying the affection.

The usually domineering Lie Tian Girl, always faced the world with her raging hammer.

Si Xianxian rarely placed herself in a vulnerable position to enjoy others' gentle comforts.

Jiang Ruyi, sensing this moment, couldn't help but chuckle silently.

She almost thought the girl clinging to her was the meek and adorable Tian Tian.

Thinking of this, Jiang Ruyi spoke up, "By the way, Lu Ran."

"Mm?"

"Tian Tian has advanced to River Realm."

"Advanced?" Lu Ran was firstly startled, then joy rose in his heart, "Finally! When did it happen, today while I was asleep?"

"Mm." Jiang Ruyi sighed lightly, reflecting, "It was yesterday."

Seeing our miserable state and hearing about what we went through, she went into advancement mode."

"I see." Lu Ran also felt somewhat emotional. What a pleasant surprise.

Had their brush with death stimulated Tian Tian?

While they talked, the trio arrived at the ground floor dining hall.

The dining hall was full of patrons, but discipline was maintained. Everyone, whether eating or conversing, did so quietly.

Jiang Ruyi supported Si Xianxian to a seat, leaving Lu Ran to handle the food serving.

However, before he finished serving the meals, three excited figures burst into the dining hall.

"Sister Ruyi!"

"Brother Lu!" The voices completely disrupted the quiet atmosphere of the dining hall.

The staff, however, did not intervene.

Anyone could sense the genuine joy from the three youths.

In fact, this scene was common in Stone City.

There were always Believers who got separated from their teams and trainees who were seriously injured.

Stone City, standing staunchly in the Demon Cave, served as the Human Clan's stronghold and a place for scattered people to have joyful reunions.

The staff naturally wouldn't rob them of this joy, watching the scene unfold with smiles.

"Too awesome, Brother Lu?" Deng Yutang approached excitedly, slinging an arm around Lu Ran's shoulder and shaking him vigorously.

"Aye, you're spilling it!" Lu Ran, holding his plate, urged quickly.

"You dared to confront a River Realm Evil Dog?!" Deng Yutang grew more excited.

As soon as he spoke, the patrons watching quietly around the dining hall were stunned!

The staff knew the details of Lu Ran's team's ordeal, but other trainees did not!

Suddenly, the room was filled with diverse expressions, all quite spectacular.

What had they just heard?

A River Realm Evil Dog?

"Not too bad." Lu Ran curled his lips, "A River Realm Evil Dog is just a bit taller and longer than a River Grade one.

That's all."

Everyone: ???

Deng Yutang widened his eyes: "Just that?"

"Go easy, don't spill the food." Lu Ran, holding a serving spoon, scooped another spoonful of rice.

His plate wasn't full yet.

All set then~

"Just that?!" Deng Yutang was overly excited, slapping Lu Ran on the back, "That was a River Realm Evil Dog with Evil Shadow Flash!"

"Ssst..."

"Ah??"

Throughout the dining hall, there were gasps of disbelief.

Many exchanged looks, finding it incredible.

Lu Ran didn't know it, but such expressions had also appeared on the faces of Team Leader Zhou Tian and his teammate.

It was after the battle ended when the two soldiers lay on the battlefield, unable to speak as they looked at the aftermath.

The terrifying River Realm Evil Dog had once made people despair, feeling as though their end was near.

After the battle, it lay bleeding profusely on the wild, breathless.

Si Xianxian, standing proudly like a goddess of war, dispersed the flames.

Jiang Ruyi, anxious and alone, dove into surging quicksand to rescue the unconscious Lu Ran...

Others could hardly imagine how this scene had shocked Zhou Tian.

A River Realm Evil Dog!

And one that possessed a core Evil Technique!

Zhou Tian and his teammate had been prepared to sacrifice themselves.

Even then, with their lives on the line, they had no idea if Lu Ran and others could make it out alive.

Zhou Tian and his team certainly never expected that this battle would not require any sacrifices.

Three trainees from River Realm, stages one to three, executed astonishing teamwork.

Lu Ran, facing death unflinchingly and using himself as bait, had employed incredible skills to utterly destroy that powerful Evil Dog...

What defines a Heavenly Pride?

What does it mean to be "peerless in the rain-soaked alley"?

This battle had given Zhou Tian a perfect answer.

"It was indeed tough," Lu Ran holding his tray, finally said something sensible.

Even he admitted it was "tough," one could imagine just how dangerous the River Realm Evil Dog was and the immense pressure it had put on Lu Ran.

"Take this over for me," Lu Ran asked, not waiting for Deng Yutang to speak again, and handed over the tray.

Deng Yutang clearly had a lot more to say but was stumped by Lu Ran.

Under Lu Ran's urging, Deng Yutang reluctantly played waiter, carrying the tray over to serve Jiang Ruyi.

With several trips back and forth, Lu Ran finally returned to the dining table.

Lu Ran, looking at the obedient Tian Tian, said with a smile, "Congratulations."

Tian Tian revealed a sweet smile, but it quickly vanished as she slightly bowed her head and said softly,

"If I had advanced earlier, I could have helped Master and Sister Ruyi."

The girl's self-reproaching look was heart-wrenching and also moved Jiang Ruyi.

After all, not just anyone had the courage to face a River Realm Evil Dog.

Jiang Ruyi felt she understood Tian Tian quite well and didn't think the girl was merely saying nice words or lying.

Moreover, from the timing of Tian Tian's advancement, one could deduce some clues about her true feelings.

"Why Master and Sister Ruyi?" Lu Ran suddenly asked.

"Hmm?" Tian Tian looked puzzled at Lu Ran.

Jiang Ruyi was touched, but Lu Ran had disrupted the mood.

"Hehe~" Si Xianxian laughed weakly, "Shouldn't it be Master and Mistress, right?"

Tian Tian opened her mouth wide, only to see Jiang Ruyi's face slightly blushing.

The strong and composed Sister Ruyi, ever elegant and detached, her power only intensified her "deification" in Tian Tian's eyes.

So, Jiang Ruyi's bashful appearance now was indeed captivating for Tian Tian!

"Nonsense, such an old-fashioned title," Jiang Ruyi muttered, pushing Si Xianxian away with discontent.

Si Xianxian, like a puddle of mud, sloppily leaned to the other side.

"Be careful." Jiang Ruyi immediately pulled her back, letting her lean against herself.

"Heh," Si Xianxian, head resting on Jiang Ruyi's shoulder, smiled wildly at Lu Ran, teasing, "What are you grinning at?"

Think you've got it all figured out? Look,

can anyone not easily manipulate such a softhearted girl?"

Jiang Ruyi: ???

Lu Ran: "..."

Chapter 229: All is Love

On the ninth day of the lunar month, at the foot of the Witch Crow Mountain.

Lu Ran and his companions, aiming to beat the closure of the Demon Cave, took the initiative to leave Evil Dog Village a day before it sealed.

"It's started to rain." Chang Ying stepped out of the central building, standing under the eaves, watching the layers of rain curtain.

She didn't need to step into the rain to know just how cold it would feel.

Lu Ran came up beside Chang Ying and patted the girl's back, "After we get back, make sure to reflect well on your experience."

"I got it." Chang Ying pouted slightly and responded softly.

In the current squad, she was now the only one who was not a River Realm Believer.

During their half-month stay in Evil Dog Village, it was on the seventh day, the day Lu Ran and the others were attacked, that Tian Tian opened the gate to advancement.

And just last night, Deng Yutang had finally had a flash of inspiration and started his advancement dramatically.

The energy fluctuation he caused was particularly intense, even waking the girls sleeping in the next room.

Lu Ran lay on his small bed, silently watching Deng Yutang level up.

This time, "Quick Bro" didn't fall behind.

As a Fierce Heavenly Believer of the Red Scarf, Deng Yutang even advanced faster than a Fourth-class God·Spiritual Sign Believer!

This also indirectly confirmed that the so-called "flash of inspiration" really isn't solely about talent.

Otherwise, Deng Yutang couldn't possibly surpass Chang Ying.

It's worth mentioning that after Deng Yutang successfully advanced, Lu Ran immediately asked him what kind of thoughts led to his epiphany.

Deng Yutang's response was a simple and straightforward one — You.

Honestly, the atmosphere was a little bit ambiguous at the time...

Lu Ran was somewhat at a loss.

Your mind is full of me, and then you have a flash of inspiration?

If Deng Yutang were a girl, Lu Ran would think he was being confessed to...

On second thought, it made sense.

Deng Yutang was indeed extremely proud and ambitious.

And all along, Lu Ran had shown amazing talent and combat power, always taking the lead.

Of course, Deng Yutang would see Lu Ran as the target to chase, as his role model in life.

Having gotten such a response, and combining it with Tian Tian's previous "epiphany," Lu Ran couldn't help but sigh inwardly.

The insights and understandings he provided for his teammates were centered around his hometown.

However, both Tian Tian and Deng Yutang had not needed to use Lu Ran's experiences.

Instead, Deng Yuxiang, who was even more powerful, had fully digested and absorbed Lu Ran's insights when she was advancing from River Realm Fifth Rank to the Jiang Realm.

The two matched perfectly, and under Lu Ran's guidance, she became a powerhouse.

Well... how should I put it?

It seems that master classes are truly meant for the top professionals in the industry.

Deng, Tian, Chang, these little minions are not quite there yet!

"Do you think I might be stuck in Stream Realm Fifth Rank forever?" Chang Ying looked up at the overcast sky and said in a low voice.

"How could that be?" Lu Ran half comforted and half rebuked her, "Even if everyone thinks that, you alone shouldn't think that way!"

Chang Ying's expression was downcast as she whispered, "But there are so many people in the world who are forever stuck at the Stream Realm Fifth Rank.

I don't seem to have anything special."

It was clear that Deng Yutang's overtaking had hit the girl hard.

Suddenly, an idea struck Lu Ran: "After we get back, pray earnestly in front of the shrine."

As he spoke, Lu Ran grabbed Chang Ying's arm with a whisper, urging her to bow her head:

"Only if you are devout enough and offer enough Power of Faith, maybe, Lord Spiritual Sign might be willing to give you a hand?"

Chang Ying: "Hmm..."

How unsightly Divine-Spiritual Sign dines is something the world witnesses.

Within its sect's Divine Techniques, those countless rotten spiritual signs exist just to force believers to pray devoutly.

Lord Spiritual Sign won't care whether it's a matter of life and death for you.

On the contrary, the more desperate your situation, the more devout your prayers become after drawing a rotten spiritual sign.

After all, if you show even the slightest disrespect, then forget about the skill cooldown period...

In order to survive, the believers must suppress all negative emotions and offer the purest Power of Faith to Divine-Spiritual Sign.

Since Lord Spiritual Sign behaves this way, Lu Ran couldn't help thinking the worst.

What if Divine-Spiritual Sign was meddling from the shadows, feeling Chang Ying hadn't offered enough Power of Faith, and was therefore deliberately suppressing her level to prevent her from advancing?

Could there be such a possibility?

Who knows?

"Just listen to me; once you get home, pray day and night." Of course, Lu Ran dare not voice his true thoughts; he could only offer such advice.

Lu Ran was really putting a lot of effort into it and continued, "Also, when you pray, don't forget to reflect.

You know Tian Tian and Deng Yutang's experience of advancing; try them out one by one, think about them, there's no harm."

"Mmm-hmm, I'll listen to you," Chang Ying nodded.

"What are you two doing over there?" A sweet voice came from behind.

Lu Ran turned his head to see Si Xianxian with an unhappy face, her beautiful eyes scanning the pair as she blurted out:

"Whispering secrets?"

Lu Ran rolled his eyes, annoyed.

Actually, Chang Ying was also puzzled, why did Lu Ran insist on whispering?

The reason...

Of course, was because Lu Ran had a guilty conscience!

Anyone who heard what Lu Ran just said wouldn't be able to find any fault with it.

The issue was, when providing advice, Lu Ran was harboring a disrespectful heart towards Divine-Spiritual Sign!

This special mental state inadvertently reflected in his actions.

"What are you plotting?" Si Xianxian stepped forward and pulled Lu Ran away from Chang Ying.

"Nothing, just giving Chang Ying some advice, hoping she will be able to advance soon," Lu Ran said helplessly.

Si Xianxian muttered, "Men and women shouldn't be so casual with each other; be more mindful.

Ruyi is such a good girl, next month she will take me out to...uhh, Ruyi is such a good girl, you can't let her down."

Lu Ran: ???

How do they even relate!

Lu Ran lowered his head to look at Si Xianxian's hand clutching his arm:

"Men and women shouldn't be so casual, so what are you doing?"

Si Xianxian raised her eyebrow, "I'm different, I'm you two's Sister Xian'er, I don't fancy you!"

Lu Ran cracked a smile, "Chang Ying doesn't fancy me either, she doesn't like scrawny guys...hey?"

Lu Ran scratched his head.

Why am I insulting myself?

Si Xianxian's face was twisted, trying hard not to laugh.

"Pfft...HAHAHAHAHA!"

In the end, the Fierce Heavenly girl couldn't hold it in any longer, laughing unrestrainedly.

"Buzz off," Lu Ran gave Si Xianxian a nudge and pushed her away, "I'll see you off in a bit, go home properly."

"Hmph," Si Xianxian's smile slowly faded away, "Perform well on the fifteenth; I'll be watching."

"Aren't you on duty on the fifteenth?"

"I have no teammates, not going makes no difference. Besides, the Moon Gazers don't trust me; they are going to assign a bunch of people to watch me anyway."

Hearing that, Lu Ran nodded affirmatively.

That makes sense.

If you put a Fierce Heavenly Believer in a sanctuary, they might blow up even without the help of an Evil Demon.

"We ready to go?" Deng Yutang's voice came from behind.

There he was, Deng Yutang, striding forward with a somewhat triumphant air.

"Did you submit the mission report?"

"Yeah, Brother Lu, you can count on me! I've even got the military's evaluation report," Deng Yutang shook the camouflaged backpack he was carrying.

"Rustle rustle~"

You could hear that it was filled to the brim with Demon Crystals.

Deng Yutang, "Brother Lu, you didn't exchange your share of Demon Crystals for money, right?"

Lu Ran nodded, "That's right."

"We didn't either; here." Deng Yutang handed the backpack over to Lu Ran, "Go for it!"

Tian Tian also clenched her small fist with encouragement, "Master, go for it!"

Lu Ran caught the strap of the backpack with one hand, moved by the gesture.

Suddenly, Jiang Ruyi raised her hand.

In her pale palm lay a Demon Crystal half the size of a hand.

One should know, the Demon Crystals from Evil Dogs at the Mist and Stream levels were only the size of a fingertip, and River Grade crystals were a little bigger, but not by much.

Yet, the crystal that the girl held was quite sizable, catching the stealthy glances of the soldiers standing guard in the distance.

"River Grade Evil Dog Demon Crystal," Jiang Ruyi looked towards Lu and Si.

Si Xianxian motioned with her hand, "Give them all to Lu Ran, he's about to level up, right?

Help him push through; who knows, he might succeed?"

Jiang Ruyi handed it to Lu Ran with a playful tone, "Looks like you're quite liked; everyone supports you."

Lu Ran indeed was close to leveling up.

Three or four days earlier, he felt that he was touching the bottleneck of River Realm First Rank.

Reflecting back, he had first entered the River Realm on the eighth day of December last year.

Two full months had already passed!

This journey through the River Realm was indeed arduous...

"I'll definitely give it my all!" Lu Ran took the River Grade Demon Crystal and nodded vigorously.

Demon Crystals were meant to help high-level believers break through and level up.

Believers at the Mist and Stream realms could also try absorbing a large amount of Demon Crystals when stuck at a level.

But honestly, it's hardly necessary.

When you're at the Mist or Stream level, the energy you can draw from in front of the shrine is enough to help you advance.

If you can't progress further, it's not due to a lack of energy but rather a lack of talent.

After believers advance to the River Realm, that's when the value of Demon Crystals becomes apparent.

At this moment, Lu Ran was in the ideal position to use Demon Crystals!

He had faintly grasped the bottleneck but was unable to initiate the leveling up mode.

Now, Lu Ran could try to absorb a large number of Demon Crystals all at once, attempting to break the shackles.

It must be noted that this method only applies to levels 1 to 4 within a major realm.

If you're at level 5, no amount of Demon Crystals will help.

After all, you need not only energy but also a "flash of inspiration."

"Rustle rustle~"

Lu Ran weighed the heavy backpack and listened to the crisp, pleasant sound.

It was full of love!

He looked up, scanning across the familiar faces, and seeing his teammates' encouraging and well-wishing expressions, Lu Ran sighed inwardly.

In the future, when his teammates reach the bottleneck of their levels, he must kill more Evil Demons, collect more Demon Crystals.

And pay them back double!

For now, Master Ran would gladly accept this bulging pack.

Before participating in "Heavenly Pride," whether I can breakthrough and advance will depend on it!

Chapter 230: Ruyi

At noon, the Rain Alley Home Community.

Lu Ran carried a heavy backpack, arriving at his small bedroom.

"Thud~"

The backpack hit the ground, making a clinking sound of Demon Crystals colliding.

Lu Ran stood in front of the shrine, hands clasped together, "Lord Immortal Goat, your disciple has returned.

This trip to Evil Dog Village, the Evil Sculpture at the Sculpture Garden has been cultivated to the River Realm·Fifth Rank."

Inside the shrine, the White Sheep Jade Carving remained silent without any reaction.

Lu Ran continued, "Disciple feels that he is about to advance..."

As he reported on his situation, Lord Immortal Goat still did not manifest.

After waiting a moment, Lu Ran bowed and turned directly towards the bathroom.

When Lu Ran returned to the bedroom refreshing and clean after his shower, he noticed a rather amusing scene.

A little tabby was pawing at the backpack, peeking inside.

This little thing, is it really that smart? Even knows how to unzip things by itself?

"Meow~"

Noticing someone had arrived, the little tabby lifted its fluffy little head, looking curiously at Lu Ran.

"Come here." Lu Ran squatted down and beckoned to the little tabby.

The tabby turned its head and bolted toward the door.

"Baa~"

"Meow?" The tabby paused in its actions and turned its head back towards Lu Ran.

"You really are forgetful," Lu Ran said, watching the little tabby that he had forcefully changed its will, quickly returning.

Little thing,

what use is there in resisting?

"Just give in to me, heh heh~"

Lu Ran stretched out a pair of demon claws and scooped the little tabby into a full embrace.

He didn't even need to pet the cat, simply enjoying was enough.

Under the control of Divine Technique·Voice of Compassion, the little tabby had its mind fully focused on Lu Ran, continuously rubbing affectionately against its master.

Lu Ran quickly walked to the shrine and sat down with a plop.

He unzipped the backpack and grabbed the bottom, lifting and shaking it vigorously.

"Rustle~"

Piles of Demon Crystals poured out, scattering all over the ground.

Lu Ran looked around, feeling the surging energy.

Whether or not he succeeded in advancing, he needed to absorb these Demon Crystals cleanly before he turned fifteen.

Otherwise, Lu Ran's house would catch the attention of the Evil Demon Clan.

Although Lord Immortal Goat was present, the petty might not dare to act recklessly, but there was no need for Lu Ran to trouble his divine protector.

"Be good," Lu Ran said as he sat cross-legged, holding the little tabby in his arms, gently stroking it, "Let's advance together."

"Meow~"

Suddenly, Lu Ran thought of something and looked up at the shrine, "Oh right, Lord Immortal Goat, during this training, your disciple encountered a River Realm Evil Dog.

That thing is really fierce! Thank you for guiding me to activate the Evil Sculpture.

The combination with this Evil Technique is simply amazing!"

While Lu Ran spoke, his heart was full of emotion.

Even a stupid Evil Dog, once equipped with the Instant Teleportation Technique, could become this powerful...

Once I advance to River Realm·Third Rank and equip the Evil Technique·Evil Shadow Flash, wouldn't I be unstoppable?

"After you've mastered this technique, you'll be qualified to venture into some places."

The transmitted message suddenly arrived, Lord Immortal Goat's voice was as deep and hoarse as ever.

"Oh?" Lu Ran perked up, "What places?"

Lu Ran waited expectantly but didn't receive a response.

"Are you talking about the depths of the Demon Cave?"

"Right, I've seen the North Wind Divine Ruins, there were North Wind Disciples who entered and then disappeared, I don't know where they were transported."

"Lord Immortal Goat, please speak?"

"Where can I actually go?"

Lu Ran was numbed!

Such a Divine Goat, good at killing but not at hiding!

Dropping a line and running away, leaving a curiously desperate Lu Ran scratching his head in front of the shrine.

"Lord Immortal Goat..." Lu Ran was completely helpless.

If I had your intriguing ability, wouldn't little Ruyi be utterly captivated by me?

Lu Ran sighed, trying to gather his emotions, gradually entering the state of cultivation.

It seemed that Lord Immortal Goat said this to fuel the fire, to encourage his disciple to cultivate more diligently and advance.

Until two days later, around noon, a phone call disturbed Lu Ran.

Thinking it was the Divine People Bureau calling, he quickly moved to his bed to pick up the phone.

But upon seeing the caller ID, Lu Ran was surprised and answered, "Chang Ying?"

"Ranbao!!"

Chang Ying's voice burst with excitement.

Lu Ran immediately pulled the phone away from his ear.

Chang Ying screamed excitedly, "I've advanced! Haha! I've advanced!"

Lu Ran was infected by her sheer joy and chuckled, "Congratulations?"

Chang Ying spoke rapidly, "I took your advice, since coming home, I've been kneeling and praying before Lord Spirit Tag..."

Lu Ran nodded silently.

Lord Spirit Tag, what a tactic!

After planting this seed in Chang Ying's heart, she would naturally be even more devoted in her prayers to the deity.

Of course, all this was Lu Ran's speculation.

It could also be a coincidence, that Chang Ying just happened to have a revelation at this time.

"How about you?" Chang Ying reported her good news and didn't forget to care about Lu Ran.

"I..." Lu Ran paused, struggling to say a few words, "Nearly there."

"Eh?" Chang Ying put down the phone looking at the screen, "I was calling Ranbao, how come Deng Yutang picked up?"

Lu Ran hung up the phone irritated.

"Beep...beep...beep..."

Lu Ran put down his phone, looking at the large number of Demon Crystals scattered across the bedroom floor.

At this moment, he still hadn't absorbed the Demon Crystals.

In the past two days, Lu Ran had been preparing.

Not practicing day and night, but eating and sleeping regularly, maintaining his best spiritual state.

At this time, Lu Ran believed he had brought his body and spirit to their peak condition.

He was ready to absorb the Demon Crystals and break through in one go.

"Knock knock knock~"

Suddenly, there was a knock on the door, which slightly startled Lu Ran.

He quickly walked out of the small bedroom to answer it.

"Click."

As the security door swung open, a tall and graceful figure entered his sight.

"Wow!" Lu Ran exclaimed softly, as if thrown back to last autumn.

The visitor was Jiang Ruyi.

She was wearing the light-colored long windbreaker from the day they parted, with her black hair scattered over her shoulders.

Still as pure and enchanting as before.

The only difference was that she no longer wore a dark red knitted scarf around her neck.

And compared to last year, Jiang Ruyi appeared taller, her style and temperament even more striking.

"Hehe~" Jiang Ruyi watched the dumbfounded Lu Ran with a smile, "Are you planning to let me stand here forever?"

Indeed, Lu Ran hadn't invited the visitor in, but asked, "What's the meaning, you're leaving again?"

Hearing this, Jiang Ruyi was taken aback.

Lu Ran was steadfast, "We had agreed, if you were coming to say goodbye...

Then don't bother entering this house."

"Really?" Jiang Ruyi raised her eyebrows slightly, playful, "Then I might just leave?"

Lu Ran was shocked, "You really want to leave?"

Jiang Ruyi's eyes teased a bit, "Are you really not letting me in?"

"Come in, come in," Lu Ran said with a grimace, stepping back several paces.

Jiang Ruyi stepped inside, and only then did Lu Ran notice she was carrying a shopping bag filled to the brim.

Lu Ran took it immediately, seeing it was stocked with meat, vegetables, and other ingredients.

"What's this?" Lu Ran was curious.

However, Jiang Ruyi stood still, looking at the slippers on the shoe rack, unmoving.

Lu Ran: "..."

Women indeed have a thousand faces.

When she was with her teammates, she was a calm and collected leader, not at all "lively" and even slightly mischievous like this.

Lu Ran bent down to grab the slippers and threw them beside her feet, "You're not here to cook for me, are you?"

Indeed, Jiang Ruyi was waiting for Lu Ran to fetch her shoes.

She slipped off her boots, put on the slippers, and whispered, "I'm not leaving."

"Heh," Lu Ran snorted, "Looking at your outfit, I'm a bit intimidated.

Feels like a dream returning to autumn."

Listening to Lu Ran's rambling, Jiang Ruyi could sense his slight nervousness.

Involuntarily, a happy smile appeared on the girl's face.

Regarding the phrase "smiling like a blooming flower," Lu Ran saw the perfect interpretation.

Well... mainly because Jiang Ruyi carried a light jasmine fragrance, inevitably making Lu Ran think of that phrase.

"Meow?" A cat meow came from behind Lu Ran.

Jiang Ruyi slightly tilted her head, "Long time no see, little tabby."

Her long hair cascaded down, making Lu Ran's heart skip a beat.

The tabby wasn't moved, because the automatic feeder suddenly activated!

It meowed loudly, purely a conditioned response, darting towards a corner of the living room.

Jiang Ruyi took steps past Lu Ran, "You said this morning, you're almost ready and planning to break through tonight?"

"Earlier than I expected, I'm ready now." Lu Ran followed, carrying a bag of ingredients.

"Good thing I came early." Jiang Ruyi whispered as she reached the bedroom door and saw the Demon Crystals scattered all over the floor.

She frowned slightly, "With Lord Immortal here, you could've cleaned up a bit."

Lu Ran leaned against the doorframe, "What do you know, this creates atmosphere."

Jiang Ruyi couldn't help but shake her head and laugh.

After all, this was a matter between Lu Ran and his deity, and since Lord Immortal Goat didn't mind, it wasn't her place to say more.

The girl didn't plan on ruining the so-called "atmosphere."

She tiptoed, finding spaces between the scattered Demon Crystals, and made her way to the shrine.

Seeing this, Lu Ran couldn't help but be amused.

This silly girl, is she taking this seriously?

"Jiang Ruyi, greets Lord Immortal Goat." Jiang Ruyi clasped her hands together, respectfully bowed her head, "Sorry for disturbing you."

The shrine remained silent.

After a bow, Jiang Ruyi walked back.

Seeing Lu Ran still holding the ingredients, she couldn't help but grin.

At this moment, their views were quite similar: both thought the other was foolish.

"Go cultivate, I'll be very quiet," Jiang Ruyi took the ingredients from his hand.

"Are you going to make me a big meal?" Lu Ran asked again, his heart stirred.

Over the past two days since returning home, he had indeed been eating canned food and drinking cold water...

Little Ruyi is truly considerate!

Jiang Ruyi, "I learned a dish during my cultivation at Jade Gate, "

She paused slightly before continuing, "Beef and goji berry soup, I'll let you taste it."

"Great, great!" Lu Ran was delighted, even feeling hungry already.

Jiang Ruyi gestured towards the bedroom, "Go on, keep a normal mind."

"Sure!" Lu Ran walked into the small bedroom, kicking the Demon Crystals along the way.

Jiang Ruyi: "..."

So earlier, you just watched me tiptoe back and forth?

Lu Ran sat down in front of the shrine, looking at the door's silhouette, "Don't just stand there, go cook!"

Jiang Ruyi smiled and glared at Lu Ran.

She held the doorknob, gently closing the bedroom door.

"Click~"

Lu Ran sat cross-legged, immediately closed his eyes, and quickly entered the state.

Just a door away.

Jiang Ruyi quietly stood, eyes lowered, murmuring in her heart.

May the deities bless you,

bless Lu Ran with a smooth and satisfying breakthrough...