

Summit of the Old Gods

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Chapter 26: 016 Divine Power Treasure Ball

This world is indeed very dangerous, very cruel.

Even if you just want to be an ordinary person, to live an ordinary life, you need to give it your all.

On every full moon night, Evil Demons of any strength rank could descend and wreak havoc among the human realm.

After each fifteenth of the lunar month, the casualty reports from around the world are a bloody reality.

"After this month's fifteenth, I hope I can still see all of you," Li Yanzhu said in a solemn voice.

The previously cheerful atmosphere in the classroom vanished, leaving nothing but dead silence.

Li Yanzhu gave the students time to reflect before she spoke: "Team 98."

Jiang Ruyi and Deng Yutang immediately stood up.

As for why Lu Ran didn't stand... it was because he had been standing all along, he hadn't sat down at all.

Li Yanzhu took out three small red boxes and placed them on the podium: "In this assessment, your team ranked first in the entire school.

These are your prizes; come and get them."

The trio immediately stepped out and walked towards the podium.

The school's rewards were distributed according to the team's ranking.

Individual rankings only provided Believer points as a reward; for everything else, the students could go home and report to their gods.

For a Believer, recognition from a god is undoubtedly the greatest praise!

Whether a god would bestow their blessings or take an interest in offering you a few pointers, that's between you and your god.

"Check it out," Li Yanzhu said, looking at Jiang Ruyi who had approached the podium, her voice much gentler.

Jiang Ruyi picked up a box and gently opened it to find a Treasure Bead inside.

The Treasure Bead was only the size of a fingertip, seemingly made of crystal but not particularly clear.

Visible to the naked eye were wisps of mist flowing within the Treasure Bead.

A Divine Power Bead!

And judging by the size and specification, it should be a Stream Divine Power Bead.

In this world, the strength ranks of Believers, the grades of Divine Techniques, and the quality of artifacts are all evaluated by a set grading system: Mist, Stream, River, River System, and Ocean.

For a high school in a small county town like Yuxiang No. 1 High School, being able to offer a "Stream Grade" Divine Power Bead as a reward for the students' first assessment is quite impressive.

It's worth mentioning that the quality of this precious item can be further improved.

Not to say that the Divine Power Bead can grow.

But Da Xia has an exclusive welfare policy for novice Believers.

During the summer vacation, as long as Lu Ran can complete the corresponding tasks, he can exchange the old for the new and get a higher-grade Divine Power Bead.

Li Yanzhu cautioned: "When using this Treasure Bead to assist in battle, you must never drain all the Divine Power from within it.

Now, feel the total amount of Divine Power inside the bead; this portion of Divine Power ensures the normal operation of the Divine Power Bead.

Unless it is a matter of life and death, never kill the goose that lays the golden eggs!"

"Okay, Teacher." Jiang Ruyi's fingers were slender and fair, holding the crystal-clear bead as she admired it.

For a moment, Lu Ran couldn't tell if the bead was prettier or if her hand was more exquisite.

Hmm... both are good~

"Did you two remember that?" Li Yanzhu looked at Lu Deng.

Lu Ran immediately nodded; he was all too familiar with the characteristics of a Divine Power Bead.

His father owned a Divine Power Bead, and not just one.

But on that full moon night, all that was left of his father in this world was a blood-stained Dawn Blade.

It was said that all the Divine Power Beads hanging around his father's neck were shattered.

It's hard to imagine just how brutal that battle was.

Of course, it's not ruled out that after his father's sacrifice, the Evil Demon Clan drained the energy from the beads and completely destroyed them.

But Lu Ran would rather believe the former was true.

As staunch as his father, he must have fought to the end on that night until he was completely out of resources.

"Go back," encouraged Li Yanzhu, "avoid arrogance and impetuosity, and continue to strive."

"Yes." Lu Ran closed the small box and walked briskly to his seat.

His classmates cast envious looks at him.

You should know that only the teams ranked in the top ten receive Divine Power Bead rewards!

As for students from other teams, they can only buy Divine Power Beads privately.

And the Divine Power Beads circulating on the market are mostly the lowest-grade, Mist Grade Divine Power Beads.

A single Mist Grade Divine Power Bead can only store the energy of 8 to 10 Mist Realm Evil Demons, a very small storage capacity.

A single Stream Grade Divine Power Bead, on the other hand, can store the energy of 8 to 10 Stream Realm Evil Demons, equivalent to the energy of 80 to 100 Mist Realm Evil Demons!

What a gap!

What's more terrifying is...

The Stream Grade Divine Power Bead is already good enough, and Lu Ran, being one of the top ten, can upgrade the grade of this bead through summer tasks!

What does it mean to be one step ahead?

Life's just a breeze!

The question arises:

Why are people so obsessed with possessing Divine Power Beads when the Demon Crystals dropped by the Evil Demon Clan also have an endurance effect?

Firstly, the Divine Power Bead can squeeze out the last bit of energy from the body of an Evil Demon.

Take the corpse bones of the Evil Demon-Evil Dog, for example; only a Divine Power Bead can extract energy from the dog's corpse; otherwise, it is simply a set of bones.

Secondly, many Evil Demons have no physical bodies!

Like Evil Demon-Yan Zhi.

She appears to be a flesh-and-blood body, but in reality, her body is made up of pure energy. Killing Yan Zhi doesn't drop a Demon Crystal.

You can think of Yan Zhi's body as a "Demon Crystal."

However, you can't just directly absorb her while she's alive — you have to shatter her and collect the energy into the bead.

"Now, summer just got busier."

Lu Ran suppressed the joy in his heart, played with the small box, and plopped down into his seat.

He planned to find a jewelry store after school to process it so he could wear the Divine Power Bead around his neck in the future.

Lu Ran hadn't sat steady yet when Li Yanzhu informed everyone to gather at the Martial Arts Arena.

Her original words were: "The instructors who led your teams during the assessment in Evil Dog Village have been invited to the school and are waiting at the Martial Arts Arena.

Any problems you encountered in actual combat can be consulted with the instructors."

Hearing this, Lu Ran couldn't help but raise an eyebrow.

Instructor Dou Zhiqiang came?

Does this mean that when I go to the Martial Arts Arena later, I'll see Wu Shanshan?

"After seeing former teammates, don't be impulsive, speak nicely," Jiang Ruyi moved her arm, lightly touching Lu Ran's elbow.

Lu Ran: "..."

I am not someone who is impulsive and irritable.

I just couldn't bear it anymore, that's why I got into a fight with Kou Yingquan.

"Did you hear me?" The girl looked at Lu Ran, earnestly persuading.

Lu Ran gestured to the middle of the desk: "Hand, hand over the line."

Jiang Ruyi rolled her eyes.

Are you a primary school student?

Seeing that the girl didn't move, Lu Ran immediately reached out to grab her: "Once it's on my side of the desk, it's mine!"

Jiang Ruyi hastily withdrew her delicate hand.

Annoyed, she glared at Lu Ran again, but her gaze met his elbow over the line, and she immediately said: "You've crossed the line too."

"Yep, for you, for you." Lu Ran quickly extended his hand, "If you like it, it's all yours."

"Who likes it." With her face flushed, Jiang Ruyi became annoyed and slapped Lu Ran's arm.

"Slap~"

"Everyone, go to the Martial Arts Arena now," Li Yanzhu's voice sounded again, "Team 98 stays behind!"

Jiang Ruyi immediately bowed her head, thinking that it was her own little action that was noticed, leading the team to be left behind.

For a moment, she was so angry that she had the urge to bite Lu Ran.

The students in the class got up and left quickly.

Until the classroom was empty, Deng Jiang Lu, upon the teacher's gesture, gathered again around the podium.

"The school notified that there were some adjustments to your team," Li Yanzhu looked at the three, "The school took your wishes into account, and for now, you three will remain unchanged."

Hearing this, Jiang Ruyi relaxed inside, while Lu Deng was even more reassured.

Li Yanzhu advised: "It's normal for team members to change; don't take it the wrong way. Before the start of senior year, it is the stage to form and adapt to teams; no team is fixed."

"We know." Jiang Ruyi whispered back, "Last night, Wu Shanshan also called me to explain."

"Ah?"

Deng Yutang and Lu Ran looked at Jiang, their class leader, in unison.

Li Yanzhu nodded: "Your results are very good; the school has listed you as key trainees; many students want to join you. After comprehensive consideration by the school, four candidate students have been selected for you. They are all under different gods and have individual features that suit your team.

Over the next two days, these four students will come to you at different times to report and undergo trial training."

"Ha ha, it should be!" Deng Yutang laughed.

Lu Ran also became interested: "Am I a judge now?"

Feels a bit like Da Xia's Got Talent?

Want to make me turn around, you've gotta bring your A-game, huh~

Li Yanzhu looked at Jiang Ruyi: "Before eight o'clock tomorrow night, you summarize the team's opinions and choose a new teammate from the four candidates, then report to me."

"Okay, Teacher Li."

"Go," Li Yanzhu waved her hand, "to Martial Arts Arena 13."

"Yes!"

"Thank you, Teacher Li."

The trio bid farewell to their homeroom teacher and quickly left, heading to the Martial Arts Arena located in the woods on the north side of the school.

The Martial Arts Arena was actually just a series of cement plots fenced off with wire mesh, much like basketball courts.

The difference was that there were no basketball hoops there, only weapon racks, which held various wooden weapon

On the way, Deng Yutang curiously asked: "Class leader, what did Wu Shanshan say to you?"

"She said that after discussing with teachers and family, they felt she was not quite right for this team."

Jiang Ruyi spoke softly, then added: "She also wished us to become stronger and stronger and to keep getting good results."

"Heh." Deng Yutang scoffed, "Where does she not fit in?"

"Well, there's one thing that's quite true," Jiang Ruyi thought, "Wu Shanshan said this isn't her team."

"Does she want to be the team leader?" Deng Yutang looked perplexed.

If Wu Shanshan wanted to be a leader, rather than not trusting her teammates or being prejudiced against Lu Ran...

Then Deng Yutang would indeed respect her a bit more.

"I see the instructor," Lu Ran interrupted the two's conversation, pointing towards the distance.

Through the wire mesh, they saw a familiar figure.

Wu Shanshan wasn't seen; presumably, she had joined a team.

"Instructor Dou!"

"Instructor," they quickened their pace and jogged onto the field.

Dou Zhiqiang spoke: "There's not much time, so I'll start with the problems you encountered during the mission."

This soldier was indeed quick to the point.

Lu Ran raised his hand: "Instructor, I have a question. Could you answer it for me first?"

"Go on."

Lu Ran: "I've been wondering, how did I get these 98 points?"

The scores of this assessment were reported by the proctoring instructors and then issued by the military.

And in the military's individual score ranking, the second place was only 87 points; Lu Ran was leading by a landslide!

Dou Zhiqiang explained: "Your understanding and application of the Immortal Sheep sect's Divine Techniques far exceeded others."

Lu Ran: "I see..."

Dou Zhiqiang continued: "Because of your outstanding performance, your team transformed, overpowering the Evil Dog Clan.

Your success rate reached 100%, your killing efficiency was higher, and you were also safer."

"Heh heh~" Lu Ran smiled, "Look at this commotion."

Dou Zhiqiang kept a stern face: "Any other questions?"

Lu Ran: "..."

Why so fierce?

Dou Zhiqiang coldly said: "If not, I'll begin."

Lu Ran raised his hand again.

Dou Zhiqiang frowned slightly: "Ask."

Lu Ran boldly asked: "Since I'm so powerful, where did I lose those two points?"

Dou Zhiqiang: ? ? ?

Deng Yutang was also a bit stunned: "Geez."

Jiang Ruyi, quick-witted, grabbed Lu Ran's wrist and pressed down his raised hand:

"Instructor, just tell us our problems, Lu Ran has no more questions."

Lu Ran felt uncomfortable.

How is it that I don't have any questions?

According to the instructor's statement, even a full mark couldn't stop me; I should get 120 points!

Chapter 27: 017 Sword Lily and Red Scarf

The strict instructor began to elaborate on the problems of the squad, without mincing words.

After a severe critique, Lu Ran almost thought that his team had finished last.

It wasn't until the group was so berated that they began to question their life choices that Dou Zhiqiang finally turned to leave.

"The instructor is really strict," Lu Ran said, watching the instructor's retreating figure, hands helplessly on his hips.

"Brother Lu." Deng Yutang looked towards Lu Ran and said something that had been suppressed in his heart, "Do you really intend to score perfect marks?"

"I was just saying that," Lu Ran said with a smile.

Jiang Ruyi and Deng glanced at each other, not revealing Lu Ran's modesty.

After the scene on the rooftop yesterday, both teammates were certain that Lu Ran was determined to prove himself!

Both to make a noise for Lord Immortal Sheep, and to shatter the world's mockery and doubt.

"Ruyi." Suddenly, a man's voice rang out not far away.

Everyone turned their heads and saw through a wire fence a middle-aged man walking with a young girl.

"Teacher Zhao," Jiang Ruyi greeted politely.

Lu Ran recognized this teacher too; he was the homeroom teacher of Class 7, and the girl following him seemed somewhat familiar too.

"This is my student, Tian Tian," Teacher Zhao said with a smile, looking at the three prominent figures, "She will be training with you this morning."

The first trial trainee has arrived?

"Tian Tian," Lu Ran murmured under his breath.

Isn't she Ma Tianchuan's teammate?

During this assessment, she had achieved second place with her team.

"Hello." Tian Tian's voice was very soft, she slightly bowed to everyone.

Such an action was unexpected for everyone.

Usually, a simple greeting sufficed when meeting; why bow?

Lu Ran wore a puzzled expression and looked at Jiang Ruyi beside him: "Are we really becoming judges now?"

Jiang Ruyi smiled wryly, stepping forward to meet her.

Tian Tian was petite, with ear-length hair, appearing very docile.

"Her personality is rather introverted, please take care of her, Ruyi," Teacher Zhao spoke.

"Don't worry, Teacher," Jiang Ruyi responded generously, with a smile, "We'll train well."

The teacher nodded in satisfaction and after giving some advice to Tian Tian, he turned to leave.

Once Teacher Zhao had departed, Jiang Ruyi looked down at Tian Tian, who then dropped her gaze even lower.

So shy?

Jiang Ruyi spoke gently, "Your team achieved second place, why the change then?"

Tian Tian whispered, "They think... think that I'm not really suited for that team."

"They?" Deng Yutang asked, "Who? Your teacher or your family?"

Tian Tian just shook her head silently.

Deng Yutang frowned slightly: "Your teammates think you're not suitable?"

This time, Tian Tian didn't shake her head, but she still remained silent, failing to utter a word.

Deng Yutang's frown deepened: "What about you? Do you also think you're not suited for that team?"

Tian Tian hesitated and then stammered, "I... I don't know."

Jiang Ruyi sighed softly, "Suitability is something you should judge for yourself."

Deng Yutang put it more bluntly, "If you're being ostracized or bullied, you need to speak up!"

Tian Tian remained silent, tears welling up in her eyes.

"Alright, alright," Jiang Ruyi interrupted Deng Yutang, softly wiping Tian Tian's eyes.

Although they were all peers, Jiang Ruyi seemed more like a gentle older sister, comforting a wronged younger one.

Lu Ran silently watched the scene, feeling that Tian Tian had perhaps worshipped the wrong deity.

In people's eyes, Lu Ran, a devotee of Immortal Sheep, should have been the one to appear fragile and timid, right?

"I remember, you're a Sword Lotus believer?" Jiang Ruyi spoke softly.

"Yes, that's right." Tian Tian was flustered and hastily nodded.

She had never imagined that someone as radiant as Jiang Ruyi would notice her.

"Lord Sword Lotus is soft on the outside but tough within," Jiang Ruyi reassured, "As long as you're diligent and devoted enough, you'll come to resemble Lord Sword Lotus more and more."

"Thank you," Tian Tian whispered.

Among the ranking of deities, Sword Lotus is only one word different from Sword One, but their statuses are vastly different.

Sword Lotus ranks in the fourth row, and its Divine Sculpture portrays a budding lotus, seemingly a plant-like deity.

But don't be fooled by its appearance!

Within those delicate petals, above the lotus heart, floats a sharp sword!

At first, no one knew there was a sword among the lotuses, as the Divine Sculpture was made of stone, not transparent.

It wasn't until one day that the deity, Sword Lotus, began recruiting believers and appeared in the public eye as an apparition.

It was then that people understood why the deity was dubbed "Sword Lotus"!

It turns out, nestled within those delicate petals was indeed a formidable item!

As Jiang Ruyi mentioned, Sword Lotus believers are typically of the type who appear frail but prove resolute, and Tian Tian before them was evidently gentle to excess, lacking in resolution.

No wonder the homeroom teacher personally accompanied the student over, explicitly requesting Jiang Ruyi to take care of her.

"What's the basic Divine Technique of the Sword Lotus sect again?" Lu Ran finally spoke.

"Lotus Shield." This time, Tian Tian's response was prompt.

She didn't think that Lu Ran was unaware of this basic knowledge; clearly, he was providing her an opportunity to showcase herself.

Tian Tian extended her small hands, and with a surge of Divine Power, a lotus petal materialized in front of her.

Divine Technique: Lotus Shield!

This lotus petal was about a meter in size, pinkish-white, and exuded a fragrant aroma.

Lu Ran clucked his tongue in amazement, walking over and sniffed.

Sniff~

Delicious!

It's worth mentioning that the lotus petal was assembled by Divine Power, exhibiting a semi-transparent state.

Thus, Tian Tian could see Lu Ran sniffing around her, through the petal.

She shyly withdrew her hands.

"It seems the school thinks our squad lacks defense," Lu Ran looked towards Tian Tian, "you think so too, which is why you're here for the trial?"

"I..." Tian Tian stumbled over her words.

Jiang Ruyi placed a hand on the girl's shoulder, encouragingly saying, "Speak up.

For a squad to achieve good results, smooth communication within the team is essential."

Tian Tian hesitated for a moment then muttered, "I don't know; the homeroom teacher applied to the school on my behalf."

Everyone: "..."

Realizing the three big shots were somewhat speechless, Tian Tian lowered her head again.

After all, in her previous team, she had been spurned, how could she dare apply to train with the top squad?

Yesterday, after receiving complaints from three team members, the homeroom teacher of Class 7 repeatedly confirmed their wish to adjust, before signing up Tian Tian who was "adjusted" out.

Fortunately, the deity Tian Tian worshipped was very powerful.

The school valued the Sword Lotus believers' dual ability in offense and defense and gave her a chance to meet the top squad.

Hearing this news, Tian Tian mustered courage to come.

She had experienced being in the second-ranked team and knew what kind of people these Heaven's Chosen were.

Thus, she didn't harbor much hope.

The field grew quiet.

Tian Tian hung her head, knowing she had misspoken, yet lacked the courage to say more.

A gentle voice broke the silence: "From now on, you can stay by my side, to protect me."

"Hmm?" Tian Tian looked up in surprise at Jiang Ruyi.

That meek appearance was like that of a devotee in the presence of the sacred!

Like looking at a luminous goddess.

"You must perform well," Jiang Ruyi spoke softly, "after all, you still have three other competitors."

"I will," Tian Tian nodded eagerly, "I'll definitely work hard."

Jiang Ruyi didn't realize the pedestal she occupied in Tian Tian's heart.

In academics, martial arts, appearance, demeanor...

Including the powerful deities Jiang Ruyi worshipped at the God Worship Platform.

For two years, Tian Tian had silently witnessed the splendid rise of Goddess Jiang, never thinking she would have any interaction with such a figure.

Unexpectedly, after being kicked out of her team, by a stroke of fate, she found herself standing before her.

"Go grab your weapon," Jiang Ruyi gestured towards the weapon rack, "let's get familiar with each other's fighting style, then later we can spar with other teams."

"Yes," Tian Tian obediently turned and quickly walked towards the rack.

Jiang Ruyi watched the girl's retreating figure, sighing in her heart.

No wonder she was ostracized, this girl was too "obedient."

Lu Ran then turned to Deng Yutang beside him, inquiring, "What's with that expression, don't you like it?"

"What's there to like or dislike." Deng Yutang appeared indifferent.

Lu Ran chuckled, "A domineering rich young master like you, don't you fancy these gentle and weak girls?"

"Wrong!" Deng Yutang waved dismissively, "I prefer the type that are bold and vigorous."

Lu Ran made a strange face: "Deng Yi likes someone like Chang Ying?"

"Ah?" Deng Yutang instinctively wanted to rebut, but the more he thought about it, the brighter his eyes shone, as if he was seeing a new world.

You know... you really shouldn't say!

That chick, she really is quite something?

Wielding a Mountain Opening Axe, she's even braver than I am!

Jiang Ruyi glanced at the two, reprimanding, "Keep it down, don't let Tian Tian hear.

Also, you still don't know what your Mr. Deng likes?"

Lu Ran hurriedly said, "How would I know what he likes."

Whose Mr. Deng is this?

Sounds weird...

Deng Yutang suddenly spoke, "Brother Lu, have you seen 'Bright Sword'?"

"I've watched a few episodes, what about it?"

Deng Yutang's voice rose: "Cavalry unit!"

Lu Ran paused, unsure, and replied, "Charge?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" Deng Yutang clenched his fists, his face full of agreement and longing, "I love that kind!"

"No wonder you could become a believer of Red Scarf," Lu Ran smiled.

If the label for Sword Lotus believers was "tender outside, tough inside," "balanced in attack and defense," then the label for Red Scarf believers was "Master of Combat Spirit."

In the advanced Divine Techniques of the Red Scarf sect, there's a technique akin to "mental duel."

Once the duel begins, regardless of your realm or how powerful your martial arts and Divine Techniques are, all of these are set aside.

In the dueling arena, the only thing contestants compare is willpower.

Who lives and who dies depends entirely on personal will!

From this perspective, even an ordinary person could defeat a powerful believer.

A saying circulated in Da Xia:

There are differences among deities in the heavens, distinctions among believers on earth.

Yet the Red Scarf makes all beings equal!

A true Red Scarf believer dares to battle everything and can fight anything!

Even facing the deity group that represents "authority," or extremely powerful evil demons and spirits...

Dueling arena, open!

Cavalry unit...

Fix bayonets, charge!

Chapter 28: 018 The first thing is your lies

Tian Tian's weapon was a sword, unsurprisingly.

The group practiced several formations and, once their respective positions were clear, went to spar with other teams.

Tian Tian performed quite impressively!

After several sparring matches, she diligently guarded by Jiang Ruyi's side, using her petals to shield the Goddess from wind and rain.

Deng Yutang had once been the team's sole defensive gatekeeper, and whenever he was breached, Lu Ran had to rush to the rescue.

Now with the Sword Lotus believer on board, Deng Yutang's pressure dramatically decreased, and Lu Ran could roam freely.

Jiang Ruyi was on a killing spree!

With a relatively stable environment to output her attacks, her Electric Shackles Talismans flew everywhere, causing the Martial Arts Arena to crackle with electricity!

Round after round of battle, the sparking electricity at her fingertips frightened the onlooking students.

It has to be said, the school's team change was well thought out~

Until school was out for the morning, Tian Tian, with a face full of gratitude, bowed to everyone and then briskly walked away.

That morning, she had been fully cared for, and her teammates spared no praise.

Even when mistakes were made, Jiang Ruyi did not scold her.

For Tian Tian, who was shunned and marginalized, this team environment was something she did not dare to even dream of.

"This teammate isn't bad, just lacks confidence," Deng Yutang said as he took off his sweat-drenched red headband and shook out his hair.

This gesture had become his usual routine after combat.

It really felt like an "end-of-battle animation."

"Mm," Jiang Ruyi sighed softly as she watched Tian Tian leave.

"What do you think?" Lu Ran asked, sitting on the concrete floor, looking at Jiang Ruyi's tall figure.

"She's pretty good, very obedient," murmured Jiang Ruyi, "She's a great fit for our team."

"Indeed," agreed Lu Ran.

This morning on his way to school, he thought about Wu Shanshan leaving the team: Goodbye and good riddance, the next one will be better behaved!

To his surprise, they really got an obedient girl.

She would do whatever she was told, unconditionally following Jiang Ruyi's orders.

Even when interacting with Jiang Ruyi, Tian Tian would unconsciously lower her head, showing a respectful, humble demeanor.

Hmm... maybe a bit too meek?

"We can help her build confidence," thought Jiang Ruyi, "Once the Lotus Sword is drawn, our team will undergo a qualitative improvement..."

Before she could finish, Jiang Ruyi suddenly began to tremble slightly.

Waves of Divine Power surged, surprising and delighting Lu and Deng.

Was their leader about to level up?

Lu Ran had leveled up on the fifth day of the lunar new year; today was the seventh, showcasing that Jiang Ruyi also had impressive talent.

After a moment, Lu Ran turned to look at Deng Yutang and slightly raised an eyebrow.

A simple gesture caused Deng Yutang's face to flush red.

"Hmph," Deng Yutang turned his head away, pretending to be tough, "The young master is also close to leveling up, what's the rush?"

Lu Ran chuckled softly.

Who's in a hurry, only they know~

Deng Yutang simply strode away: "I'm going home to eat."

Lu Ran called out: "Don't forget to come back at half past one in the afternoon; we still have other students to try out."

Deng Yutang did not look back, just waved his hand with suave dismissal.

"Mm~"

Meanwhile, Jiang Ruyi let out a comfortable nasal sound.

Lu Ran... well, he felt pretty good about it too.

He was all too familiar with the feeling of leveling up, indulging in the sensation.

Absolutely exhilarating!

"Don't tell anyone," Jiang Ruyi suddenly whispered.

"Huh?" Lu Ran was puzzled, looking at Jiang Ruyi surrounded by the Immortal Fog.

Was there any need to hide her leveling up?

"Never mind," Jiang Ruyi's face turned red, realizing she was overthinking.

Mainly, the nasal sound from before made her feel embarrassed.

Feeling awkward, she casually stirred the fog around her, drawing out strands of mist that looked dreamlike and magical.

This fog... was truly misty.

"You want to hide your strength?" Lu Ran found it baffling, yet intriguing.

In front of Tian Tian, Jiang Ruyi was a gentle elder sister.

But with him, she reverted to a girl who often blushed.

Quite interesting, huh?

"How about you, when can you level up to the third stage of the Mist Realm?" Jiang Ruyi asked as she walked towards the edge of the arena.

"You look beautiful," Lu Ran quipped, following her.

"Speak properly," retorted Jiang Ruyi, slightly annoyed.

"I meant your thinking is beautiful!"

Jiang Ruyi: "..."

"I just leveled up two days ago... uh, stop kicking, put your leg down, be more ladylike."

...

At noon, Lu Ran excitedly rushed home to report the joyous news of ranking first on both lists to Lord Immortal Goat.

However, Lord Immortal Goat did not descend with a message.

The bossy and aloof sheep remained high and mighty.

Lu Ran didn't linger; he simply started practicing in front of the shrine.

Of course, he longed to advance to the third stage of the Mist Realm soon so that he could learn the New Divine Skill-Immortal Hoof.

This skill significantly enhanced his speed, making him even more adept at moving about and striking down enemies.

Although, Lord Immortal Goat's original purpose in creating the Immortal Hoof was to help his followers avoid strife and stay away from battlefields...

No matter,

Once the Divine Technique Immortal Hoof was in Lu Ran's hands, how it was used was up for interpretation.

After all, Lu Ran was the type of guy who could beg for mercy while swinging a chair to hit someone.

On the seventh and eighth days, Lu Ran's team trialed all four students.

The subsequent three students had their unique traits, but the team felt something was lacking.

Until the evening of the eighth, the trio unanimously decided to put Tian Tian's name down to the class teacher.

With that, Squad 98's reformation was complete!

The team did not dare to slack off, rigorously training and refining their coordination every day, just waiting for the final exams on the fifteenth day of the lunar month.

Days passed, and the thirteenth of the lunar month arrived quickly.

Chapter 29: 018 The first thing is your lies_2

The four anxiously preparing teammates encountered an old friend at the Martial Arts Arena—Wu Shanshan!

"Isn't that Wu Shanshan?" Deng Yutang, with sweat streaming down his back, was holding a wooden spear as he looked toward the barbed wire outside.

Everyone quickly turned their heads, and Lu Ran couldn't help but raise his eyebrows slightly, "Looks like she's coming for us?"

Jiang Ruyi's brows slightly furrowed as she observed Wu Shanshan and her new teammates.

Tian Tian seemed a bit nervous. She sidestepped and her petite figure hid behind the beauty Jiang.

Because Wu Shanshan's new teammates were none other than Tian Tian's former teammates!

After the Evil Dog Village assessment, many teams made adjustments, establishing new teams mostly before the eighth of the month.

These past few days, everyone already knew which team Wu Shanshan had joined.

It was the second-ranked school team led by Ma Tianchuan!

"Jiang, long time no see," Ma Tianchuan led his team onto the field first.

"Hi~" Wu Shanshan, walking beside Ma Tianchuan, smiled and waved at her former teammates.

Behind her followed another male and female teammate, both from Class 7.

Deng Yutang snorted, "Captain Wu, found a team of your own?"

Previously, after listening to Jiang Ruyi's account of Wu Shanshan's reason for leaving the team, he had regarded Wu Shanshan highly for a moment.

A soldier wanting to be a general is quite normal.

But when he heard Wu Shanshan had joined Ma Tianchuan's team, Deng Yutang felt like he had been slapped in the face.

You couldn't be a leader with Jiang Ruyi, so it worked with his Ma Tianchuan?

Isn't that just a joke?!

"Yep, how about you? How's the new team?" Wu Shanshan's smile remained, seemingly unconcerned by Deng Yutang's words.

"Not bad," Deng Yutang didn't hesitate, giving his new teammates significant acknowledgment.

"Tian Tian, you're really lucky!"

Another female teammate spoke with a smile, looking at the silent Tian Tian, "You left our team, but joined the top-ranked team!"

Despite her former teammate Wang Xinyao's words, Tian Tian didn't respond; she still stood behind Jiang Ruyi.

She even quietly clutched the corner of Jiang Ruyi's clothes.

Seeing this, Wang Xinyao's lips curled up slightly.

That condescending attitude irritated Deng Yutang quite a bit, "From the way you speak, should Tian Tian be grateful that you kicked her out?"

Wang Xinyao's expression changed, "Why do you have to say it so unpleasantly?"

Suddenly, Lu Ran spoke up with a grin, "Our Mr. Deng loves to speak a few harsh truths~"

After being praised by Lu Ran, Deng Yutang stood tall and proud, "Yes, I love to speak the truth!"

Wang Xinyao became furious, "You..."

The male teammate, Zheng Cheng, was also dissatisfied, "Team adjustments are quite common!"

Everyone is looking for better development, what's right or wrong with that?"

"Alright, alright," Ma Tianchuan intervened, "no need for tempers."

Once the captain spoke, Wang Xinyao and Zheng Cheng fell silent.

Ma Tianchuan made his intentions clear, "These few days, I've been itching to spar while watching Jiang's team compete with others."

How about a spar between our two teams before the big test?"

"Scared you won't make it?" Deng Yutang blurted out.

The people opposite looked toward Jiang Ruyi, knowing who led Squad 98.

Unexpectedly, Jiang Ruyi turned slightly, looking down at the silent Tian Tian, "Do you want to spar?"

Tian Tian's eyes widened slightly in surprise, somewhat at a loss.

She had always been the obedient one.

At home, she listened to her parents. At school, she listened to her teachers.

On this team, she listened to the captain, Jiang Ruyi.

Throughout her life, her own wishes weren't important; she was used to being quiet and compliant.

Tian Tian genuinely didn't expect Jiang Ruyi to ask for her opinion.

"I, I..." Tian Tian stuttered quietly, "I'll follow you."

Wu Shanshan urged from across, "What's there to hesitate about?"

Wang Xinyao then looked toward Lu Ran, a scrutinizing gaze in her eyes,

"I hear your understanding of 'Divine Technique' is quite unique, and we're all curious!

Show us a bit later, let us experience it?"

"You might not be able to handle it," Lu Ran said with a smile. "My 'Divine Technique' is specially used to kill 'Evil Demons.'

Once executed, it must draw blood."

Wang Xinyao was still angry, her expression unfriendly, "Are you threatening me?"

To everyone's shock, Lu Ran actually nodded!

Not just that, he also dropped a line that stunned everyone, "Do you want to die?"

Suddenly, the atmosphere at the scene dropped to freezing point!

Wang Xinyao got a bit panicked.

This guy was indeed different from other weak and timid Immortal Sheep Believers...

He was truly fierce!

"Just kidding, I'm not like Mr. Deng," Lu Ran suddenly laughed, waving his hand, "I love to tell a little lie~"

Everyone: ???

Wang Xinyao: "..."

Although furious, Wang Xinyao didn't speak further.

At the end of it, Lu Ran's performance stood out, undeniably ranking him first in the entire school year, almost achieving a perfect score!

The number of 'Evil Dogs' that had died under his blade was at least dozens.

Jiang Ruyi saw the obedient-looking Tian Tian, spoke softly, "What do you really think?"

"I..."

"It's okay, speak," Jiang Ruyi tenderly positioned the girl's hair behind her ear.

Tian Tian finally mustered up the courage, whispering quietly, "Let's not fight.

We have to participate in the city defense operation the day after tomorrow, let's not get injured at this time."

"Alright," Jiang Ruyi turned her head toward Ma Tianchuan, "Let it be, the final test is the day after tomorrow, let's not complicate things."

Ma Tianchuan hesitated for a moment but eventually nodded, "Okay, we'll seek advice after the defensive task is over."

He also saw that the tempers were running high.

Forcing a contest in such an atmosphere was unwise, especially since the fifteenth night's mission was the most important.

It was a pity, he was looking forward to a hearty fight.

"Let's leave," Ma Tianchuan turned to go, laughing, "Lu Ran, don't let me surpass you in this test!"

"It was just luck last time," Lu Ran responded modestly, "this time, you're sure to be first."

Ma Tianchuan chuckled, "A sugar-coated cannonball?"

Lu Ran shrugged, "I love to tell a little lie~"

Ma Tianchuan: "..."

Everyone: "..."

"Hmph," Deng Yutang watched them leave, "What sparring, they just came to find fault."

"From now on, be like today," Jiang spoke softly while rubbing Tian Tian's head, "speak up if you have thoughts, don't always keep to yourself.

We're a team, in the future, we'll face many problems together."

"Mhmm," Tian Tian whispered softly, her hands twisted together, her head lowered even further.

Did she look like a docile little daughter-in-law?

In this competition, Lu Ran indeed shared some common ground with Tian Tian.

After all, when facing the domineering Immortal Sheep general, he also had to shut up and sleep when told~

Jiang Ruyi turned to Deng Yutang, joking, "No fight happened, you must feel aggrieved."

"Defending the city is more important," Deng Yutang naturally distinguished the priorities, "in this upcoming test, we'll continue to surpass Ma Tianchuan."

Although Wu Shanshan had left, she said something quite accurate.

Whenever Deng Yutang mentioned "Ma Tianchuan," didn't it always sound like swearing?

"What about you, Brother Lu?" Deng Yutang looked toward Lu Ran, "Shall we teach them another lesson?"

"Survive first, then talk about scores," Jiang Ruyi corrected the squad's philosophy, fearing that Lu Ran would get carried away with Deng Yutang's antics.

"Ah, beautiful Jiang is right!" Lu Ran promptly nodded.

Hearing Lu Ran respond this way, Jiang Ruyi relaxed, spoke softly, "Let's call it a day, go home and practice well, and by the way..."

She turned to Lu Ran, "You mentioned yesterday that you're almost advancing to Mist Realm-Third Rank."

Lu Ran sensed carefully, confirmed, "It'll happen in the next couple of days."

Tian Tian secretly raised her head, looking at Lu Ran with full admiration.

He was about to break through again?

How impressive...

Jiang Ruyi noticed the girl's sneaky demeanor, couldn't help but pat her head, joking,

"The day after tomorrow, you'll have to protect all of us."

"Mhmm." Tian Tian quickly lowered her head, daring not to peek anymore.

Chapter 30: 019 Sound of the Wind

On June 14th of the Lunar Calendar, the whole school was on holiday.

More accurately, the entire nation was on holiday.

From the 14th to the 18th of each lunar month, the days surrounding the 15th, society hit the pause button, except for specific departments that continued to work.

A full five-day holiday was both an official regulation and a social custom.

"Woo~~~"

"Boom rumble!"

The early morning alarm, accompanied by rolling thunder, woke Lu Ran from his deep sleep in bed.

"Hmm." Lu Ran rubbed his eyes groggily and picked up the mobile phone beside him to check the time.

Seven o'clock on the dot.

Although the Evil Demon Clan would appear on the night of the Lunar fifteenth, the official warning alarms were already being sounded today, alerting the citizens.

"Lord Immortal Goat, good morning." Lu Ran got out of bed and habitually went to the Divine Shrine to pay his respects.

Ever since the assessment in Evil Dog Village, Lord Immortal Goat had not manifested himself for quite some time.

Actually, this was how deities should behave: high and lofty, not someone whom mere believers could expect to see on a whim.

"Disciple feels like he's about to advance to Mist Realm·Third Rank."

Lu Ran muttered to himself, hoping the deities could hear.

Since advancing on the fifth day of the lunar month up to today's the 14th, Lu Ran had been training diligently, even in the Martial Arts Arena surrounded by wisps of mist.

Now, the mist inside him had been compressed to a certain degree.

His body, nourished by Divine Power, had grown strong and robust, and he was ready to advance to Mist Realm·Third Rank!

Lu Ran was full of anticipation: "When that time comes, I'll be able to practice Divine Technique-Immortal Hoof."

However, the Immortal Sheep Jade Carving within the shrine remained silent.

Lu Ran waited for a long while, but after confirming that Lord Immortal Goat had no instructions for him, he respectfully bowed his head.

Then, he moved a step sideways, coming to the windowsill.

The deep and long alert sound continued, reverberating throughout the city, making this already gloomy rainy day even more oppressive.

"It's raining again."

Lu Ran looked out at the rainy scene within the complex, watching the swaying branches in the slanting rain.

The weather forecast said it would be cloudy tomorrow, but who knew if the full moon would be visible?

Lu Ran let out a deep sigh and turned to go to the bathroom to wash up.

Afterward, he grabbed his umbrella and wooden sword and walked out the front door.

In the curtain of rain, Rain Alley City seemed forlorn and desolate.

Compared to the previous days, there were noticeably fewer people on the streets, and the shops on the street corners were all closed up.

It took Lu Ran a long time to find an open convenience store, where he bought a box of milk and a can of fish.

His destination remained the same, the riverside of the Wu Lie River, near the abandoned residential district.

As for why Lu Ran wanted to come here...

On one hand, it was to pay respects to his late father, and on the other hand, he was thinking about that little calico cat.

Since parting last time, Lu Ran made a special trip to this place every day on his way to school.

On the sixth day, Lu Ran got so distracted by Wu Shanshan leaving the team that he accidentally let the calico cat escape.

When he got home, the thought of that little calico cat made him extremely worried.

Stray cats and dogs truly have a hard time surviving the night of the Lunar fifteenth.

Unless some kind person takes them in, or the little calico could sneak into a citizen's home and hide beside the Divine Shrine Divine Sculpture, otherwise...

"Baa~~~"

In the patter of light rain, Lu Ran walked through the overgrown Wild Grass riverside with his umbrella.

He kept bleating along the way, from outside the building to inside, and then up to the run-down seventh-floor rooftop.

Sadly, the calico cat was still nowhere to be found.

"Dad, that calico cat isn't here again." Lu Ran came to a corner of the rooftop and placed the milk and tin can on the railing, "You eat it."

Putting away his umbrella, Lu Ran's figure was once again exposed to the rain:

"Eat quickly, you eat and then I'll eat."

Gripping his wooden Tang sword, Lu Ran visualized an imaginary enemy and began to practice.

Thanks to the cat, for many days now, father and son's breakfast was fish from a can.

Lu Ran was getting a little sick of it.

As for his dad... Well, never mind.

Whether he likes it or not, it's not as if he can talk~

"Little Lu Ran?"

Suddenly, a voice came from the doorway to the rooftop.

"Huh?" Lu Ran turned to look and saw a tall figure in a yellow raincoat.

Lu Ran jumped in surprise!

Is this...uh, a little Nightmare?

The little one actually grew so tall, and what a figure...

Lu Ran wiped the rain from his eyes to make sure the figure was still there.

His heart was in his throat!

How could there be someone in such a desolate place?

And they knew his name!

Could it be some kind of Evil Demon pre-emptively coming into the world?

The woman reached out to pinch her hood and lifted it a bit to reveal an oriental face.

Suddenly, Lu Ran was even more startled!

The woman in front of him was beautiful and fresh, just like her yellow raincoat, she stood out dazzlingly in this gray world.

"Rain Alley Sister?" Lu Ran said incredulously, his face full of disbelief, "What a coincidence?"

"What coincidence?" Deng Yuxiang glanced at Lu Ran, "I came following the sound of the bleating."

Lu Ran: "..."

"You're quite bold." Deng Yuxiang stepped onto the rooftop, "Out here in this desolate area on the 14th of the lunar month?"

"This is my secret training location." Lu Ran pointed southward with his wooden sword, "Look over there."

"Hm?" Beneath the hood, the woman's deep black eyes pierced through the rain and looked to the south.

In the misty rain, the Wu Lie River flowed turbulently.

It was a spectacular sight to see.

"The view is indeed not bad." Deng Yuxiang gazed into the distance, then asked, "Tomorrow you're going to be participating in the defense of the city with Yutang, how prepared are you?"

"It's ok, I guess, I was thinking of practicing more today to stay sharp." Lu Ran asked curiously, "Why would Rain Alley Sister be here?"

Deng Yuxiang did not take the bait but instead shifted her gaze to the milk and canned food placed on the stone railing.

"Do you want some, sister?" Lu Ran played along, "It's yours."

Deng Yuxiang rolled her eyes with a laugh.

I climbed up a full 7 floors, just to fight you for a drink of milk or a can of fish?

Deng Yuxiang turned towards the stairs, a distant voice floating behind her, "Take your little snack and head home to practice, don't linger outside."

Little snack?

Lu Ran felt uncomfortable.

That was the calico cat's food, my dad's offering, my breakfast, alright!

What do you call eating the same fish three different ways?

"Nothing changes." Lu Ran muttered under his breath before resuming his sword practice by himself.

A few days ago, after dropping him off at home, she had floored the gas, and the coupe roared into the rain.

Now, she barely spoke and left, not even giving a chance for small talk. All business.

Lu Ran never expected that Deng Yuxiang would return to the rooftop after just 1 minute, "Do I really need to escort you back?"

"No, no need." Lu Ran shook his head repeatedly, "I'll go immediately, immediately."

Deng Yuxiang smiled, "I've figured it out, you're only obedient with words, right?"

Lu Ran helplessly said, "I'll stay just a little longer, just a little while."

What if the calico cat shows up?

Deng Yuxiang nodded slightly, "It seems that Yutang didn't talk to you much about me."

Lu Ran was confused, "Talk about what?"

Without warning, Deng Yuxiang gestured and quickly gathered a semi-transparent slender wind blade in her palm, "In front of me, Yutang doesn't dare to utter a word of 'no'."

Suddenly a chilling aura came at him, creating an atmosphere of awe and fear.

"North Wind!" Lu Ran's eyes narrowed, "Rain Alley Sister is a believer of North Wind Knife?"

Second-class God·North Wind!

The folk also called this deity "North Wind Knife," whose Divine Sculpture was depicted as a stern swordsman situated in the distant frontier of the North Country.

Together with South Ocean Bow, West Desolate Axe, and East Thunder Spear, they were known as the "Four Directions Martial Heroes."

Lu Ran's former teammate, Wu Shanshan, was one of the four heroes, a believer of South Ocean Bow.

"You don't have to struggle." Deng Yuxiang's lips curled into a barely there smile, "I'll break your legs and then personally take you home."

How about that, Little Lu Ran?"

This time, Lu Ran had no interest in admiring her bright lipstick.

"Misunderstanding! Sister, I'm going home now!" Lu Ran was shockingly cowed.

He hadn't expected such a beautiful and lively sister to be a Living Yama.

No wonder Deng Yutang didn't dare say "no."

This was no hesitation; she would strike out without a moment's notice!

"I said before I'd teach you a thing or two." Deng Yuxiang weighed the wind knife in her hand, "No time like the present, let's do it today."

Lu Ran's expression stiffened, feeling a terrifying pressure envelop his entire body.

"Please don't." Lu Ran backed away, "I still have to defend the city with Deng Yutang tomorrow, if I get hurt..."

"Shhh!" Deng Yuxiang motioned for silence.

She slowly closed her eyes, as if listening to something, "Do you hear it?"

The woman suddenly turned eccentric, leaving Lu Ran puzzled once more,

"Listen to what?"

Deng Yuxiang suddenly lunged in Lu Ran's direction, the corners of her mouth lifting slightly:

"The sound of the wind."