

Old Gods 261

Chapter 261: People leaving under the moonlight along the river

On the rooftop, shadows loomed in the wake of every slash, and the wind wailed constantly.

However, after merely three minutes, both sides ceased their clash.

Lu Ran was cornered at a nook of the rooftop's railing, sitting on the ground with hands over his head:

"Meh~"

Deng Yuxiang stood in front of Lu Ran, looking down at the pleading little lamb and chastised with a laugh,

"Little Lu Ran, playing dead, are you?"

Lu Ran shook his head repeatedly: "Meh."

Deng Yuxiang couldn't help but soften inside, looked at Lu Ran amusingly annoyed, then turned and walked away.

Lu Ran instantly breathed a sigh of relief.

Ah, saved...

His body went limp, leaning against the stone railing, definitely feeling resigned.

Beside him, Deng Yuxiang placed the Night-slaying Great Saber behind her back and looked out into the distance again.

The rooftop was utterly silent.

After a long while, Lu Ran spoke, "Is it that troublesome? You really don't want to go to Beifeng City?"

Deng Yuxiang was silent for a long time before she finally said, "The Divine Weapon Domain of the Night-cutting Blade overlaps with that of a senior's Divine Weapon."

"Ah?" Lu Ran was startled.

Was there another story here?

Deng Yuxiang said, "That senior is in Beifeng City."

Lu Ran tensed up, recalling what she had just said about "Being so young and yet taken seriously by her superior."

So the so-called achievement, was it her Divine Weapon·Night Cutting Blade?

Lu Ran quickly said, "This isn't some kind of trap, is it? They call you over and then cripple you and shatter your weapon?"

"It's not to that extent." Deng Yuxiang gently shook her head, "Under the eye of the divine, no miscreant dares cause trouble. If I were to face injustice, I need only look up to see the divine. A complaint lodged, no Believer could bear the consequence."

"Oh." Lu Ran felt slightly relieved.

With such exceptional talents, Deng Yuxiang was naturally more likely to catch Lord Beifeng's attention.

Stepping back ten thousand steps, even if the divine beings cared little about the squabbles of the Human Clan, Deng Yuxiang's rival wouldn't dare to gamble."

Deng Yuxiang continued, "If this senior indeed intended harm, it wouldn't make sense to call me to Beifeng City. It would be easier for them to strike if I stayed in the tiny Rain Alley City."

Lu Ran nodded thoughtfully.

Hopefully.

He always believed that when the Human Clan started infighting, their methods could be even more severe than those of the Evil Demon.

Lu Ran thought of something and asked, "Sis, how did you know that the Divine Weapon Domain of the Night overlaps with the other party's Domain?"

Deng Yuxiang was more than willing to clarify for Lu Ran, "When your Divine Weapon is close to cultivating its own Divine Weapon Domain, you will be able to sense the existence of the other."

Speaking of which, Deng Yuxiang raised her hand, grabbing the hilt of the saber behind her shoulder: "Night can feel who is blocking its path. Night can also faintly perceive the location of that Divine Weapon. The same Divine Weapon Domain creates a connection between the two weapons in the unknown."

Lu Ran's expression grew solemn: "So, both Divine Weapons can know each other's location."

Deng Yuxiang silently nodded.

Seeing the woman nod, Lu Ran sighed internally.

It was truly a 'crime to have a jade'.

A Divine Weapon is indeed coveted, something people dream of having.

But if you don't have the strength to match it, you really can't protect your own treasure.

It might even attract deadly threats because of the Divine Weapon at your side!

Lu Ran's expression grew even more grave: "On the side of the Evil Demon faction, there are also many evil weapons. If the Divine Weapons of the Human Clan inadvertently share the same domain as those weapons, wouldn't that draw the attention of the Evil Demon himself?"

The so-called evil weapons were actually Divine Weapons.

Only, because these weapons were in the hands of Evil Demons, people had changed their names.

Deng Yuxiang nodded slightly but said, "Do you think many would shun food because of choking? Take yourself, for example. Would you discard the Dawn Blade for fear that its Divine Weapon Domain might overlap with the Night Charm Blade's Domain?"

Lu Ran immediately shook his head, "How could I?"

Deng Yuxiang leaned slightly forward, resting her hands on the railing and looking out with a somewhat lost gaze:

"Fated."

Lu Ran looked up to her.

Evening breeze brushed gently, carrying a hint of camellia scent threading through her flowing hair.

It should have been a beautiful scene, yet her face was tinged with sorrow.

Lu Ran really wanted to resolve Deng Yuxiang's troubles as she analyzed for a long while, finally concluding with four words—indirect salvation!

"Sis." Lu Ran slowly began, "This senior inviting you might truly be intending to nurture and take care of you. Once you've received enough kindness, it wouldn't be appropriate to challenge them."

But Deng Yuxiang smiled, "You kid, quite the schemer."

Lu Ran shrugged, "All this, provided that you can exclude the possibility of them daring not to make a move under the divine's watch."

Deng Yuxiang stepped forward, crouched in front of Lu Ran.

She curled her finger, tapping Lu Ran's forehead, "Don't think so poorly of our Beifeng Sect."

Lu Ran nodded, whispering, "Meh."

Deng Yuxiang: "..."

Without Spiritual Defense Technique, she always got affected first and then suppressed the abnormal state afterward.

In other words, each of Lu Ran's "Meh" could infiltrate her mind and reach deep into her heart.

Lu Ran felt uneasy under Deng Yuxiang's gaze and immediately averted his eyes: "So this senior is inviting you because?"

Deng Yuxiang looked at Lu Ran with displeasure, "Hmph," and then said,

"The Beifeng Sect has its share of cunning hypocrites, but they are the minority. Since this senior is powerful, they are likely more aligned with Lord Beifeng, colder and more severe."

Lu Ran: "So?"

Deng Yuxiang: "As is the custom, the senior will indeed nurture me. Until I am ready, under the divine's watch, we will have a fair duel."

Lu Ran: "Tradition? Has there been such a precedent?"

"Yes." Deng Yuxiang nodded, "That's why I say, I may not return any time soon. Until the ownership of the Divine Weapon Domain is confirmed, I am afraid I cannot leave Beifeng City."

This time, it was Lu Ran's face that turned sad.

Deng Yuxiang spoke civilly of confirming the ownership of the Divine Weapon Domain.

The dire circumstances behind it were imaginable.

One side's blade would surely shatter.

Even the wielder might perish.

Unless, between them, one willingly steps back and gives up the contest.

But is that possible?

Even if the master agrees, the Divine Weapon might not.

"Born at a disadvantage," Lu Ran sighed heavily.

Deng Yuxiang was the challenger, her Night-slaying Great Saber did not possess a Domain.

The opposite party's Divine Weapon, however, did possess a Divine Weapon Domain!

Moreover, she had made it clear that the other was a powerful senior...

Deng Yuxiang replied, "Hmm, indeed somewhat at a disadvantage."

Lu Ran refuted, "Just a bit? By the way, what is the other party's strength realm?"

Deng Yuxiang shook her head: "It is said to be Jiang Realm, but the specific rank, no one knows."

Lu Ran seemed to understand why maternal figures like Chen Jingjing did not disclose their strength realms to the public.

Once one becomes a Jiang Realm Great Power, their strength becomes a secret.

Only certain Believers, such as those squad leaders who accompanied Lu Ran into the Demon Cave for training, publicly reveal their strength rank for various considerations.

"I will go," Deng Yuxiang suddenly said.

"Sis. will you...will you go?"

Deng Yuxiang moved her palm down, gently pinching Lu Ran's cheek: "Didn't you just encourage me to go? Why change your mind now?"

Lu Ran: "..."

Where did I know that you were going to fight with blades and risk your life?

Deng Yuxiang said, "You're right, a minor rank's advance doesn't happen by a flash of insight. In Beifeng City, I will also enjoy more resources, feel more pressure, and naturally my strength will improve faster."

Lu Ran fell silent.

He suddenly realized something.

Was Deng Yuxiang someone to fear or back down?

Of course not!

Even if it was just for the sake of the Night-slaying Great Saber behind her, she wouldn't retreat.

So, her sorrow was truly just reluctance to leave her hometown.

"Fortunate to meet you here," Deng Yuxiang slowly stood up, looking down at Lu Ran, who still sat against the railing, "Will you take care of this city for me?"

"I'll do my best," Lu Ran looked up at Big Nightmare, "This here is my home too."

A faint smile appeared on Deng Yuxiang's face, as she reached down.

Lu Ran immediately raised his hand, catching her slender jade hand.

Two children rooted in Rain Alley, on this dilapidated rooftop, appeared to have made a pact.

Truly, with regards to "protecting this city well," Deng Yuxiang, as a Jiang Realm Great Power stationed in Rain Alley City, certainly had the right to say so.

But Lu Ran, merely a River Realm·Second Rank Believer, to say such... seemed somewhat presumptuous, don't you think?

Regardless of what others thought, Deng Yuxiang in her actions showed that she didn't think so!

How many special events had Rain Alley City seen?

Lu Ran, what important role did he play, how did he shine, Deng Yuxiang had seen it all.

Not just her,

Since the night of February 15th, the entire Da Xia had witnessed, within this rundown little city, there stood a Da Xia's genius whose brilliance shone bright.

"Did you previously say, as long as your heart is here, it's okay?"

Deng Yuxiang turned her head to look southwards, at the moonlit and rushing Wu Lie River.

Lu Ran also turned his head, peering through the gaps in the railing into the distance: "After completing my studies, I'll come back here to report the good news."

"Hmm."

"Before you challenge, remember to tell me. I'll come to watch."

Deng Yuxiang suddenly twisted up a skyward wind, slowly rising: "I'll tell you after everything is settled."

"But how can that work?" Lu Ran grinned, "If you win, I need to celebrate for you. If you lose, I also need to collect your body."

Deng Yuxiang laughed as she glared at Lu Ran, waving her hand gently.

"Whoosh~"

A Wind Blade suddenly formed, thrusting directly at Lu Ran's face.

Lu Ran slightly tilted his head, the Wind Blade grazing past his ear, shooting through the gaps of the railing and flying off the rooftop.

"Just as we agreed, let me know in advance." Lu Ran shouted towards the soaring silhouette of Big Nightmare.

"Huh!"

Suddenly, from Deng Yuxiang's back, loosely carrying the Night-slaying Great Saber, a human-shaped phantom spread out.

That was the Artifact Spirit, and also another Deng Yuxiang.

The ethereal woman gave Lu Ran a gentle nod, as if saying goodbye, or perhaps thanking him for comforting her master.

Her figure quietly vanished, disappearing into the vast night along with her master.

Lu Ran finally stood up, gazing into the distance, also at the moonlit rushing Wu Lie River.

The scenery of departure was beautiful, surely unforgettable.

With this sentiment,

On the day I will watch your battle of life and death,

I will surely bring with me this part of the sky, the crescent moon in the night, and also the rushing river, to watch over you.

Hometown,

will surely protect you.

Chapter 262: Number one scholar in imperial examinations?

The next day, in the morning.

Lu Ran sat meditating in front of the shrine when he suddenly heard the sound of a key entering the door lock.

"Uh?" Lu Ran was a bit surprised and immediately stood up.

He had just reached the door when he saw Jiang Ruyi opening the front door.

"Meow~" The little calico cat ran up to greet her as if it had seen a family member.

"How are you?" Jiang Ruyi bent down and smiled at the little creature.

"Meow~" The little calico cat cried softly, rubbing against the girl's trouser leg as if seeking affection.

Lu Ran was dumbfounded!

All the time he'd had the little calico cat, when had it ever rubbed against his trouser leg?

Jiang Ruyi was amused and laughed, bending down to pick up the calico cat with one hand while reaching out towards the shoe rack.

But then she stopped mid-motion.

Then, Jiang Ruyi straightened up, still playing with the calico cat but throwing a fleeting glance at Lu Ran in the distance.

Lu Ran: "..."

It's never easy to learn good manners, but bad habits catch on quick~

"Done paying respects to the gods?" Lu Ran walked over, picked up a pair of slippers from the shoe rack, and threw them at the girl's feet.

However, Jiang Ruyi just tilted her head and stared silently at the slippers without moving.

Such a scene made Lu Ran laugh.

He immediately knelt down and helped the girl change her shoes.

Jiang Ruyi felt the gentle gesture from Lu Ran and was secretly delighted.

"I thought you wouldn't come today," Lu Ran said as he unbuckled her leather boot straps, speaking casually.

Jiang Ruyi's foot, clad in a white sock, was just stretched out but then retracted back into the boot: "Should I go then?"

"No, no, no!" Lu Ran quickly grabbed her foot and slipped the slipper on.

Jiang Ruyi was all smiles, having only intended to tease Lu Ran.

But with Lu Ran's actions, her cheeks flushed slightly, and she fell silent.

"By the way, I negotiated with the gods last night," Lu Ran spoke softly.

"Huh?" Jiang Ruyi was a bit surprised.

What do you mean "I negotiated with the gods"?

Are Divine beings someone you can just contact whenever you like?

And you, a Believer, can actually negotiate with a Divine being?

Lu Ran took two steps back and stood up: "Lord Immortal Goat has agreed to allow you to cultivate in front of the shrine."

Jiang Ruyi: "..."

The girl silently looked at Lu Ran, feeling completely overwhelmed.

Lu Ran had said only a few words, but each one had upended Jiang Ruyi's understanding of the world.

Jiang Ruyi was, of course, aware of the special care Lord Immortal Goat gave to Lu Ran.

Divine-Immortal Goat not only permitted Lu Ran to fight but also taught him several special Divine Techniques.

Since the airing of "Heavenly Pride," discussions about it online were fervent.

The mainstream opinion was that Nine-class God-Immortal Sheep had found itself a great deal, hence its particularly doting and nearly indulgent affection towards Lu Ran.

It seemed that opinion was not without merit!

Lu Ran smiled: "From now on, whenever you come over, we can meditate together in front of the shrine."

Jiang Ruyi hesitated and spoke softly, "Isn't that inappropriate?"

"Ah, come on, just do it," Lu Ran said as he grabbed her wrist and led her toward the small bedroom.

Jiang Ruyi was certainly a stickler for rules; she casually placed the calico cat on the computer desk, then stood in front of the shrine, palms together in a proper bow:

"Lord Immortal Goat, Ruyi intrudes."

"Sit," Lu Ran sat down with his legs crossed.

Jiang Ruyi, however, was unsettled and simply couldn't sit down.

"Lord Immortal Goat is gentle and friendly with people... ahem, very easygoing."

Lu Ran clearly stumbled over his words, silently thinking it a sin.

Jiang Ruyi had no doubt about what Lu Ran had said.

After all, the world only ever sees the amiable side of Lord Immortal Goat.

Who has ever seen it with a black look, glaring with a pair of sinister Dead Sheep Eyes?

Lu Ran tugged at Jiang Ruyi, earnest: "This is permitted by Lord Immortal Goat."

Jiang Ruyi hesitated for a moment but was reluctant to refuse Lu Ran's request.

She chose a compromise, kneeling down in a posture reminiscent of how they sat for meals in ancient times.

"Just cross your legs and meditate," Lu Ran said softly, "you're not an Immortal Sheep Believer."

Jiang Ruyi's expression was complicated as she pursed her lips and looked at Lu Ran.

It wasn't Jiang Ruyi's fault.

People living in this era are heavily constrained by the times.

Even if Divine Immortal Goat wasn't the Divine Jiang Ruyi worshiped, she still wouldn't dare to overstep her boundaries.

"Listen to me," Lu Ran said as he gently tucked a strand of Jiang Ruyi's hair behind her ear.

Thinking of the Divine watching from above, Jiang Ruyi's cheeks suddenly reddened.

She lowered her head, struggling internally for a moment, but eventually relented to Lu Ran.

Follow the host's lead?

But that depends on who "the host" is.

If it were anyone else, Jiang Ruyi would absolutely not comply.

The girl sat down with her legs crossed, clearly still somewhat anxious.

Lu Ran: "Let's cultivate together until noon, and then go out for hot pot, how about that?"

"Mhm... okay," Jiang Ruyi replied in a small voice.

"Let's start!" Lu Ran closed his eyes.

Around them, within the shrine, wisps of white mist flowed continuously towards the two of them.

It proved that Lu Ran's choice was right.

After solving the big problem of "cultivation," the quality of their time together improved significantly.

For the next ten days, Lu Ran lived a joyous life, meeting with little Ruyi every day.

They watched movies together, went shopping, ate frozen treats, and even strolled leisurely by the Wu Lie River during quiet nights.

Of course, these were considered "extracurricular activities."

More often, they were meditating at home or practicing martial arts on an old rooftop.

The nature of the Jade Talisman Sect's Divine Techniques meant that Jade Talisman Believers could follow two growth paths: close combat or ranged.

Looking at Jiang Ruyi's trajectory, she was on the path of ranged damage.

Lu Ran wasn't trying to forcefully change her.

His thought was, if enemies ever got close to Jiang Ruyi on the battlefield, at least she should have the ability to protect herself.

This blissful world for two continued until the eleventh day of the lunar month.

That afternoon, the two had an appointment and hurried to the cold drinks shop in Snow Alley.

The trio of Deng, Tian, and Chang had finally returned from their trials on the tenth night and had not seen each other for a long time, wanting to catch up.

Lu Ran also made it clear: he would treat them to this meal.

After all, the trio deserved credit for their hard work!

While Lu Ran and Jiang comfortably stayed at home, sweetly together,

Deng, Tian, and Chang were slaving away in the Demon Cave, completing school assignments for the duo...

It sounded downright scandalous~

...

West River, in front of the Snow Alley cottage.

"Here they come!" Tian Tian excitedly clenched her little fists, whispering to herself.

She saw a couple, both wearing hats and masks like they were too ashamed to show their faces, walking down the street.

"Wow~" Chang Ying rested a hand on Tian Tian's head, admiringly saying, "Don't they match well?"

Tian Tian nodded repeatedly, thrilled to hear such words, feeling pleasantly warm inside:

"Master and Sister Ruyi are the most perfect match!"

As Lu and Jiang approached, Tian Tian couldn't contain her longing and trotted over.

"Sister Ruyi!"

Tian Tian whispered softly, like a swallow returning to its nest.

"Oh." Jiang Ruyi hugged the petite Tian Tian and stepped back to slow the momentum.

Tian Tian buried her head in Jiang Ruyi's chest, acting greedily content, rubbing her cheeks left and right.

Jiang Ruyi couldn't help but smile contentedly, "Missed me?"

"Mhm," Tian Tian blushed and whispered back.

Lu Ran smiled at the scene, truly struggling to penetrate little Tian Tian's heart, not understanding the special feelings she harbored for Jiang Ruyi.

Tian Tian had reached River Realm; you'd think she'd have some air of a powerful being.

But in front of Jiang Ruyi, she remained like a little sister...

"Let's go inside!" From a distance, came Deng Yutang's voice.

Lu Ran looked up to see Deng Yutang standing at the entrance of the Snow Alley cottage, waving cheerfully towards them.

In front of the cottage, Chang Ying was also beaming, "Lu Ran, come quick~"

Lu Ran too smiled as he approached, basking in the joy of this rare reunion.

Minutes later, the five of them settled into a small private room.

Lu Ran finally took off his mask and hat, looking around: "How was it, tiring from the trials?"

"Not bad at all," Chang Ying said cheerfully.

Her eyes sparkled as she stared at Lu Ran's face as if she could see flowers blossoming.

Deng Yutang and Tian Tian were also watching Lu Ran with admiration evident in their eyes.

Lu Ran was indeed a role model for them all.

Ever since "Heavenly Pride" aired, Lu Ran's standing in their hearts had skyrocketed.

In fact, they were well aware of the brilliance Lu Ran had shown during the Night of Ghosts and the Barbaric Woman.

But they could only superficially observe through photos, and animated images.

"Heavenly Pride," however, was different!

With comprehensive, no blind-spot coverage, it perfectly showcased Lu Ran's fearsome combat power!

After this battle, Lu Ran became the center of attention, a "big shot," indeed deserving of worship.

"Uh." Lu Ran touched his nose.

The usually thick-skinned him felt unusually embarrassed and changed the subject: "Think you'll get a perfect score for this training assignment?"

"Don't worry, Master," Tian Tian whispered, "We'll definitely get the full 20 Believer points."

Deng Yutang nodded confidently: "With these 20, I'll have over three hundred Believer points.

I'll be nearly ready to graduate."

Deng Yutang's tone carried a hint of emotion, as high school life was ending soon.

The college entrance exam was only two months away!

Jiang Ruyi turned to the beside her, Tian Tian: "And you?"

Tian Tian promptly said, "I have a bit more than Yutang, 307 Believer points."

"That's good," Jiang Ruyi nodded with satisfaction, "Before the college exams, we'll get points from two more fifteenth-of-the-month city defenses and two more school training assignments.

The college exam on May fifteenth is itself the big end-of-term exam, and it's scored out of a hundred.

Per tradition, on the first day of the sixth lunar month, the day we all Worship God, we have a special bonus mission.

Your final score will be good."

"Mhm mhm." Tian Tian, having received the Goddess's approval, wore a happy smile.

Since the beginning of the third year of high school, the school had not only increased the points for training assignments to 20 Believer points but also raised the points for the fifteenth-of-the-month city defense tasks as the students' realms climbed and their responsibilities grew heavier.

Previously, the individual and team leaderboards were capped at 10 Believer points each.

Now, the cap had increased by 10 points for each leaderboard.

That meant, where Lu Ran used to take the first place on both leaderboards for a total of 20 Believer points, if he managed it now, he could earn 40 points!

Last month on the fifteenth, Rain Alley City experienced the special event Night of Ghosts, and the students who survived got full marks.

That added a whopping 40 points to everyone!

What a triumph!

"Lu Ran doesn't have to worry anymore," Deng Yutang smiled at Lu Ran.

"Exactly," Tian Tian felt especially energetic today, "Including these 20 points, Master already has 459.6 points."

Lu Ran looked puzzled: "You know better than I do?"

Tian Tian clenched her fist: "I calculated, Master's final score will definitely be much higher than the Beijing University cutoff!"

"Hey, wait a minute!" Chang Ying suddenly spoke up, looking at Lu Ran, "Heavenly Pride doesn't give Believer points?"

Lu Ran shrugged: "You have to wait till the end of the year, they award Believer points and Divine Weapons based on the overall ranking of the leaderboard."

"Oh," Chang Ying murmured regret, whispering, "It would be nice if it settled after each competition.

Directly winning first place~"

Lu Ran: "..."

If they settled after each competition, that would indeed be a bit too overwhelming.

Since the second half of the sophomore year, the accumulated Believer points over the upcoming year were equivalent to the college entrance scores.

Of course, certain prestigious universities still have their entrance exams, and students need to reach the cutoff before they can apply.

That's a story for later. Just look at Da Xia's top one hundred Heavenly Prides, aside from me, they're all college students.

College students use points for honor, to glorify their Divine beings and Sects, and to embellish their personal records.

Am I meant to use "Heavenly Pride" points directly added to my college entrance scores?

Who could compete with me then~

Chapter 263: First Kiss?

In the small cabin of Snow Alley, several people were happily chatting, discussing both the past and the future.

When Lu Ran was asked which university he aspired to attend, his response surprised everyone—Wu Lie River University.

Honestly, that was such a waste of his scores!

Given Lu Ran's current scoring momentum, he should easily surpass the enrollment score line of Beijing University by early June of this lunar year when the final scores were released.

Yet, Lu Ran was determined and had set his heart on Wu Lie River University.

Who knew how devastated the school leaders of Rain Alley's First High School would feel upon learning of Lu Ran's decision?

After all, a student like Lu Ran who could score over 660 points in the college entrance exam was a rarity that Rain Alley City had not seen in many years.

Not to mention, Lu Ran's final score would likely far exceed 660 points...

When Deng Yutang and others asked why he made such a decision, his answer was even more straightforward—Wu Lie River.

The Wu Lie River flowed through Rain Alley City, and also through the provincial capital, Wu Lie River City.

After some contemplation, the three of them understood his reasoning.

Lu Ran, acting as a "master," had once shared insights on advancing to River Realm with them.

The essence of 'hometown' was the key.

And among the critical factors was the vigorous and ceaselessly flowing water of the Wu Lie River.

Later, Tian Tian asked Jiang Ruyi which university she wished to attend.

The beautiful Jiang replied not with words, but with a glance at Lu Ran.

That glance made Tian Tian's heart sweeten!

On one hand, she was thrilled about the romantic gestures between her Master and Sister Ruyi.

On the other hand, if the two decided on Wu Lie River University, not Beijing, Shanghai, Qiantang River, or other places...

With Tian Tian's current scores, she could possibly strive for it.

The local universities generally had lower admission scores for students from the same province.

Similarly, Deng and his companion also targeted this university.

Based on their estimated scores, this top institution within the province was definitely the most cost-effective choice.

Finally, the five young people clinked their juice cups together.

That crisp sound was like the final sprint whistle.

On the way home, Lu Ran and Jiang Ruyi walked side by side.

The spring breeze brought with it the fragrance of grass and trees, refreshing their spirits.

"After the fifteenth of this month, shall we join them to complete the internship assignment?" Jiang Ruyi whispered.

"A last-minute sprint before the exam, we just need to give it a try," responded Lu Ran, nodding. "Let's see if we can upgrade the internship task like last time in Evil Dog Village, so we can earn more points."

Although that was said, managing to upgrade the internship task was more a matter of luck than certainty.

Last time, they had coincidentally encountered Si Xianxian's "reformation," which led to the military providing Lu Ran with a high-risk operation that allowed them to earn 20 additional Believer points.

Nevertheless, Lu Ran was still willing to try.

Initially, he had thought of going to Yan Zhi Village to wreak havoc after defending the city.

But looking at the calendar, and with the college entrance exam two months away, he could try pulling some strings with the "Ran Sect Believers."

As for success...

"It's all in the hands of fate," he thought.

"Mhm," Jiang Ruyi nodded gently, understanding what Lu Ran was thinking.

Actually, scores weren't so crucial for them.

Lu Ran had already received numerous offers from various universities, and so had Jiang Ruyi!

The path Lu Ran paved for her was broad and bright.

As a companion by the side of Da Xia's genius; a Jade Talisman Believer who just turned eighteen and was already at River Realm·Second Rank; a high school student with a Divine Weapon!

With so many labels in place, how could Jiang Ruyi not be the center of attention?

How could she not receive relentless calls from numerous universities?

Jiang Ruyi still remembered, in the days following "Heavenly Pride," when she received calls, the joy and pride on her parents' faces.

"Hah..."

Jiang Ruyi exhaled lightly, enjoying the spring breeze on her face as she looked up at the blue sky dotted with white clouds.

There was no need for a bright spring day; her heart was always warm.

He was always so glib, but at heart, he had always been a gentle man.

Whether towards herself or those around him... well, perhaps a bit gentler towards her.

Thinking of this, a smile appeared on Jiang Ruyi's face.

"Ruyi."

"Hm?" The girl turned her head to look at him.

"You really aren't proactive at all, are you?" Lu Ran picked up the girl's slender hand. "If I don't hold it, are you just going to leave it hanging?"

As he spoke, he gently pinched the center of her hand.

Jiang Ruyi looked at Lu Ran's profile, her expression profound.

Am I not proactive enough?

I've visited multiple times, made soup for you—is that not clear enough what I feel?

If I hadn't decided on you, what other girl of eighteen or nineteen would disregard the views of others and proactively make house calls...

Bad guy.

"We're here." Lu Ran gently tugged Jiang Ruyi's hand, pointing ahead.

Jiang Ruyi snapped back to reality.

Once again, she was stunned to find herself standing at the entrance of the apartment building.

Jiang Ruyi felt hopeless.

These days, Lu Ran had been escorting her home every night.

Several times, Jiang Ruyi only "woke up" when standing in front of the apartment building door.

This couldn't continue...

"Mhm, I'm heading back in," Jiang Ruyi said as she took out her access card and opened the door to the apartment building.

As usual, Lu Ran stood at the entrance of the building, watching her enter.

But this time, she paused her step and turned around:

"It's almost the fifteenth of the lunar month, so these next few days, I won't come over."

"Oh?" Lu Ran was somewhat taken aback.

"Hehe~" Seeing Lu Ran's clueless expression, Jiang Ruyi felt slightly better. "Let's both prepare well."

Jiang Ruyi, with a smile in her voice, turned and left.

Lu Ran suddenly stepped forward, catching her pale, delicate hand again.

"Ah!" Jiang Ruyi exclaimed softly.

In front of Lu Ran, she had no guard up.

Being by Lu Ran's side, she didn't even know where she was walking, so how could she be on guard?

"What did you say?" Lu Ran wrapped one arm around her slender waist.

Soft and fragrant like the scent of faint jasmine.

"Mm." Jiang Ruyi's cheeks flushed instantly.

Lu Ran took off their hats and masks deliberately slow.

Jiang Ruyi's upper body leaned back slightly, but she did not try to evade further, only her complexion becoming redder.

A kiss.

With the pesky fur flowers gone, this time, Lu Ran succeeded.

As the motion-sensing light went off, the stairwell fell into darkness and a profound silence.

In the dark, Jiang Ruyi seemed to hear her own rapidly beating heart.

Was this her first kiss?

Or should she count the last time, when Lu Ran's surprise peck happened as the first?

Well, it didn't matter. Either way, it was him.

Thinking this to herself, Jiang Ruyi tightly closed her eyes, one hand firmly grasping Lu Ran's shoulder.

For a long time, Lu Ran finally let her go.

Jiang Ruyi was breathing lightly, her cheeks flushed, her eyes slightly misty.

Lu Ran said softly, "These days, let's keep it as usual.

We'll stay until the night of the fifteenth and patrol together."

As he spoke, the motion-sensing light in the corridor lit up, dispelling the darkness.

Jiang Ruyi bowed her head, her voice small and light: "Mhm, okay."

Heh,

Little Ruyi.

Still trying to flee?

Lu Ran sorted the hats and masks in his hands, helped her put them back on, and said softly, "Then it's settled, head back."

Jiang Ruyi immediately turned around and rushed towards the elevator.

Lu Ran, however, leaned slightly to the side, watching the graceful figure standing in front of the elevator.

She was still shyly lowering her head, her hands twisted together, looking utterly adorable and confused.

Until Jiang Ruyi's figure disappeared at the elevator door, Lu Ran turned around and lightly licked his lips.

Sweet.

Was it because they had just eaten ice cream?

Well... who knows.

Lu Ran pushed open the door to the apartment building, greeted by bright sunshine.

The sky filled with fluffy white clouds, a warm spring breeze meeting him face to face.

The oft gloomy and cold Rain Alley seemed appropriate today.

As Lu Ran walked away on this side, in some apartment building by the water, the elevator reached the 9th floor.

Jiang Ruyi took out her keys, unlocked the door to apartment 901, and quickly slipped out of her boots.

In the living room, a middle-aged woman looked over, a bit surprised: "Back so early today?"

"Mhm, mom," Jiang Ruyi answered perfunctorily, walking quickly towards the north balcony.

"Put on slippers, the floor is cold!" Jiang's mother said, dissatisfied, watching her careless daughter.

Usually, her daughter always behaved in a calm and collected manner—what was up with her today?

Something was not right!

Jiang's mother reached for a pair of pink slippers, immediately walking toward the north balcony.

She arrived just in time to see Jiang Ruyi standing by the window, looking out at the street outside the community.

This apartment, located on the edge of the complex, had a clear view of the street.

"Watching Lu Ran?" Jiang's mother's voice suddenly rang out.

"No, not really," Jiang Ruyi said softly.

Jiang's mother looked at her daughter, whose words did not match her true feelings, and her face broke into a broad smile:

"When are you going to bring him home to meet your mother and father?"

Jiang Ruyi: "I..."

Jiang's mother took off her daughter's hat and gently stroked her jet-black hair with a tender look in her eyes:

"Ruyi, you've grown up..."

"I know." Jiang Ruyi left a quick reply, then turned and walked away quickly.

Jiang's mother looked at the pink slippers on the floor, couldn't help but chide with a smile: "Put on your shoes!"

But Jiang Ruyi hurriedly walked through the living room to the enclosed south-facing balcony, kneeling before the shrine of Divine·Jade Talisman.

She clasped her hands together, her eyes tightly closed, silently praying for something.

Seeing this scene, Jiang's mother, who had followed with the slippers, could only smile helplessly and didn't dare to disturb her.

The woman returned to the sofa, muted the TV, and fell into deep thought.

Lu Ran, a Nine-class God-Immortal Sheep Believer.

He was the pride of Rain Alley City and the heavenly pride of Da Xia.

But before he owned these glittering titles, he was merely the youth her daughter had chosen to help her graduate smoothly.

Who would have imagined that such a despised Immortal Sheep Believer would rise to such heights?

Could the daughter have foreseen the future?

Of course not.

Jiang's mother turned her head and looked towards the south balcony.

The Divine Sculpture inside the shrine was of a Third-class God·Jade Token, not the Second-class God·Tianluan.

This seemed to confirm that her daughter had already made up her mind.

What a silly girl...

Chapter 264: Snake Named Jade Face

Days flew by, and before anyone knew, half a month had passed.

This morning, clothed in a yellow raincoat and wielding dual swords, Lu Ran strolled through the gloomy rainy day.

There's an old saying: "Spring rain is as precious as oil."

Rain Alley City would say... you're talking nonsense!

Listening to the bursts of spring thunder, Lu Ran stepped over a small puddle by the roadside, splashing up some water.

"Raining again," Lu Ran muttered to himself.

Though the scene felt oppressive, having rain on every fifteenth day of the lunar month was actually a blessing.

After all, it made buildings less prone to catch fire.

Creatures possessing fire evil magic had always posed a great threat to human cities.

Lu Ran turned down a street, looking towards the small district across the water.

There stood a tall figure at the district's entrance.

She was cloaked in a wide black raincoat, under which a pale face could be seen.

At the moment, she was tilting her head slightly back as if observing the roiling dark clouds.

"What are you looking at?" a voice called from a distance.

As the gust surged, Jiang Ruyi instinctively closed her eyes, her long raincoat fluttering in the wind.

Lu Ran truly possessed the skill of "Shrinking Land into Inches," reaching the girl's side in an instant, leaving a trail of ethereal mist similar to a dreamy illusion along the way.

"Hmm?" Standing beside the girl, Lu Ran followed her gaze into the distance.

In the far distance, the landmark building of Rain Alley City, Wu Lie Building, appeared hazy and indistinct through the misty rain.

A flock of crows circled in the gloomy sky.

Due to the distance, Lu Ran couldn't hear the crows cawing, but he could imagine it.

With this, the already grey world seemed even more desolate and bleak.

Realizing the girl's concern, Lu Ran spoke up, "This morning, I consulted our classmates."

"Hmm?" Jiang Ruyi turned to look at Lu Ran.

Lu Ran shrugged, "The common caster's fortune was not bad, and the white caster's heart wasn't too panicked."

"Oh." Jiang Ruyi raised her hand, revealing a piece of chocolate from the wide sleeve of her raincoat.

Lu Ran, however, seemed frozen in place, his eyes fixed on the unopened chocolate.

"Don't you want it?" Jiang Ruyi asked, puzzled, as Lu Ran usually liked it.

While speaking, she moved the chocolate closer to him.

Still unresponsive, Lu Ran just gazed eagerly at it.

Suddenly, Jiang Ruyi realized and burst into laughter.

Lu Ran like this was no different from when he would stare at the slippers on the shoe rack at his home.

"You and your ways," Jiang Ruyi chastised playfully, opening the chocolate wrapper for Lu Ran.

As expected, Lu Ran immediately bent down and took a bite.

"Hey, my hand!" Jiang Ruyi exclaimed as her chocolate-holding fingers recoiled.

Lu Ran immediately looked up, "Can I eat the hand too?"

Jiang Ruyi: ???

She glared at Lu Ran and kicked out.

I dodge~

Amidst laughter, they walked along the deserted streets, heading straight for their usual haunt—Hexi Park.

At the lakeside dock, Lu Ran saw two familiar figures.

"Uncle Sun, good morning!" Lu Ran, having just eaten the chocolate, was extra sweet.

"Little Lu has arrived," Sun Zhengfang greeted enthusiastically as he opened his door, inviting them inside. "I watched your 'Heavenly Pride' episode a lot after I went home!"

Your first-person perspective almost made me dizzy!"

Wei Long nodded in agreement, seeming to have revisited it after going home as well.

Sun Zhengfang continued with a smile, "Did you rewatch your own broadcast after going back?"

Lu Ran shook his head, "No."

Sun Zhengfang: "Too busy with cultivation and practice to review it?"

Unexpectedly, Lu Ran blurted out, "I was too fast, too dizzying, even I felt dizzy watching it."

Sun Zhengfang's eyes widened in surprise.

Wei Long also looked puzzled.

"Hehe~" Jiang Ruyi couldn't help but cover her mouth and laugh softly.

Show-off!

"You rascal!" Sun Zhengfang laughed and teased, "Do you know what they keep posting in the live chat during your solo fight against Night Charm?"

Lu Ran immediately perked up, "What?"

Sun Zhengfang laughed heartily, "All colorful fonts with 'Dazzle dazzle dazzle', 'Shake it up' and lots of little emojis of girls in red dresses dancing! It was like stepping into a dance hall.

I really couldn't understand it, but it was truly shocking!"

Lu Ran: "..."

Clearly, this was not Sun Zhengfang's usual manner of speaking; he must have learned a lot from the chat moderators.

Thinking back, was his own chat room really that jolly?

Lu Ran hadn't watched it, but he could imagine that explosive atmosphere.

He figured, those chats must have been filled in afterwards.

During his live battle against Night Charm, the chat must have been full of question marks, right?

Sun Zhengfang turned to look at Jiang Ruyi, his eyes filled with admiration. "Little Jiang also performed very well.

She has gained unanimous approval from the Divine People Bureau.

We've already sent a letter to your school. To commend your outstanding contribution, the 15th of last month was considered an extra test, rewarding you with thirty Believer points."

"Thank you, Captain Sun," Jiang Ruyi replied with a smile, nodding in appreciation.

Her graceful, composed demeanor drew yet another sigh from Sun Zhengfang.

Jiang Ruyi was almost a Heavenly Pride herself, yet completely devoid of arrogance, truly refreshing to be around.

In recent years, this tiny Rain Alley City had indeed produced several remarkable individuals...

"What about me? What about me?" Lu Ran quickly interjected.

Sun Zhengfang looked at Lu Ran and chuckled, "You want a double portion?"

Your participation wasn't in a Divine People Bureau test, but in the 'Heavenly Pride' hosted by Da Xia!"

Lu Ran spoke earnestly, "But I've earned merits for the patrol team, I've bled for the Divine People Bureau!"

"Go on, get out of my sight, I get dizzy just looking at you!"

Lu Ran: ?

"Let's go, we're on patrol." Without giving Lu Ran another glance, Sun Zhengfang simply walked out the door.

"Hey? Uncle Sun! Don't go, Uncle Sun..."

...

As time slipped away, the rain gradually turned into a drizzle.

The small city of Rain Alley lit up for the evening, casting a comforting glow from every household.

As they passed by the neighborhood across the water, both Lu Ran and Jiang Ruyi looked up.

The lights were on at Jiang Ruyi's family home, but her parents were not at the window as usual.

Jiang Ruyi had explained to Lu Ran:

Her mom and dad were worried about her getting distracted on missions, so they made it clear they would absolutely not show up at the window.

Still, every time they passed by, both couldn't help but look up.

"Should be time now," Jiang Ruyi turned her head, gazing towards the east.

Far away, the top of Wu Lie Building was ablaze with light, piercing through layers of rain and mist.

"Yes," Lu Ran listened to the gentle patter of rain.

Suddenly, he stopped in his tracks, barely catching a strange hissing sound.

Could that be the hiss of a snake?

Has the invasion of evil demons begun?

Indeed, a massive roar unexpectedly came from afar.

This night of the fifteenth had truly begun!

Lu Ran didn't pay heed to the distance, instead, he turned his head towards the neighborhood across the water.

"Little Lu?" Sun Zhengfang obviously noticed Lu Ran's abnormal behavior and immediately called out.

Together with that, a group of Moon Gazers stationed at the neighborhood gate tensed up.

They knew all too well who Lu Ran was!

"Lu Ran?"

"Is there an evil demon nearby?"

"Hush!" Amidst the queries, Sun Zhengfang quickly signaled for silence.

Lu Ran's expression turned stern, his eyes fixed on the fourth floor of an apartment building.

Jiang Ruyi's heart tightened immediately!

This building near the street was where her family's apartment was located.

Ching! The sword left its sheath.

"Block one, fourth-floor stairwell!" Lu Ran grabbed the Dawn Blade and shot straight up.

Jiang Ruyi, surrounded by Jade Tokens, quickly followed suit.

"Little Lu, Little Jiang, enter from the third-floor window!" Sun Zhengfang immediately commanded, "I'll enter from the fifth floor with Wei Long, to block it off!"

"Yes!" Jiang Ruyi sped up to open the window.

As they approached the building, Lu Ran spoke rapidly, "Captain Sun, I think I heard the hiss of a snake."

Sun Zhengfang's heart leaped in alarm!

A snake?!

The Moon Gazers stationed at the neighborhood entrance similarly tensed upon hearing Lu Ran's words, all on high alert.

The evil demons in the world were numerous, including several snake-like creatures, mostly weaker ones with low intelligence.

However, there was one particular form of snake-like evil demon that was humanoid and particularly troublesome!

"Click~"

Jiang Ruyi stepped onto the windowsill, and with the temporarily deactivated but reactivated Divine Technique-Jade Talisman Formation, two Jade Tokens instantly appeared within the stairwell.

One token, sparking with tiny sparks, lightly pressed down, opening the window from the inside.

Without taking any chances, Lu Ran activated his water armor and slipped inside the window.

"Shit!" Suddenly, from the stairwell above, Sun Zhengfang cursed, "Always what we fear most!"

Jade-faced Snake!

Little Lu, don't come in, draw her out..."

Before he could finish, Lu Ran's eyes narrowed.

He saw a woman emerge from the stairwell.

Hmm... half a woman.

For her lower half was a serpentine body, covered in white scales that shone like jade under the light inside the building.

And her upper body...

This woman had a beautiful face and a majestic demeanor.

Her jet-black hair was styled high, with a white veil flowing back from it.

She was dressed in white and draped in a sheer white fabric, appearing noble and aloof, holding a delicate white Jade Ruyi in her hand.

What evil demon was this?

If you said she was a deity, Lu Ran would believe it!

Evil Demon·Jade-faced Snake!

One of the evil demons most detested by First-class God·Monk!

"Sss..."

The Jade-faced Snake, spotting Lu Ran crouching on the windowsill, let out a soft hiss.

Her face emotionless, her actions at odds with her dignified aura.

Her mouth then released a vivid red snake's tongue, which she licked across her red lips.

"Gulp." Lu Ran's throat constricted.

Watching as she raised the Jade Ruyi, Lu Ran, without another word, abruptly turned and leaped out.

"Zzzsh—"

Underneath Lu Ran, the mist churned as he grabbed Jiang Ruyi by the window, plunging rapidly towards the ground.

"Boom!"

Chapter 265: First Sight

The bleating of sheep shattered the curtain of rain, and the noble, cold jade-faced snake finally changed color!

The indifferent expression vanished without a trace, replaced by an exceedingly sinister visage.

"Hiss!!"

Within the four-story staircase, the jade-faced snake rapidly crawled towards the window, holding a jade Ruyi in hand, placed in front of her face.

Jiang Ruyi saw it clearly and immediately warned, "Lu Ran!"

"Huh~"

From the red lips of the jade-faced snake, a breath of immortal energy had already been expelled.

When this breath swept past the jade Ruyi, its power abruptly intensified, instantly transforming into a gale!

The gale howled toward Lu Ran's direction, with fine white mist mingling within the wind wave.

In an instant, everything the wind touched, met with calamity!

"Crack!"

"Crack..."

The tall community iron fence was corroded at a speed visible to the naked eye.

Trees shook violently in the wind, with their lush branches being gradually dissolved until they disappeared completely.

Evil Technique-Immortal Breath!

There came a muffled "thud."

Lu Ran, aided by the Dawn Blade, had already turned direction in mid-air and landed heavily on the ground.

He looked up in shock.

Truly, the jade-faced snake clan was exceptionally rare, and indeed formidable!

The area affected by the gale was vast; everywhere it passed, it hinted at the desolation of all things, leaving not a single blade of grass alive.

Fortunately, this special wind was tangible and visible to the eye.

It wasn't the wind that corroded everything, but the thin white mist mixed within it.

In other words, it was the breath of immortal energy that the jade-faced snake had emitted from her red lips.

It was apparent to those with keen sight that the jade Ruyi in the hands of the jade-faced snake significantly amplified this evil technique.

"Baa!!"

The sheep's bleat rose again, fueling the malicious desires in the heart of the evil demon.

The jade-faced snake's face grew dark, and she immediately leapt out the window, directly plunging toward the asphalt road outside the complex.

"Goodness."

Lu Ran slid backward on the asphalt road, looking at the jade-faced snake that had shot out.

Her upper half was human, a normal-size, like any ordinary human clan woman.

However, her snake lower half had to be 7 or 8 meters long!

But that was not the main point, Lu Ran saw, from her waist upward, another eight snake tails had shot out!

Those eight tails were clearly illusory, but they appeared extremely lifelike, each covered with scales as lustrous as white jade.

Evil Technique·Immortal Tail!

"Bang!"

The jade-faced snake landed heavily; the asphalt road shattered.

Seeing this scene, Sun Zhengfang's expression was still grave, but his heart relaxed slightly.

The evil techniques of the jade-faced snake clan were too threatening.

The battle group must not be initiated within the stairwell; otherwise, who knows how many would suffer.

Now that she had been lured out, it was time to launch a counterattack.

"Da Long!" Sun Zhengfang commanded.

"Yes!" Wei Long immediately flew out, his hands swiftly weaving through the air.

But just as Wei Long was about to cast a spell, a Silent Night Blade had already been thrust out, and wedged at the joint between the hilt and the blade were two White Jade Tokens.

Jade Talisman Divine Skill·Bursting Flame Talisman!

Jade Talisman Divine Skill-Electric Confinement Talisman!

Jiang Ruyi had made her move!

She predicted the landing point of the jade-faced snake, and with the help of the divine weapon, she executed a combination technique.

But to everyone's surprise, the jade-faced snake had activated Immortal Tail while lunging toward the asphalt road.

It seemed she was determined to viciously trample that annoying little sheep in her prime.

This sudden development disrupted Jiang Ruyi's plan.

Several wildly flailing immortal tails not only struck the blade but also prematurely detonated the two White Jade Tokens.

"Boom!"

Explosions erupted, shockwaves churned, flinging the jade-faced snake forward.

"Zzzt~zzzt!"

Electric sparks flickered, currents ran wild, rapidly climbing along the tails to the upper body of the jade-faced snake.

"Hiss..." The jade-faced snake let out a hiss.

A mist spread, billowing in all directions.

Everyone: !!!

"Was this technique also equipped?"

"Damn, Lu Ran's divine technique won't be effective against her anymore."

Evil Technique-Immortal Realm!

The spreading mist could purify a certain range, clearing any abnormal states afflicting the target.

"Hiss!"

The jade-faced snake suddenly turned her head, no longer looking at Lu Ran.

The whiteness helped her completely escape the mental influence.

The jade-faced snake no longer fixated on pursuing Lu Ran but targeted Jiang Ruyi, who stirred trouble from behind.

The sneak attack by the human clan girl clearly infuriated the jade-faced snake.

The scene that followed left people astonished!

The jade-faced snake swiftly killed towards Jiang Ruyi, passing through the region filled with electric currents.

It must be understood that it was a Thunder Ball spread by the Electric Restriction Talisman—a dense web of current that could paralyze any being.

Yet the jade-faced snake's movements did not slow in the slightest!

She treated the dense currents as insignificance, charging through them, raising the jade Ruyi with one hand.

Within Evil Technique·Immortal Realm, the jade-faced snake was not only immune to mental influence, but her physical abnormalities were also cleansed!

"Crackle! Crackle!"

"Crackle..." Chains materialized out of thin air, binding toward the jade-faced snake.

"Hiss!" The jade-faced snake let out a piercing cry, her voice desolate.

Her attention was on Jiang Ruyi, and facing the suddenly emerging Blood Chains in front of her, she instinctively reached out to block.

By doing so, her arm was tightly wrapped by the Blood Chains.

But that wasn't the end!

Wei Long narrowed his eyes and decisively cast a spell.

Prisoner Demon Divine Skill·Blood Chain Stab!

Suddenly, sharp spikes burst from the Blood Chains binding the jade-faced snake's arm, piercing her arm with numerous bloody holes.

"Crack! Crack! Crack!"

The jade-faced snake clenched her silver teeth; the eight immortal tails lashed out fiercely.

Within several meters radius of the jade-faced snake, everything suffered damage.

The appearing Blood Chains were whipped into frays by the tails.

The asphalt crumbled, leaving deep whip marks.

The roadside trees broke, and even the rain was swept away layer by layer...

It was like she had activated a small-scale domain!

"Whoosh!"

Suddenly, a horizontal knife pierced through layers of wind and rain, pulling out a splendid rosy light, coming with momentum.

The jade-faced snake's expression turned sinister, obviously hearing the piercing sound behind her.

Her eight immortal tails continued wreaking havoc, lashing about everything.

Her own body coiled round and round, wrapping herself.

The next moment, that jade-like glistening snake body began to gleam.

"Zing!"

The Dawn Blade, with great force, pierced through two immortal tails, continuing to thrust toward the face of the jade-faced snake.

Everyone watched closely, a glimmer of hope rising in their hearts.

"Ding!"

The crisp sound, to everyone else, was like a heavy hammer, smashing hard onto their hearts.

Could it be that even divine weapons couldn't penetrate the snake's body?

How sharp was a divine weapon, carrying such momentum?

Even if it was disturbed by two immortal tails before, losing some force and speed, but this...

Evil Technique-Immortal Scales!

This technique could, in an extremely short time, make the scales on the snake's body incredibly hard.

It must be noted that when Evil Technique-Immortal Scales was effective, the jade-faced snake could not move.

Including the floating eight immortal tails, they all paused.

"Snap!!"

The jade-faced snake "revived."

The Dawn Blade was whipped away by an immortal tail, spinning rapidly, vanishing into the night rain.

"Hiss..." A hoarse snake hiss sounded.

The snake body wrapping the jade-faced snake writhed, slowly moving downward.

Within the diffusing Immortal Fog, the jade-faced snake revealed her upper face.

Her pair of cold eyes stared stubbornly at Lu Ran, chill-inducing to anyone who saw.

The coiling beautiful snake body continued to move down, exposing the jade Ruyi she held to her lips.

"Huh~"

A breath of immortal energy spewed from the charming red lips.

Without a second word, Lu Ran's feet swirled with mist, darting to the side.

The gale arose abruptly; the jade-faced snake cleared everything in front!

Trees, grasses, the asphalt road...

Wherever the gale passed, all things continuously dissolved, being severely eroded.

Lu Ran pursed his lips, dodging swiftly while inwardly sighing.

Truly, a worthy archrival of a First-class God·Monk!

But then again, enveloped in water armor, Lu Ran could withstand the erosion of Evil Technique-Immortal Breath for a time, but he saw no need for unnecessary depletion.

However, for a moment, Lu Ran really wanted to use Vermilion Paper Evil Technique·Yan Zhi Sleeve!

In doing so, he could stand firm and kill without harm.

The immortal energy released by the jade-faced snake would be absorbed into his sleeve.

Lu Ran also wanted to execute Night Charm Evil Technique·Night Wind Assault, blowing the jade-faced snake away, delivering 16 Night Charm Blades, severing all her eight immortal tails!

You still stand firm against me? Quite stable, aren't you?

If you really provoke me, I'll directly activate Evil Sculpture Tangled Silk Shadow, starting Silk Tethering Evil Skill·Tethering Silk Robe.

Let's see if your eight immortal tails are steadier or if my myriad of red lines can stand firmer!

Thinking thus, Lu Ran couldn't help feeling a bit frustrated.

The presence of human clan comrades and cameras in streets and alleys limited the performance of a certain wicked little sheep.

"Huh!"

The jade-faced snake's cold eyes flowed, following Lu Ran's evasion; she also slightly turned her head, adjusting the direction of her attack.

"Crackle..."

Two Blood Chains suddenly appeared, one binding toward the still-bleeding hand of the jade-faced snake, another towards her throat.

Several immortal tails quickly came to the rescue, striking with precise control, shattering the chains without harming the jade-faced snake herself.

The upper half of the jade-faced snake, with a human clan flesh and blood body, lacked any defensive power.

"Splat!" came a crisp sound from behind the jade-faced snake.

The jade-faced snake's expression changed, the ground beneath her suddenly turned into surging quicksand?

Jade Talisman Divine Skill-Quicksand Talisman!

In the night sky, Jiang Ruyi held the returning Silent Night Blade in one hand and briskly drew talismans with the other, replenishing the Jade Talisman Formation.

In her view, within the tumultuous quicksand, sand whips lashed out, killing towards the jade-faced snake.

Jiang Ruyi's offense was effective; the jade-faced snake decisively abandoned the pursuit of Lu Ran, while defending against quicksand intrusions and quickly shifting her position.

"Snap!"

Lu Ran clenched the returning Dawn Blade in his left hand, his right hand slowly pulling the Silent Night Blade from his back.

In his mind, he flicked through the effects and strengths of each of the jade-faced snake's evil techniques, as well as all her performances and casting tendencies up to now.

Jade-faced, upon our first encounter.

Pleasantries, let's leave it at that.

"Huh~"

Lu Ran spun knife flowers in both hands.

Let's go and chop off her eight tails one by one!

"Hum!"

The double blades in his hands hummed and vibrated.

Lu Ran stared intently at the jade-faced snake, fog swirling at his feet, his figure suddenly darting forth.

Now it's my turn!

...

Chapter 266: The Charm of Beheading Snakes

Sun Zhengfang knelt on one knee, pressing one hand against the ground with a solemn expression on his face.

He held the Divine Technique·Biwu Tree in his hand but hesitated to use it.

That towering tree, with its myriad branches, was as good as nonexistent in front of the Jade-faced Snake.

The Jade-faced Snake needed only to blow out a breath of immortal energy, and the Biwu Tree would wither at a rapid pace, vanishing into nothingness.

Of course, the main reason Sun Zhengfang had yet to deploy the technique was his worry that the appearance of the giant Biwu Tree would prompt the Jade-faced Snake to summon a giant python!

As the captain, Sun Zhengfang had more to consider.

Since the battle had started, the Jade-faced Snake had only summoned a giant python once, when Lu Ran had first emitted the lamb's bleat.

Thankfully, the python had sliced through the night sky at a slant, but had its angle of attack been slightly different—headed towards the buildings...

The consequences would be unthinkable!

"Big Dragon!" Sun Zhengfang called out, "If it really comes to that, start the Prisoner Demon Array!"

The Divine Technique of the Biwu Sect was easily restrained by the Jade-faced Snake, quickly dissolved, but the Divine Technique of the Prisoner Demon Sect was a whole different story.

Given the strength and effectiveness of the Divine Technique·Prisoner Demon Array, it was worth the risk!

Wei Long's brow furrowed deeply.

Should he deploy the Prisoner Demon Array?

Chains erupted beneath his feet, aiming to completely submerge and shred the Jade-faced Snake.

Wei Long hesitated, not because the technique hugely drained energy, nor was it because he did not want to help his teammates.

It was because the Prisoner Demon had created this technique with the purpose of allowing believers, when utterly surrounded, to stand against a hundred foes and fight to the death!

In other words, it was a technique to be used only in the most desperate of situations.

The mainstream belief was that Prisoner Demon, in a great act of mercy, allowed the disciples who entered his sect a dignified departure from this world.

However, the current battlefield situation clearly did not match the scenario anticipated by the deity Prisoner Demon.

Before making any move, followers of this world naturally consider their revered deity.

No one wants to displease the great deity.

On the one hand, it's about faith's influence, self-restraint, absolute respect for the deity.

On the other hand...

If you act rashly, defy the will of the deity, who knows if at some critical moment, the deity will deny your ability to use the technique!

Then everything would be over!

This was why Sun Zhengfang used a tone of negotiation rather than issuing an order.

Ah..." Sun Zhengfang sighed inwardly, not urging Wei Long.

At this point, the seasoned captain couldn't help but think back to the team's former ace—Deng Yuxiang.

If the North Wind Disciples were still part of the team, there would be no need to take such risks.

Since Deng Yuxiang had left, Lu Ran and Jiang Ruyi had joined the squad. Both young people were indeed excellent, but the team...

"Right!" Wei Long steeled himself, "I...hm?"

Wei Long did not hesitate for too long, as he had already made a decision in his heart to "defy the old ancestor."

After all, the battlefield was very close to a residential area; with every second the Jade-faced Snake lived, the people faced another second of danger.

However, just as Wei Long was about to charge in, a figure on the other side of the battle darted towards the Jade-faced Snake:

"Baa!"

"Lu Ran?" Sun Zhengfang looked over and couldn't help but change his expression.

After several exchanges, the experienced Sun Zhengfang had roughly judged:

This Jade-faced Snake must be an Evil Demon of the River Realm·Fifth Rank!

At that moment, the Jade-faced Snake's eight Immortal Tails were crazily whipping around.

Yes, Lu Ran dared to charge through the myriad of red lines when facing the Tangled Silk Shadow clan, but that Tether Silk Robe only won by sheer quantity.

The strength and speed of the red fabric and threads were not on par with the eight Immortal Tails of the Jade-faced Snake!

Additionally, the area where the Jade-faced Snake was, was also churning with Quicksand...

One after another sand whip burst forth, intent on dragging the Jade-faced Snake down, burying it alive.

Once Lu Ran approached, he would also become a target for burial.

With its special body structure and reliance on eight Immortal Tails, the Jade-faced Snake could still move through the yellow sand, but Lu Ran, as a member of the Human Clan...

Human Clan?

No!

At this moment, his name was "Ran Mei!"

"Hisss—"

Lu Ran's feet stirred up a mist as he charged alone into the area with the flowing sand.

Suddenly, a slender sand whip attacked with incredible speed and a tricky angle.

Lu Ran had already pushed his Evil Technique-Evil Sense to the maximum, thus seeing in all directions, hearing all around!

"Snap!"

He bounced off his feet, seemingly stepping on the quicksand, but in fact, a layer of wind waves appeared beneath his shoes.

Night Charm Evil Technique·Night Dance!

Lu Ran liked this name.

He liked even more to cut through each self-important Evil Demon within this Night Dance!

"Huuh!"

The figure of Lu Ran, rushing forward, suddenly twisted, the sand whip grazing past his chest as he deftly moved aside.

The scene was rather amusing.

Jiang Ruyi's Divine Technique·Quicksand Talisman was intended to restrict the Jade-faced Snake's movements, but at this moment, it became an obstacle to Lu Ran's effort to kill the enemy.

But Lu Ran did not speak; he did not ask Jiang Ruyi to cancel the Divine Technique.

He needed the flowing sand to limit the Jade-faced Snake, he needed each of those sand whips to distract those Immortal Tails.

"Lu..." Jiang Ruyi's beautiful eyes sharpened.

Knowing full well the extent of Lu Ran's abilities, she uttered only a syllable and focused all her attention on the Jade-faced Snake.

Helping him was the only thing she needed to do now!

Jiang Ruyi, flying in mid-air, abruptly raised her hand.

The Cold Night Sword, still soaring in the night sky, immediately stopped its upward thrust and swiftly changed direction.

"Hissss!!"

The Jade-faced Snake let out a sharp hiss, slightly lifting the Jade Ruyi in her hand.

Immediately after, an illusory giant python swiftly took shape, lunging towards the night sky.

Jade-faced Snake Evil Technique·Immortal Sky Python!

Jiang Ruyi was undaunted, her solid foundation knowledge familiar with this Evil Technique's characteristics, immediately choosing to drift sideways.

This Immortal Sky Python was indeed massive and destructive.

But it moved in a straight line, never turning, incapable of seeking out targets on its own.

"Hissss..."

The Jade-faced Snake cried out again in pain as she was just about to lift her Jade Ruyi when a Blood Chain wrapped around her.

Wei Long resolutely cast the spell, urgently growing sharp spikes on the blood-red chains.

Piercing the Evil Demon's arms was not the objective.

Wei Long wanted to strangle the Jade-faced Snake's neck, entangle her head.

Unfortunately, the genuine snake body of the Jade-faced Snake was always slithering on her upper body, almost covering her torso and constantly protecting her vital parts.

"Hissss!!"

The screams of the Jade-faced Snake had not yet weakened when they suddenly increased in volume.

The formerly raspy snake cry turned piercingly sharp, causing those who heard it to tremble in fear.

Because...

That little lamb had forcefully made his way in!

Behind the Jade-faced Snake, Lu Ran, wielding dual blades, stepping on Immortal Fog, traversed the raging quagmire, striking straight at the heart!

"Huuh!"

A flurry of blade light passed, drawing a crescent arc.

An Immortal Tail was severed by the Silent Night Blade with a resounding chop!

The severed tail fell to the ground with a "thunk," only to be pulled into the surging yellow sand.

Lu Ran's body surged with Divine Power, almost boiling, his strength astonishing!

Soul-splitting Evil Technique-Soul Splitting Power, full force unleashed!

"Huuh!"

Lu Ran stepped on wind waves, concealed by Immortal Fog, darting to the side.

His left hand swung the Dawn Blade, tracing another crescent arc.

In a flash, a golden-red gleam burst forth!

Under that rosy light, another Immortal Tail was nearly sliced in half!

"Hissss!!"

The Jade-faced Snake writhed in agony, screaming pitifully, but she dared not look back.

As a long sword plummeted swiftly, carrying a terrifying sound of tearing through the air.

The Jade-faced Snake only sensed the approaching deadly move, how could she focus on the lamb pestering her from behind?

She used her original snake tail to wrap around her upper body, then exerted all her might to cast her spell.

Evil Technique·Immortal Scales!

"Hisss!"

This time, the Divine Weapon did not get deflected.

What the Dawn Blade could not penetrate, the full-blown attack of the Silent Night Blade did!

Yet, even with the Silent Night Blade's unstoppable momentum, it only managed to break open the snake scales and embed a few inches into the snake's body, not truly piercing through.

The defensive power of the Evil Technique-Immortal Scales was incredibly strong!

Behind such strong defenses, naturally, comes a cost—rigidity.

The Jade-faced Snake was immobilized, including several Immortal Tails.

Instantly, sand whips emerged from the sandstorm, bombarding the Immortal Tails, binding the Jade-faced Snake, attempting to drag her into the depths of the earth.

"Hiss—"

The sound of Immortal Fog surged, enough to make everyone's blood boil.

And the scene unfolding in the battle behind was simply jaw-dropping.

The randomly flailing sand whips, entangled snake tails, all became leveraging points for Lu Ran!

In the midst of a chaotic battle, Lu Ran's figure surged with Immortal Fog, briefly and rapidly, flying up and down.

In a world constructed by sand whips and snake tails, Lu Ran, ducking and weaving, retracing his steps with rapid advances and retreats, swiftly made it to the very center!

Those cold eyes of his stared fixedly at the coiled Jade-faced Snake.

Upon those winding tails, Lu Ran found a hint of a gap!

With Evil Technique·Evil Sense activated, the battlefield through Lu Ran's eyes never dimmed; his gaze was incredibly sharp!

A gap?

See a gap, insert blade!

"Hisss—"

This was the sound of Lu Ran stepping on wind waves, Immortal Fog spewing forth.

"Hisss!"

This was the sound of the Silent Night Blade piercing through the gap between the snake's flesh, stabbing into the beauty's head.

Scales were indeed unequaled in defense.

But the Jade-faced Snake's upper body was always flesh and blood.

"Wait for her Evil Technique to fade, don't stab...Ah?!"

"Did it go in?"

"The pride of our heavens, our Heavenly Pride..."

At the residential compound wall, the Moon Gazer people standing guard over the apartments, ready at any moment to block bullet holes, turned their heads in unison.

Lu Ran's final blow was formidable.

Gripping the Silent Night Blade, still piercing through the head of the Jade-faced Snake, he surged forward along the street.

The Jade-faced Snake's tails were now limp, swaying in the storm.

This powerful Evil Demon had met her demise.

"Captain Sun." Wei Long looked towards the distant street, calling softly.

"Ah?" Sun Zhengfang continuously moved his gaze, following the one-on-one struggle.

Wei Long said, "It seems it won't be my turn to deploy the Prisoner Demon Array."

Sun Zhengfang: "..."

Just now, he had made a difficult decision, discussing with his teammates, "If it really comes to that, start the Prisoner Demon Array."

The fact proved:

Lu Ran was capable!

"Spurt—"

Amidst layers of rain, the Jade-faced Snake shattered into mist.

Lu Ran alone passed through the white mist, with the terrified face of the Jade-faced Snake still lingering in his mind.

His eyes remained cold as he muttered softly, "Quiet."

"Buzz!"

The Silent Night Blade trembled gently...

Chapter 267: Mystery of Life's Origin?

Lu Ran clutched the hilt of the Silent Night Blade, feeling its clear feedback.

Its vibration amplitude wasn't particularly violent, indicating that there was still some way to go before it became a Divine Weapon.

However, Lu Ran and the Silent Night Blade were clearly on the correct path.

This was enough to settle one's heart, with time being the only remaining issue.

"Whew—"

Jiang Ruyi descended from the sky, bringing with her the wind and rain, landing beside Lu Ran.

"I'm alright," Lu Ran immediately said.

"Alright." Jiang Ruyi smiled, lifting her hand to carefully straighten Lu Ran's collar for him.

She had gradually gotten used to keeping her worries deep inside.

Some emotions were inevitable, but she didn't want to disturb Lu Ran, nor could she afford to disturb herself.

Lu Ran lowered his head and gently kissed the back of her hand wetted by the rain.

"We're on a mission," Jiang Ruyi said with a reproachful look, playfully slapping Lu Ran's mouth.

However, this gesture of punishment looked incredibly gentle...

Speaking of missions, Lu Ran turned to look behind him, only to see a scene of devastation.

Withered, broken trees and a street full of whip marks, as well as a huge hole blasted into the wall of a residential building.

All served as evidence of the ferocity of the recent battle.

Lu Ran whispered, "The strength of the Jade-faced Snake was a bit more formidable than expected."

Had they not been here by chance, one could hardly imagine what would have happened to the Moon Gazer squad stationed in this neighborhood.

Jiang Ruyi looked toward her own apartment building, still in shock: "After all, she's the sworn enemy of Martial Monk Sir."

"Are you alright, Lu Ran?" Sun Zhengfang and Wei Long hurried over, examining Lu Ran from head to toe.

"I'm fine," Lu Ran shook his head and continued, "I thought the textbooks were exaggerating."

After seeing it with my own eyes, the Jade-faced Snake really doesn't seem like an Evil Demon."

Not just that, she seemed more like a... Divine Being.

Her aloof demeanor and beautiful visage, like a Fairy untouched by worldly concerns, were enough to make mere mortals feel ashamed.

Yet such a creature belonged to the Evil Demon Clan!

Indeed... well, not bad.

The techniques of the Jade-faced Snake's Evil Technique were each extraordinary in their own right.

Especially the area Purification Techniques like Immortal Realm—it greatly enticed Lu Ran.

If one could have such Evil Demon servants to guard one's squad, resolving all concerns, wouldn't that be marvelous?

Moreover, the Jade-faced Snake herself was like a stationary artillery platform, her attacking power astonishing!

The only pity was that the powerful defensive technique, Immortal Scales, didn't seem to be usable by Lu Ran.

After all, the Jade-faced Snake Clan was naturally endowed with snake bodies, enhancing the defense of their scales.

Lu Ran, on the other hand, was made of pure flesh, just like her upper body.

That is to say, once he activated this technique, would his flesh remain unchanged?

As for the other Evil Techniques of the Jade-faced Snake Clan, Lu Ran could use them.

Well... forget it, no point dreaming for now.

People always say this Evil Demon is rare, that Evil Demon is rare.

If we're talking about rarity, the Jade-faced Snake truly stands out!

All the likes of Tangled Silk Shadow, Prison Sky Demon, Night Charm, they all fall behind the Jade-faced Snake.

At this thought, Lu Ran sighed inwardly.

To have such an Evil Demon servant, one would surely have to pull some strings, entering the corresponding Demon Cave for training.

"Yes," Sun Zhengfang said with a sigh, "when the Jade-faced Snake sees humans, she doesn't react brutally or impatiently like other Evil Demons.

She still keeps everyone at a distance, which is indeed misleading."

Wei Long nodded in agreement, speaking rarely: "This clan is very special, very peculiar."

"Let's go, we'll continue patrolling," Sun Zhengfang gestured for the squad to move on.

Lu Ran stepped forward, then suddenly said, "The techniques of the Jade-faced Snake Clan are named things like Immortal Realm, Immortal Scales, Immortal Breath, right?"

Sun Zhengfang didn't understand and looked at Lu Ran's back, waiting for him to continue.

Lu Ran: "The names we use for Evil Techniques should have been named by our Human Clan.

So why use the word 'Immortal'? It doesn't sound like an Evil Technique, but rather like a Divine Technique, doesn't it?"

Jiang Ruyi subtly raised her eyebrows in agreement.

Not to look too far, just take Lu Ran as an example:

His sect, Immortal Sheep, had Divine Techniques named Immortal Horn, Immortal Eyes, Immortal Hoof...

It's not to say there's any relation between the God Camp's Immortal Sheep and the Evil Demon·Jade-faced Snake.

But just looking at it from the name alone, don't the techniques of the Jade-faced Snake Clan seem closer to the God Camp's camp?

At the very least, it's extremely easy to cause confusion!

"I don't know," Sun Zhengfang shook his head, equally puzzled.

The experienced squad leader really didn't know where the names for the Jade-faced Snake Clan's techniques came from or who had named them.

Jiang Ruyi speculated, "The names of the techniques of the Jade-faced Snake Clan are probably based on the effects and forms manifested by the techniques."

Lu Ran nodded lightly.

Whether it was the purifying Evil Technique that produced mist like Immortal Fog or the Immortal Breath exhaled by the Jade-faced Snake, they indeed fit the character 'Immortal' very well.

Plus, considering the overall impression the Jade-faced Snake gave...

Lu Ran had a bold conjecture: the Jade-faced Snake originally belonged to the God Camp!

But later, for some unknown reason, she chose to descend into the path of demons.

"Snap."

Lu Ran slapped his forehead, unsure if he was letting his imagination run wild.

And he didn't share this speculation with his teammates.

Because the question was extremely serious!

If the Jade-faced Snake was originally a deity...

Then it also meant that all followers of the gods revered around the world could potentially fall into the path of demons!

You must be joking!

"Jade-faced Snake, Jade-faced Snake..." Lu Ran murmured inwardly.

What exactly is the story of your life?

"Moo!"

An abrupt bellow of a cow woke Lu Ran from his reverie.

He paused mid-stride, looking toward the street ahead.

A massive, muscular Minotaur was angrily bellowing towards them.

It strode forward, surrounded by several black fog orbs.

As everyone looked on, the Soul-splitting Demon no longer walked upright but changed to galloping on all fours, charging at them.

"Boom! Boom! Boom!"

The Soul-splitting Demon charged wildly, each thump of its hooves as if shaking the ground.

Lu Ran raised his Silent Night Blade, pointing it at the Soul-splitting Demon: "Go on, little Ruyi, I choose you!"

Jiang Ruyi: ???

Am I your Pokémon?

"Here it comes!" Lu Ran urged.

Against such a brute who relied on reckless ramming and had no wits, there was indeed no need for "Ran Mei" to act.

Jiang Ruyi raised her hand, and two White Jade Tokens immediately flew out.

"Moo!!"

The Soul-splitting Demon, heedless of everything, its eyes fierce and its horns sharp.

With a slap and a crisp sound!

The Jade Tokens shattered, and electricity scattered.

The body of the Soul-splitting Demon was immediately covered with tiny electric snakes, immobilizing it.

But the Soul-splitting Demon's momentum carried on!

It fell forward, its hooves sliding uncontrollably across the wet asphalt.

"Rumble!"

A Bursting Flame Talisman followed closely, striking the bull's head accurately.

Flames burst forth, with shockwaves rolling!

The massive bull's head was blasted into pieces, layers of flames raging, and the bull's body was charred to a crisp.

Jiang Ruyi slowly lowered her left hand, feeling she'd been overly cautious.

She should have just thrown the Bursting Flame Talisman, not needing the Electric Shackle Talisman for control at all.

"It smells good." Lu Ran muttered, smelling the scent of roasted beef.

Jiang Ruyi chuckled inwardly, taking off the Divine Power Pearl from around her neck and walking forward.

Lu Ran followed: "How about we go for barbecue after the fifteenth is over?"

"Sure," Jiang Ruyi responded softly, reaching out to press her hand against the bones of the Soul-splitting Demon Corpse.

"Hum—"

At that moment, Lu Ran felt a jolt in his mind!

Moments later, having recovered, Lu Ran couldn't help but feel overjoyed.

In the God Demon Sculpture Garden, the Evil Sculpture belonging to the Soul-splitting Demon kept trembling, entering the upgrade mode!

For so long, Lu Ran had only visited the Soul-splitting Demon's Demon Cave once and cultivated the sculpture to the River Realm·First Rank.

In the following battles on the fifteenth night, the sculpture kept being nourished by the souls of the Evil Demon minions, reaching River Realm·Second Rank.

Now, it was about to advance to River Realm·Third Rank!

The new Evil Technique was ready, waiting for him to also reach River Realm Third Rank to be equipped!

Simply delightful~

The Evil Technique suited for the Soul-splitting Demon Clan at River Realm·Third Rank was called "Soul Splitting Formation."

The caster could summon a herd of large black bulls to gallop forward and charge at the target!

What's more terrifying is that once the technique advances in grade, these black bulls could ignite with pitch-black flames.

Any creature that touches this flame would have its soul scorched!

Just thinking about it was horrifying.

Since the Soul-splitting Demon Clan wasn't highly intelligent, most of them wouldn't know the Evil Technique-Soul Splitting Formation.

Objectively, this was fortunate for the Human Clan.

If every Soul-splitting Demon of River Realm-Third Rank and above had this technique, considering their frequency on the night of the fifteenth...

The human homelands would likely have been flattened by herds of black bulls long ago.

"Lu Ran?" Jiang Ruyi picked up the Divine Power Pearl, stood up, and looked at Lu Ran curiously, who was lost in thought.

The massive bones of the Soul-splitting Demon before her had been completely absorbed.

"Huh?" Lu Ran came back to his senses and looked at the young girl.

"Let's go," Jiang Ruyi said, her gaze lingering on Lu Ran's face for a moment before turning to leave.

"Oh, right, coming." Lu Ran quickly followed.

As they walked side by side, Jiang Ruyi suddenly blurted out, "Jade-faced Snake is pretty, isn't she?"

Lu Ran looked bewildered: "Ah?"

Jiang Ruyi glanced at Lu Ran playfully: "Stop thinking about her, you're distracted.

Focus on the mission, the night has just begun."

Lu Ran: "..."

It's just curiosity about the Jade-faced Snake's background; how could I possibly be thinking about her?

And what's there to think about?

Thinking about her noble and chilly demeanor? Her beauty that rivals celestial beings?

Thinking about her... well, it does seem worth thinking about.

But I'm not!

Lu Ran hurriedly said, "I was thinking about the Soul-splitting Demon Clan!

Thinking about the Evil Technique suited for them at River Realm Third Rank, thinking about those muscular black bulls."

Watching Lu Ran's flustered explanations, Jiang Ruyi restrained a laugh.

"Mhm, mhm," Jiang Ruyi nodded nonchalantly in response, gesturing ahead, "Watch your step."

Lu Ran: "..."

...

Chapter 268: Sneak Attack~

The rain poured all night.

In the pitter-patter of rain, Lu Ran fought through the entire night.

The dangers he faced were not worth mentioning.

For tonight in Rain Alley City, there were no Night of Ghosts prowling, no descent of the Demon Lord.

This cursed city finally allowed its people a moment to breathe.

Even though each battle Lu Ran encountered, each rescue mission he took part in, was fraught with peril...

This night still gave Lu Ran an illusion of "calm seas and mild winds."

He stayed with the little Rain Alley City until after midnight, battled until dawn.

Looking back suddenly, it was the initial battle with the Jade-faced Snake and the small team that had been most perilous.

"The last round."

Lu Ran whispered softly as he came to the dilapidated overpass outside Hexi Park once more.

The sky was already brightening, the small town quiet and peaceful.

Lu Ran raised his head, looking through the misty rain at the towering Wu Lie Building.

Jiang Ruyi's heart stirred, probing, "After the last encounter with Heavenly Pride, has Sister Deng Yuxiang contacted you?"

"I've seen her once," Lu Ran replied truthfully.

"Seen her once?" Jiang Ruyi was surprised, turning to look at Lu Ran's profile, her gaze deep and distant.

Last night, Jiang Ruyi told Lu Ran not to think anymore about the Evil Demon·Jade-faced Snake, which of course was said in jest.

But now, the girl seemed genuinely jealous.

"Quite a coincidence." Lu Ran scratched his head, his hand falling upon the raincoat's hood, "That night after I walked you home, I thought to visit my father.

Then, there she was on the rooftop."

Hearing this, Jiang Ruyi's expression became even more peculiar.

Even if Lu Ran was slow to react, he still sensed something was off.

He hurriedly explained, "Due to a fortunate coincidence, it was there on that rooftop that she had an epiphany and made a breakthrough.

So, she often goes there to solidify her state of mind."

"Oh," Jiang Ruyi's voice was very low.

Lu Ran lifted his left hand, releasing the Dawn Blade.

The Dawn Blade flew up on its own, spinning in the air, and returned precisely to the scabbard on Lu Ran's right shoulder.

Meanwhile, Lu Ran's freed hand took hold of the girl's icy delicate hand.

Behind them, Sun Zhengfang first froze, then shook his head with a smile, pretending to see nothing.

"We're on a mission," Jiang Ruyi said softly, trying to pull away from Lu Ran's grasp but unable to break free.

Lu Ran said, "Sister Yuxiang left; she went to North Wind City."

"Oh? She's not in the Wu Lie Building?"

Lu Ran organized his words and explained the situation.

Hearing about Deng Yuxiang's "do or die" cultivation journey, Jiang Ruyi frowned with concern.

As Lu Ran finished his story, Jiang Ruyi sighed deeply, "Ah..."

Divine Weapons were the stuff of dreams for everyone.

The Divine Weapon Domain was one of the world's top resources.

Alas, resources were finite; some ascend to the throne, while others are pulled down from their horses.

And as a challenger, Deng Yuxiang had an innate disadvantage, for her Divine Weapon temporarily lacked a Domain.

The possible outcome for Deng Yuxiang...

Thinking of this, Jiang Ruyi felt an increasing weight on her heart.

Last month, when she visited Beijing, Qiao Wanjun had personally instructed her about the potential Domain of the Cold Night Sword.

Would the Domains overlap?

When the time came, would she also have to compete with her seniors?

Even more terrifying was that even if you didn't vie for it, the other party probably wouldn't let it go without a fight.

There's no such thing as enduring a thief for a thousand days.

Once the Cold Night Sword realized who was blocking its path to divinity, the other party would also learn who was lurking in the shadows, coveting.

A battle would naturally be inevitable.

Let's hope that the Domain of the Cold Night Sword does not overlap with any other Divine Weapon.

Honestly, that's a bit idealistic.

Without relying on luck, the best-case scenario would be that the rival Divine Weapon is in the hands of the Human Clan.

If that Divine Weapon belonged to a deity or an Evil Demon...

Whether the deity would shatter your blade, and how they would deal with you, would depend on which deity it was and their temperament.

As for an Evil Demon, that's the worst draw of the lot.

Your Divine Weapon provides a precise coordinate for the Evil Demon.

From that moment, you become a harbinger of disaster.

The city you're in could suffer the ravages of the Evil Demon at any moment.

"Sister Yuxiang asked me to protect this city before she left," said Lu Ran, gazing at the peaceful streets of the town.

Suddenly, he felt his hand being tightly squeezed.

He was usually the one leading her; it was rare for the girl to take the initiative.

"What's wrong?" Lu Ran asked with concern.

Jiang Ruyi lowered her head in silence; she felt that nurturing a Domain for her Divine Weapon was still a far-off matter.

But that didn't seem to be the case.

From the moment Deng Yuxiang acquired her Divine Weapon to when the Night-slaying Great Saber comprehended its Domain, it had been no more than half a year.

Jiang Ruyi didn't think Lu Ran was much inferior to Deng Yuxiang.

The Dawn Blade was already a Divine Weapon, with a clear growth trajectory.

The Silent Night Blade too was advancing fiercely!

Just last night, after Lu Ran had slain his enemies, he had excitedly held up the Silent Night Blade, watching it tremble continuously.

Everyone understands the principle of 'holding a precious stone makes you a target of envy.'

Who knows what awaits the two of them.

That question, is unanswerable.

No matter what it is, they're sure to face it together.

At least Jiang Ruyi knew she would always stand by Lu Ran's side.

Thinking thus, the girl squeezed his hand even tighter.

Strength, strength...

"Ruyi?" Lu Ran stopped in his tracks, facing the girl as he inquired, "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," Jiang Ruyi quickly adjusted her state, changing the subject, "I feel like I've touched the bottleneck of a minor rank."

"Oh?" Lu Ran's face brightened with joy, "River Realm Third Rank?"

Jiang Ruyi nodded lightly.

Lu Ran hurriedly said, "Why are you only telling me this now?"

Jiang Ruyi smiled, "I only felt it near midnight last night."

"That's great!" Lu Ran, somewhat excited, embraced the girl's slender waist, "Come to my house in a bit."

The sudden movement made Jiang Ruyi look somewhat uneasy.

She leaned back slightly, whispering, "What for?"

Lu Ran, with a mysterious air, said, "I've got a big treasure to show you~"

"Cough cough!" From behind came a cough from Sun Zhengfang.

Jiang Ruyi's cheeks flushed with embarrassment, quickly pushing Lu Ran away.

Lu Ran looked rather uncomfortable as he turned to Sun Zhengfang.

Sun Zhengfang couldn't help but laugh, "What are you looking at me for? Continue patrolling!"

Holding hands is fine, since it's been light for a while, and there are no Evil Demons around.

Uncle Sun could turn a blind eye.

But stopping here, blocking the bridge, and picking her up?

Uncle Sun may be experienced, but thinking about Brother Long, how his heart must ache!

Ahead, Lu Ran resumed patrolling, while in the middle of the squad, Sun Zhengfang chuckled as he glanced back.

Wei Long: "..."

The group of four continued onward, and when they arrived at the neighborhood of Rain Alley Home, Lu Ran turned to the team leader, "Uncle Sun."

Sun Zhengfang gestured with his hand, "Go back and rest well."

Lu Ran took Jiang Ruyi's hand, "No, Uncle Sun, why don't you and Brother Long wait for us?

I'm going to take Jiang Ruyi home quickly, and we'll be right back."

Sun Zhengfang: ???

Wei Long: "..."

Jiang Ruyi was curious about the treasure Lu Ran mentioned.

The next second, she was being pulled by Lu Ran, running into the neighborhood.

Sun Zhengfang and Wei Long looked at each other, neither speaking.

Lu Jiang rushed straight home, quickly opening the door.

"Don't move from there."

Lu Ran took off his shoes and headed straight for the small bedroom.

He bowed his head in front of the small shrine, then crouched down and found a Demon Crystal from the cabinet underneath the shrine, half the size of a palm.

Jiang Grade·Evil Dog Demon Crystal!

Lu Ran weighed the large Demon Crystal in his hand and quickly returned to the doorway, presenting the treasure, "Here!"

"What is this?" Jiang Ruyi felt the Demon Crystal looked somewhat familiar.

Lu Ran said, "When I advanced last time, I absorbed the Demon Crystals in my backpack, and it was a success.

I kept this one especially to help you advance!"

Saying so, Lu Ran stuffed the Jiang Grade·Magic Crystal into the girl's embrace.

Jiang Ruyi felt warm inside and did not refuse Lu Ran's good intentions.

For both of them, successfully breaking through and enhancing their power was the best answer to each other.

Lu Ran quickly put on his shoes, "Let's go, I'll take you home."

"No need to bother," Jiang Ruyi declined, "Just stay here. If you take me, you'll have to patrol a whole big round again."

"No problem," Lu Ran finished putting on his shoes and stood up, "I...um."

Lu Ran's eyes widened slightly.

In his field of view, Jiang Ruyi's delicate white face suddenly leaned forward.

Her thin lips lightly pressed against his own.

Of course, Lu Ran reacted!

With the responsiveness of Evil Dog Evil Skill·Evil Sensitivity, he was as swift as a small dog.

But...

Who would dodge such good fortune~

In his memory, this was the first time Jiang Ruyi had taken the initiative.

"Behave," Jiang Ruyi said somewhat flustered, lowering her head softly, "Rest at home, my teammates will take me back."

Lu Ran pursed his lips, chuckling, "A sneak attack?"

Jiang Ruyi immediately shot Lu Ran a glare and turned to leave, closing the door behind her.

Then, she leaned against the security door, recalling her bold move.

The more she reminisced, the redder her cheeks became.

Of course, Lu Ran knew she hadn't left.

Not only was his reaction as quick as a small dog's, his nose and ears were just as sharp.

In his nose, the mingling scent of blood and faint jasmine.

In his ears, very light and somewhat short breaths.

After a full ten seconds or more, the girl outside the door finally stepped away.

Only then did Lu Ran start humming a tune, heading toward the bathroom:

"The rain fell all night, like the beautiful Chapters fluttering in a book...eh?"

He seemed to have sung the wrong lyrics.

Hmm... It doesn't matter!

"...and your cheeks are like ripe tomatoes in the field~"

Lu Ran's song wasn't over, but Jiang Ruyi had already reached the entrance of the neighborhood.

"I told Lu Ran that I hit the bottleneck for advancement, and he got me a Demon Crystal."

Jiang Ruyi proactively explained, opening her palm to show the Demon Crystal to the two men.

"Wow," Sun Zhengfang exclaimed, "Not a low-grade Demon Crystal, is it?"

Without Lu Ran by her side, Jiang Ruyi returned to her usual composed self.

She nodded with a smile, "Before, our squad went to the buffer zone of Evil Dog Village.

An Evil Dog from the River Realm slipped in, and Lu Ran led us, taking it down."

Sun Zhengfang's expression became startled, "A Demon Crystal from a River Realm Evil Dog..."

He stumbled over his words for quite a while before confirming, "Since it could slip into the buffer zone, that Evil Dog must have had Evil Shadow Flash, right?"

Under their watchful eyes, Jiang Ruyi nodded once more.

"Good lad!" Sun Zhengfang slapped his forehead, his expression extremely animated.

He thought he understood Lu Ran well, having carried out missions together every month.

But with this news, Sun Zhengfang was still taken aback!

A River Realm Evil Dog with Instant Teleportation Technique?

For a patrol team like theirs, to not be wiped out was already a stroke of great luck.

But that Evil Dog was slain by Lu Ran?

Lu Ran was just a River Realm Believer, the Divine Technique·Sheep at best only Of River Grade, unable to take effect on a River Realm Evil Demon, right!?

This...

Sun Zhengfang turned to Wei Long, "So, Lu Ran can not only take on the Night of Ghosts but also battle the descent of the Demon Lord?"

Wei Long: "..."

What does the old team leader mean by that?

Please don't be rash.

Lu Ran might be able to manage, but it seems we can't...

Chapter 269: Final sprint before the exam!

For the next three days, Lu Ran had been diligently training at home.

Concerned that Jiang Ruyi might breakthrough at any moment, Lu Ran had refrained from disturbing her.

Lu Ran, however, had been quite active in the group chat, communicating a lot with the trio of Deng, Tian, and Chang. He had already confirmed his return to the squad to complete this month's training assignment with the three.

The trio was thrilled!

Everyone was looking forward to this month's training, seemingly eager to showcase their progress and impress Lu Ran.

On the nineteenth day of the lunar month, the city was unsealed.

That morning, Lu Ran replenished Little Calico's food and water, then left the house.

"Ah..."

Standing at the entrance of the apartment building, Lu Ran took a deep breath and slowly exhaled.

The morning air after the rain, mingling with the fragrance of plants, was refreshing to the soul.

Lu Ran, clad in black training gear and carrying twin blades on his back, looked exceedingly valiant.

He strode off, under the watchful eye of an old man walking his bird.

The population of Rain Alley City was indeed dwindling.

Today, in the neighborhood, a bird-walking old man had just appeared.

Lu Ran recalled that in previous years, on the day of unsealing, he would see many elders taking their strolls...

Along the way, almost everyone Lu Ran encountered would stop and stare blankly at him.

Some bold citizens even chased after him for selfies and autographs.

Only then did Lu Ran realize he had forgotten to wear a hat and mask.

Change of plans!

He took a deserted route, avoiding the bun shop, and headed to the school with a hungry stomach and in silence.

As Lu Ran neared the campus, the number of pedestrians increased.

Cheers of "Ran Mei" and "Ran Shen" came from all directions, making him somewhat embarrassed.

There were moments when Lu Ran wanted to cast the Vermilion Paper Evil Technique·Red Veil and shroud his head blindly...

The students, far more frenzied than ordinary citizens, were too much for Lu Ran to handle.

So, he drew his Dawn Blade, flew into the sky, and plunged straight down to the teaching building.

It's worth mentioning that there were no students gathered at the school's main gate.

Because today, there was no big announcement.

Due to the special event on the fifteenth of February, most students were not allowed to participate in the battle on the fifteenth's night just passed.

On February fifteenth, the Divine People Bureau suffered heavy losses, and the Moon Gazers were exhausted.

On March fifteenth, they didn't want you to be a burden, to add more to the defense corps.

Why "most students" were not allowed to participate?

Because a small group of students within the school had advanced to the River Realm!

For these students, both the school and the Divine People Bureau encouraged participation in the defense missions.

Once your strength met the standards, you no longer needed constant protection from the Moon Gazers—you had become a qualified member of the defense corps!

For participating, you would gain 15 Believer points on account of being a "social volunteer."

Moreover, due to your special status as a high school student, the school would apply its encouragement policy, awarding you an additional 15 points.

That's 30 points in hand!

The students who had advanced to the River Realm were over the moon.

The high-stakes exam was impending, and every point was precious.

The students stuck at the Stream Realm's third, fourth, or fifth level, though, were filled with complaints.

But then, who could they blame?

If you lack the strength, you'll just have to stay at home obediently.

"Huh~"

Lu Ran, with the Dawn Blade in hand, landed firmly at the entrance of the teaching building.

"Wow, Ran Shen!"

"Lu Ran!"

"Ran Meimei has arrived, everyone clear the way~"

A chorus of voices came from inside and outside the building, making Lu Ran's head buzz.

The mist swirled under his feet as he dashed into the teaching building.

Behind him, he could still hear the sounds of discussion:

"Haha, I saw him in person!"

"Even his escape is handsome, I'm so lucky..."

"Lucky again, sister~"

Ignoring the commotion, Lu Ran quickly climbed the stairs and dashed towards his class.

But at the class entrance, he stopped.

Because there, in the fourth row, he saw his deskmate.

The girl, wearing a light-colored shirt and jeans with her black hair falling over her shoulders, seemed unusually lazy.

She appeared bored, one hand propping her chin, lost in thought as she gazed out the window.

Bathed in the beautiful spring sunlight, she was radiant and serene.

"Ran Shen!"

"Ran Bro's here! Hurry, give me an autograph!" The class wasn't full, but the noise was significant.

Jiang Ruyi snapped out of her reverie and turned her head to look.

There stood Lu Ran at the classroom door, smiling at her.

Jiang Ruyi couldn't help but be stirred inside, not breaking eye contact, as memories flooded her mind.

During their first and second years of high school, she had seen Lu Ran appear at the classroom door numerous times.

Sometimes he would stealthily watch her just like now.

Since everyone became Believers, in their senior year, such moments had become rare and almost disappeared.

Now, with the college entrance examination nearing and students soon to leave the classroom, such scenes would never happen again.

"Back then, I thought it was nothing special."

Jiang Ruyi murmured softly.

"We've been classmates for two or three years now, what autograph are you talking about, stop it!" Lu Ran walked into the classroom, repeatedly refusing, "If you really want it, go ask the class teacher."

"I've written how many assignments and submitted how many test papers in first and second year, my name's all over them, isn't it!"

"Ran Bro, over here!"

"Eh?"

"Click~" Qian Hao took a selfie, his plump face beaming with a radiant smile.

In the phone screen, behind Qian Hao, was Lu Ran surrounded by classmates, looking exasperated.

"Click! Click..."

As the shutter sounds rang out again, Lu Ran hadn't given any autographs, but ended up in quite a few photos.

After a while, he finally made it to his seat and plopped down: "Did you succeed in advancing?"

Jiang Ruyi shook her head gently.

A sense of heaviness filled Lu Ran's heart.

With an advancement in Believer level, failures in breaking through barriers had become increasingly common.

Jiang Ruyi smiled and explained upon seeing Lu Ran's expression, "I haven't tried to break through yet."

Lu Ran sighed in relief, "Oh, you're still in the preparation phase."

"Yep, I want to make it more secure and kill more Demon Crystals in the Demon Cave."

"Right!" Lu Ran nodded firmly.

For high-level Believers, the longer the preparation phase, the better.

Advancing was something that needed to be done in one vigorous effort!

Failing to break through a bottleneck not only affects morale but also inflicts a certain degree of physical harm.

Then, what you lose is not just a few days.

"What did you have for breakfast?" Jiang Ruyi casually asked, still looking out the window and resting her hand on her chin.

"I didn't have anything." Lu Ran replied with some frustration.

"You didn't have anything?" Jiang Ruyi puzzled.

Is it that hard to have a meal?

Lu Ran shrugged his shoulders: "I forgot to wear a hat, didn't dare go where there were many people."

Jiang Ruyi wordlessly pulled out a piece of chocolate from her desk and placed it on the table: "Here."

However, Lu Ran didn't move, staring intently at the chocolate.

Jiang Ruyi looked at Lu Ran, both amused and annoyed, and whispered, "Eat it yourself! There are a lot of classmates watching."

"Brother Lu!" Deng Yutang strode energetically into the classroom.

Chang Ying followed, just as vivacious: "Ran darling... Eh, chocolate!"

Compared to Da Xia's genius, Chang Ying seemed to be more interested in the tasty treat.

Lu Ran clenched his fist and bumped it with Deng Yu Tang.

Deng Yutang sat down in front of Lu Ran and asked, "By the way, Brother Lu, do you know where my sister went?"

Lu Ran: ?

Are you asking me?

Who's her real brother here?

Deng Yutang looked at Lu Ran skeptically: "I just heard from my parents that my sister went to North Wind City a while ago.

You didn't know that?"

"I..." Lu Ran opened his mouth, then said, "I knew."

"You knew!" Deng Yutang nodded assertively, asking further, "What did she go there for?"

Lu Ran: "Didn't your parents tell you?"

Deng Yutang frowned deeply: "They said my sister went to North Wind City for further studies, but I've always felt something off."

Deng Yuxiang had the opportunity to stay in North Wind City early on, so why had she changed her mind now?

What's more, Rain Alley City, the city she loved, had helped her breakthrough to become a Jiang Realm Great Power.

Deng Yuxiang had no reason to leave!

Deng Yutang whispered, "Brother Lu, she's not lying to my parents, is she? Not going to battle, to the front lines or something?"

Lu Ran immediately shook his head, "No, she did go to North Wind City."

"That's good to hear." Deng Yutang nodded, "How long will my sister be gone? Just for studies, or is she going to serve the gods indefinitely?"

Will she be coming back?"

With one question, Lu Ran fell silent.

Coming back?

Could Deng Yuxiang return?

She should be able to, Lu Ran thought. He would go to pick her up, no matter what her outcome.

"Brother Lu?" Deng Yutang closely watched Lu Ran's reaction, growing increasingly suspicious.

Jiang Ruyi reached out and gently tapped Lu Ran's leg.

"Merely for studies," Lu Ran finally spoke up, "As for when she'll be back...

Your sister is a Jiang Realm Great Power. Once she enters closed-door cultivation, it could be a few months or even several years, right?"

"Yeah." Deng Yutang relaxed a bit and nodded.

Lu Ran quietly sighed to himself.

It seemed Deng Yuxiang hadn't told her family about the Divine Weapon, probably not wanting to worry them.

He wondered if her colleagues knew.

Fortunately, when Lu Ran had spoken about this matter with Jiang Ruyi yesterday, he had kept his voice low and was some distance from Sun Zhengfang behind them.

"Everyone back to your seats," the teacher's voice suddenly came from the podium.

Tian Tian, waiting to say hello, missed her chance and had to sit back sullenly.

Luckily, Sister Ruyi was kind enough to turn her head and smile at Tian Tian.

Tian Tian's spirits lifted instantly, as if the world had brightened a bit.

On the podium, Li Yanzhu scanned the students: "Today is April 23rd by the solar calendar, with less than two months till the college entrance exam.

Today's assigned training homework is the second-to-last assignment of your high school career.

You won't have many more chances to improve your grades. You must earn these 20 points. Clear?"

"Clear!"

"Yes!" There were only about twenty students in the class, but their response was resounding.

Li Yanzhu nodded in satisfaction, glancing at Lu Jiang's direction:

"Those capable can try to communicate with the army stationed at Ghost Moon Mountain and ask for an upgrade of the training mission. It's worth a shot."

"Ghost Moon Mountain?"

"We're going to Ghost Moon Mountain this time?" Suddenly, the students were both excited and anxious, and the classroom buzzed with discussion.

Chapter 270: Ghost Moon Mountain

In the morning, Lu Ran and the others, organized by the school, boarded the eastbound train.

The destination was Ningyue City, located at the border of Wu Lie River Province and Liaodong Province, not too far from Rain Alley City.

On the train, the students chatted excitedly, clearly looking forward to the Demon Cave·Ghost Moon Mountain.

You can't blame them for their excitement.

The scenery of Ghost Moon Mountain is very beautiful.

And the white foxes in the mountain... even more beautiful!

Those alluring fox eyes could captivate anyone's spirit.

There's a saying among the people of Da Xia:

"If you don't believe in love, go to Ghost Moon Mountain.

Under the moonlight, the white fox will show you what love at first sight is, what it means to be engraved in one's heart."

Ghost Moon Mountain is an extremely unique demon cave.

Those who go there, aside from being actual trainees, also include cultivators seeking tranquility and ascetics looking to strengthen their resolve.

Well... maybe there are also some love-crazed men and women who throw caution to the wind.

"Ah?" Lu Ran, holding his phone, sat by the window seat, "You're not coming?"

"I've been there already, so I won't go, not very interesting," Si Xianxian said bashfully on the other end of the line.

Lu Ran frowned slightly, puzzled.

Sister Xian'er's desire for "fun" was evident to everyone.

The picturesque landscape of Ghost Moon Mountain, the enchanting Ghost Moon Fox.

Why not come?

Lu Ran hesitated for a moment before tentatively saying, "Could it be you've developed feeling..."

"Beep... beep... beep..."

Before Lu Ran could finish, the other party hung up the phone.

His expression turned peculiar as he looked at his phone.

Jiang Ruyi sat opposite Lu Ran, looking out the window, "The Fierce Heavenly believers are generally emotionally unstable; their psyche is a weak point.

It's normal for Sister Xian'er to have been charmed by the Ghost Moon Fox and to not want to hurt the foxes after being bewitched."

Lu Ran laughed and shook his head: "Okay then."

Jiang Ruyi's lips quirked up, jokingly saying, "You should be careful too, don't fall in love with any of those white foxes."

Lu Ran: "..."

Tian Tian, sitting beside Jiang Ruyi, held onto Jiang's arm with both hands, whispering, "I will definitely protect you all."

Tian Tian had the confidence to say this.

Sword Lotus Divine Skill·Treasure Lotus could emit pollen with a peculiar fragrance, purifying any abnormal mental state within its range.

The trick that made the Ghost Moon Fox family so endearing was the illusion they cast from their beautiful fox eyes.

In the presence of Treasure Lotus, illusions naturally wouldn't stand a chance.

"Sure," Jiang Ruyi nodded with a laugh.

Seeing Tian Tian's cute demeanor, Jiang Ruyi couldn't help but reach out and affectionately pinch the girl's nose.

Tian Tian's eyes grew more determined, holding onto Jiang's arm even tighter.

I will protect the love between my master and Sister Ruyi!

No one is allowed to tear them apart.

I say so!

"I can help too," Chang Ying, sitting on the aisle side, volunteered timidly.

Believers in the Eight Treasures are like a cure-all, even earning the title "Divine Magic Grocery Store."

The Divine Technique·Eight Treasures that Chang Ying was equipped with in the River Realm·First Rank included an auxiliary charm that could clarify people's minds.

However, to draw that auxiliary charm from the eight, you had to be lucky.

"After we enter the demon cave, you can just draw a charm," Deng Yutang said magnanimously, "With Brother Lu and Jiang leading us, you can draw without fear!"

"Exactly!" Chang Ying nodded repeatedly, understanding his meaning.

If the trio of Deng, Tian, and Chang were to go on a training mission, Chang would most likely continuously use the Five Treasures charm as there are no bad charms among the five.

No matter what she pulled, it was at least positive.

Now, with Lu Ran and Jiang Ruyi by her side, Chang's margin of error when drawing charms was much higher!

To put it bluntly, even if she consistently drew bad charms, it wouldn't matter.

After all, Lu Ran would back her up~

At quarter past ten, the group arrived in Ningyue City, and under the guidance of a teacher, they boarded a bus that headed toward the southern suburbs.

As the bus neared the military camp, Lu Ran once again saw the presence of the Six-class God·Desert Drum.

Previously, when Lu Ran had gone to Black Grave Mound (Black Light Demon Cave) for training, he also saw a statue of the honorable Desert Drum.

After getting off the bus, Lu Ran, as usual, admired the grace of the deity.

God·Desert Drum stood erect, bare-chested with coiled muscles, hair tied high behind his head, emitting an impressive and heroic aura.

He was holding a drum mallet, as if about to strike the large drum in front of him.

A thick air of valor pervaded between heaven and earth, resounding with passion!

Who needs to beat the drum?

Lu Ran's blood was already boiling!

Speaking of which, those squads with Desert Drum believers on this trip to Ghost Moon Mountain can sleep easy.

Illusions?

What a joke!

Desert Drum believers have their Constitution maxed out and are immune to such tricks.

Buddy, I smash all notions of affection and love with one drum mallet!

Wake up, friend!

Where the hell is true love in this world?!

"Line up to collect weapons, don't mess around!" The teacher stood beside the bus, calling out loudly.

"Get me a weapon," Lu Ran patted Deng Yutang on the shoulder, whispering, "I'm going to ask if we can upgrade our training task."

"Alright," Deng Yutang nodded emphatically, a sense of anticipation rising within him.

The matter of "training task upgrades" was indeed elusive.

But that was for ordinary students!

Who was Lu Ran?

Da Xia's genius!

A little face-swiping, and maybe this thing could really happen?

Deng Yutang queued up while watching Lu Ran head towards the central building.

He immediately noticed that the soldiers standing guard in the camp turned their heads to look at Lu Ran, with various expressions.

"Hello," Lu Ran briskly approached the registration desk, nodding to a female soldier.

"You are...you, Lu Ran?!" The female soldier's eyes widened in shock.

"The school has organized us to train here," Lu Ran said with a smile, "I'm wondering if it's possible to upgrade our task?"

"Oh dear, he really came!" The soldier sister's eyes lit up, not paying attention to what Lu Ran was saying.

She rambled on: "The higher-ups notified us that Rain Alley First was coming here to train..."

"Mm-hm," Lu Ran nodded repeatedly, repeating his request.

"Task upgrade," the female soldier finally reacted, but her expression showed difficulty as she instinctively wanted to refuse.

However, as the words reached her lips, she changed her rhetoric: "You...please wait a moment, I'll ask for instructions."

"Thank you," Lu Ran nodded in thanks.

The female soldier stared dazedly at Lu Ran for a good two or three seconds before finally picking up a walkie-talkie.

The most profound impression people had of the renowned Da Xia's genius was mostly from the battlefield.

His gaze was frosty, his attacks fierce, and his bravery unmatched.

But at this moment, there wasn't a trace of arrogance or hostility in Lu Ran; he was amiable and his smile was sunny.

He was... well, a bit too much like an Immortal Sheep believer?

Lu Ran didn't wait long before a few soldiers approached.

The leading middle-aged male soldier held out a hand to Lu Ran: "Mr. Lu, a pleasure to meet."

"A pleasure indeed," Lu Ran responded humbly, cloaked in the façade of an Immortal Sheep Believer.

"Here's the thing, we currently have no suitable tasks for you to undertake."

"Ah... alright then, thanks for the trouble," Lu Ran thought it was a pity.

The middle-aged male soldier quickly changed the subject: "However, each time you return to the fortress, you can inquire at the inn's front desk.

We will notify the inn's staff as soon as we select an appropriate task."

"Thanks!" Lu Ran's spirits lifted.

Face-swiping really did work, didn't it?

By the way the man had difficulty turning him down, Lu Ran knew that had he been anyone other than himself, a flat refusal would have been guaranteed!

"You're welcome," the middle-aged male soldier smiled, "I wish you success on the fifteenth of next month."

"Absolutely~," Lu Ran playfully stole a phrase he had learned from Si Xianxian.

The middle-aged male soldier: "..."

The other soldiers tried to hold back their laughter, not daring to make a sound.

Lu Ran looked down and walked away, leaving promptly.

At that moment, the students had already started lining up to enter, naturally witnessing Lu Ran's amiable interaction with the military soldiers.

"He probably went to apply for a task upgrade," Ma Tianchuan pushed his rimless glasses, full of envy.

But no jealousy was apparent.

People may feel envious of those who are on a similar level to themselves.

But for someone who is far beyond their own reach...

Mostly, they look up to them.

Back in the high school opening grand competition, Ma Tianchuan was utterly convinced of his defeat.

Since the release of "Heavenly Pride," Ma Tianchuan was completely subdued by Lu Ran, with nothing but admiration in his heart.

Wu Shanshan whispered, "Should we try too?"

Behind them, Kou Yingquan's expression wasn't great, and he didn't join in.

He had no idea what the content of the upgraded training tasks was in this demon cave.

But Kou Yingquan knew that upgrading tasks in Evil Dog Village meant going into the buffer zone to complete missions.

For them at this stage, that was practically a death wish!

Undoubtedly, the tasks after upgrading in Ghost Moon Mountain would be equally dangerous.

Kou Yingquan didn't join in, and neither did Ma Tianchuan.

The other female member of their team, seeing no one else speak up, decided to play the ostrich.

Everyone wanted a piece of the pie.

But you have to be alive to get it...

Seeing no response, Wu Shanshan did not insist further.

Actually, she also possessed Purification Techniques, which were also quite effective against the Ghost Moon Fox family.

But her teammates...

Wu Shanshan silently turned and looked at Lu Ran standing next to Jiang Ruyi.

If back then,

She hadn't insisted on leaving, if she had stayed with Lu Ran...

There would be so many differences this year, including the future.

Suddenly, she recalled the words Lu Ran had said during the school opening competition:

"You're good, I'm not worthy.

Forget about me, next."

"Ah..." Sighed Wu Shanshan heavily in her heart.

Meanwhile, from the back of the line, Chang Ying softly asked, "How did it go, Ran-bao?"

With everyone looking on expectantly, Lu Ran shook his head: "There's no special task right now."

Deng Yutang frowned slightly: "Even you can't do it?"

"What kind of talk is that!" Lu Ran responded with annoyance, "Just wait."

"Wait?" A flicker of expectation rose again in Deng Yutang's heart.

This was about twenty points, not a joke!

Lu Ran nodded: "Yeah, just wait, they're arranging it."

Tian Tian opened her mouth in slight shock: "Arranging?"

"Wow!" Chang Ying's eyes sparkled as she cheered, but was quickly silenced by a glare from Lu Ran.

"Awesome!" Deng Yutang embraced Lu Ran's shoulders, shaking them enthusiastically.

Now the chances of getting into Wu Lie River University were even better!