

Old Gods 291

Chapter 291: Shocking Moon! Silent Night!

"Whoosh~"

Endless branches quickly retracted, but only two branches glowing with luminescent green light continued to wrap around the two men.

It's worth mentioning that, although the Wutong branches were wrapped around Lu Ran's waist, they actually rested against Lu Ran's legs on the ground to avoid being bitten off by the Evil Dog.

Honestly, the Evil Dog Clan really wasn't very smart.

If only it had torn off the branches and then mockingly focused on Lu Ran, it was perfectly capable of luring Lu Ran away!

Of course, if the Evil Dog had such tactical intelligence, it wouldn't have been wasting time in the square at all.

It could have had several buffets in the shelter during the time it fought Ge Bin and Liu Yunlan...

The giant Wutong tree reverted to its normal form, standing tall in the center of the square.

With the disappearance of the dense branches, the fear in the heart of the Evil Dog has indeed dissipated somewhat.

And because of its rows of vile teeth, which had continuously failed to crush Lu Ran, the Evil Dog finally entered the fray itself!

"Woof!"

It appeared directly to Lu Ran's left rear, its gaping maw wide open.

"Hiss—"

Lu Ran tensed up, the Immortal Hoof suddenly kicking into action. As he escaped towards the front right, he simultaneously turned and chopped down with his sword.

At the same time, Ge Bin, holding a pair of daggers, viciously stabbed at the Evil Dog's body.

"Crack!" a crisp sound rang out.

The Evil Dog's drooling mouth failed to crush the Human Clan and instead bit into a mouthful of Immortal Fog.

Ge Bin, with his astonishing speed, had already stabbed into the Evil Dog's skin.

Although it was shallow, the tip of the blade really penetrated!

Even though the Evil Dog teleported away in an instant, and Ge Bin didn't manage to deal a heavy blow to the enemy, his heart still surged with overwhelming joy!

As a Jiang Realm Great Power and a Nuoshan Disciple, Ge Bin was relatively calm in temperament.

However, at this moment, his emotions were clearly etched on his face.

Ordinary people can hardly understand what this strike meant for the battle.

Before Lu Ran arrived, Ge Bin had unleashed Divine Technique·God and Ghost Entanglement to its limit, using all his tricks, and still couldn't injure the Evil Dog!

Keep in mind, that was under the pretext that Liu Yunlan was assisting and amidst the lashing of endless branches!

This Evil Dog standing at the pinnacle of the Jiang Realm was truly terrifying.

Jiang Grade Evil Technique·Evil Recognition, allowed the Evil Dog to be incredibly aware of the battlefield.

Jiang Grade Evil Technique·Evil Agility made the Evil Dog extremely agile, reaching a level of swiftness that brought people to despair!

And Lu Ran's arrival completely changed all of that.

The effect was immediate and obvious!

The taunting techniques of this Immortal Sheep Believer were unreasonably strong.

Other taunting techniques, such as Evil Dog Evil Skill·Evil Bark, annoyed and frustrated people to the point of no return, clouding their mind.

But Lu Ran's Voice of Compassion...

Ge Bin could feel that Lu Ran wasn't really taunting in the truest sense.

He was amplifying the desires for hunting, harming, sadism, and the like in the hearts of man and demon!

The underlying logic of this technique's effectiveness was fundamentally different from ordinary taunting techniques!

It was simply irrational!

It was as if it was specially designed to control Evil Demons...

"Woof!" The injured Evil Dog immediately shifted its attention, flashing behind Ge Bin in a blink, another bite coming his way.

"Whoosh~"

Ge Bin decisively turned and retreated backward, the dagger ready to block.

To Ge Bin's surprise, the Dawn Blade was already in position, its tip thrusting straight towards him.

This kid...

Good reflex, good judgment!

Killing the enemy, saving the ally, two birds with one stone!

Lu Ran's attack was not aimed directly at where the Evil Dog was but predicted where the Evil Dog would appear.

As long as the Evil Dog continued forward, biting at Ge Bin's arms, then the blade tip would pierce its dog eyes.

Only if the Evil Dog abandoned its attack would the Dawn Blade miss.

Evil Technique-Evil Recognition and bodily instinct saved the Evil Dog's life!

It violently stopped its motion, still with its maw wide open, head jerking back.

The Evil Dog chose not to teleport, seemingly wanting to wait for this fatal strike to pass before continuing its attack.

"Twist!" Lu Ran swung his right hand fiercely.

You think being a shrinking dog can dodge this?

Watch closely, I wield a Divine Weapon!

The kind that moves with my will!

The Dawn Blade swept fiercely across.

"Zing!"

The blade slightly grazed the side of the dog's mouth. The Evil Dog was in pain, its energy churning, clearly about to teleport away.

"Yes!" Ge Bin shouted loudly.

Since Lu Ran's appearance, this young teammate had rapidly climbed in Ge Bin's estimation!

The two had never fought side by side, but Ge Bin had heard some stories about Lu Ran.

A while ago, when Deng Yuxiang had moved into the Wu Lie Building, she also mentioned her good little brother.

Now, seeing with his own eyes...

No wonder Deng Yuxiang had such high praise.

Truly, Da Xia's genius!

"Baah~~~"

The bleating sound timely echoed.

The Evil Dog teleported!

The wounded creature left behind pools of crimson blood.

But the Evil Dog didn't flee far, driven by instinct, it flashed directly towards Lu Ran!

Lu Ran immediately executed Immortal Hoof, sidestepping while his left hand wielded the Cold Night Sword in a horizontal slash.

"Ding!"

It deserved to be a Jiang Realm Evil Dog, its reaction was indeed quick!

It actually caught the Cold Night Sword in its mouth, seemingly intending to crush the weapon.

Thankfully, the Cold Night Sword was a Divine Weapon, otherwise, it might have actually succeeded.

What's more frightening is that while gripping the Cold Night Sword, the Evil Dog flung out an Evil Tooth in succession!

Lu Ran's pupils slightly contracted!

His reaction was also quick, after all, he also had Evil Recognition and Evil Agility.

The battle seemed to be an intense clash between man and dog.

It actually was an internal battle among the cunning...

Lu Ran did not abandon his sword and retreat but firmly grasped the hilt and kicked his Immortal Hoof forward, thrusting fiercely!

"Hiss—"

Lu Ran thrust with his sword, his figure weaving through, while rows of canine teeth snapped viciously behind him.

The Evil Dog, still gripping the Cold Night Sword, was bumped by Lu Ran, sliding backward.

Along the way, the square's stone tiles were marked with trails of blood.

This blood, undoubtedly, signified that the Evil Dog's physical condition was continuously deteriorating.

The longer the battle dragged on, the more it bled, the closer it came to death!

Liu Yunlan watched this scene in a daze, finding it unbelievable.

What kind of reaction is this?

Was this young man immune to skills?

Unmatched speed, evasion maxed out?!

Hmm... she had indeed heard that Rain Alley City produced an extraordinary heavenly pride, who had even dared to challenge the Tangled Silk Shadow clan.

Immortal Sheep Divine Technique·Immortal Hoof was truly an eye-opener.

What a pity that the Immortal Sheep Believers of this world all used such divine techniques to flee, to avoid battle.

If they all could charge into battle like Lu Ran, how wonderful would that be?

"Slurp..." The Evil Dog, still biting the Cold Night Sword, emitted a creepy throaty growl.

This massive, ferocious dog face displayed on screens in countless households was truly frightening!

"Baah!" While Lu Ran was attracting the attention of the Evil Dog, his right hand wielded the Silent Night Blade, striking fiercely forward.

He only saw a blur before him as the Evil Dog suddenly disappeared.

Lu Ran didn't dare delay, his feet spewing copious amounts of Immortal Fog, his speed abruptly increasing substantially.

"Crack!"

From behind to the right, the sound of vicious canine teeth snapping together was heard.

Thanks to his experience on Ghost Moon Mountain, Lu Ran had gained a deeper understanding of speed.

No matter where the Evil Dog appeared, as long as Lu Ran accelerated further, he could break free.

If the Evil Dog appeared directly in front, with his sudden acceleration, Lu Ran might just be able to stab the Evil Dog to death!

"Woof!!" The Evil Dog, failing its strike, immediately sought out Lu Ran's position.

But the next second, it heard a swoosh.

"Whoosh~"

The Jiang Realm Evil Dog teleported a meter back, allowing an ethereal dagger to fly past its face.

Ge Bin surged forward, continuously waving his daggers.

From the pair of weapons, phantom-like daggers flew out, thrusting straight at the Evil Dog.

Nuosha Divine Technique·Sha Blade!

"Woof!" The Evil Dog finally shifted attention, turning to look at the incoming Ge Bin.

It teleported, dodging the flying daggers, leaving behind more fresh blood, reappearing behind Ge Bin.

Ge Bin, accustomed to the Evil Dog's routines and relying on his own reactions, turned and struck back.

"Baah~~~"

The bleating sound timely emanated, pulling at the Evil Dog's mind.

Jiang Realm's Liu Yunlan and Ge Bin could easily shrug off the influence.

But for the Evil Dog, this bleat was seriously threatening its life!

The Evil Dog uncontrollably turned its head, its vicious mouth shifting off course.

"Zing!"

The blade edge swept by the dog's eye!

"Ouu~ Ouuu~"

The Evil Dog wailed miserably.

In the moment it was injured, it teleported away.

But how fast was Ge Bin? How ferocious was his assault?

The Evil Dog's right eye was directly sliced open!

That dog eye, which used to glow blood-red, was now only oozing fresh blood.

With this teleport, the Evil Dog finally returned to the familiar high skies above, leaving the battlefield.

Ge Bin clenched his daggers tightly, his expression stern, looking at the rapidly flickering figure in the night sky: "Lu Ran!"

The Evil Dog Clan indeed had low intelligence and an extreme craving for human flesh.

But a heavily injured Evil Dog would also flee!

If it had been before, Ge Bin would have seriously worried about the Evil Dog escaping.

Such a terrible creature, intent on flight—who could catch it?

How many from the Human Clan would the Jiang Realm·Evil Dog kill while fleeing?

The consequences were unimaginable!

But now?

With Lu Ran, this deliciously crying little lamb here, which demon could escape?

This was also the fundamental reason Lu Ran was able to apply to join the battle group!

"Baah~~~"

Without needing Ge Bin's reminder, Lu Ran's bleating had never stopped!

Even suffering such injuries, the Evil Dog still teleported into the night sky and did not disappear...

Lu Ran believed his Divine Technique·Desolate Sound had definitely played a major role!

The night sky abruptly lit up, a massive bolt of lightning streaking across.

Illuminated by the lightning, Lu Ran in his yellow raincoat was especially conspicuous, fluttering in the wind.

He quickly returned to Ge Bin's side, with the bleating continuing unabated:

"Baah~~~"

"Woof! Woof woof! Woof!"

The Evil Dog barked frantically, raging like thunder!

Its eye had been slashed, enduring intense pain.

Afraid to open its eyes, it closed both and relied on Evil Technique·Evil Recognition to locate Lu Ran.

Blinded by pain and driven to madness, the Evil Dog teleported instantly toward Lu Ran.

And at that very moment, Ge Bin's eyes widened in shock!

Because...

"Boom!!"

A thunderous boom resounded across the sky!

The Evil Dog, with its eyes tightly closed, driven to the peak by Jiang Grade Evil Technique·Evil Recognition, was shaken to its core by the powerful thunder.

On the ground, thunder erupted from nowhere!

Lu Ran, with his sword positioned horizontally before him, Immortal Hoof swiftly kicking up, moved away in a flash next to Ge Bin.

Ran Sect Blade Technique Second Form·Moon Shock!

After the massive lightning bolt came the enormous boom of thunder!

Whether the Evil Dog had shut off its Evil Technique or not, Lu Ran wasn't sure, but he had made all the mental preparations and turned down the grade of his own Evil Recognition.

So now the question is!

Which boom took your dog life?

"Zing—"

A massive dog head flew high up, while the headless dog corpse bled profusely.

The brilliant neon lights reflected off Lu Ran's yellow raincoat as his figure sped away, disappearing into the rainy night.

"Silence."

Lu Ran gripped the Silent Night Blade, still maintaining the initial stance of Moon Shock, cutting through layers of rain.

"Hum!!"

The Silent Night Blade vibrated intensely!

Chapter 292: Ran

"Is he... is he dead? Is the Thin Dog dead?"

"He's dead, he's dead, we won! We won!"

"Damn, holy shit! A River Realm Believer slaying a River Realm Demon Monarch?!"

"It's a River Realm Third Rank who brutally killed a River Realm peak, okay!"

"Ran Dog! Ran Dog! Ran Dog!"

"River Realm peak? Demon Monarch? TMD, show your health bar! Decide once you see whether I step up or not~"

"Why has Lu Ran frozen? He's not moving—is he hurt? No!"

The live chatroom erupted in jubilation while Lu Ran stood quietly by the street corner, gazing down at the Silent Night Blade.

The Silent Night Blade, made of obsidian material.

It was entirely black, with mysterious deep purple patterns adorning it.

Only under the sun's rays would Lu Ran see a deep purple glow emanate from the blade.

But now, on this stormy night, the Silent Night Blade was uniquely beautiful, its mystical patterns quietly lighting up, shimmering radiantly!

"Indeed, you were waiting for an opportunity."

Lu Ran suppressed the joy in his heart, held the blade in front of him, and scrutinized it closely.

Slaying the River Realm Demon Monarch was a vivid stroke on the path of climbing higher!

"Buzz!!"

The Silent Night Blade trembled violently, splashing droplets all around, as if responding to its master.

At this moment, everyone realized something was amiss!

Ge Bin was quite surprised, and approached from behind Lu Ran: "Lu..."

He had just begun to speak when he suddenly looked up.

The thunderstorm had already been breathtaking enough.

Yet, layers of mist emerged, spreading across the night sky.

A sign of the heavens?

Obviously, it was a precursor to the Divine Weapon's upgrade!

Lu Ran seemed oblivious, completely engrossed in his own world.

He examined the blade over and over, gripped the hilt firmly, his thoughts churning wildly.

The blade is an extension of the Sword Holder's thoughts.

It is a physical representation of the Sword Holder's spirit!

The Silent Night had struggled so hard to ascend, how could Lu Ran lag behind?

In a very short time, he had entered the realm of "Heart and Sword Unity," propelling Silent Night forward at a great pace.

"Silent Night, Silent Night..."

"Silent Night is the name I gave you, and also the path we tread together."

"On every fifteenth night, wherever we go, the evil of the world yields, and all returns to silence."

"Buzz!!" The intense vibration of the blade was the best response to Lu Ran.

"You can't upgrade the Divine Weapon in the city center." Ge Bin, noticing more and more mist in the night sky, couldn't help but speak up in reminder.

Lu Ran came back to himself and turned to look at Captain Ge.

Just as Liu Yunlan approached, Lu Ran finally saw her true face.

She was tall and slender, dressed in a black raincoat, and beneath the hood was a beautiful face.

Her expression was solemn, carrying an aura of authority:

"I'll accompany you to the outskirts to help you upgrade the Divine Weapon."

As she spoke, a branch of the blue wutong tree poked out from her wide sleeves and wrapped around Lu Ran's waist.

Liu Yunlan looked toward Ge Bin and said, "You continue to station here, and explain the situation to the command center."

"Yes!" Ge Bin nodded immediately.

It seemed that Liu Yunlan's rank was a bit higher than Ge Bin's?

"Let's go." Liu Yunlan tugged the branch tied around Lu Ran's waist.

Her "Let's go" sounded more like a command to proceed...

"Thank you, Senior Liu!" Lu Ran did not refuse this kindness.

He had experienced a Divine Weapon upgrade before and knew well that the celestial phenomena would attract numerous Evil Demons.

Looking back at the previous upgrade of the Dawn Blade, he was grateful for the Big Nightmare's help which had provided Lu Ran with a relatively stable environment.

Otherwise, the Dawn Blade might not have succeeded.

"Huh~"

Lu Ran dared not delay, gripping the Silent Night Blade in one hand and the Cold Night Sword in the other, he flew straight into the night sky.

Meanwhile, in the Rain Alley's West River.

On a street dimly lit by a yellow street lamp, a young girl wrapped with a golden rune stone ring on her waist suddenly stopped walking.

"Little Jiang?" Sun Zhengfang was the first to ask.

The young girl slightly lifted her head, her eyes brimming with excitement.

Through the Cold Night Sword, she already knew everything.

"What's wrong?" Sun Zhengfang quickly stepped forward, only then noticing Jiang Ruyi's thrilled expression.

Involuntarily, Sun Zhengfang's heart stirred, and he tentatively asked, "What about Lu Ran?"

There was no need for Jiang Ruyi to respond, as all the Moon Gazers in Rain Alley City had received the command center's notification:

"Here's an announcement: the Demon Monarch has been slain!

Repeat, the descended Demon Monarch has been slain by our warriors!

All units hold your positions and continue your duties, midnight is approaching, do not take it lightly."

"Good! Good!!"

"Hmm! Hmm! Hmm!"

"Well killed!!" Suddenly, cheers erupted from the streets and alleys of Rain Alley City.

Compared to the civilians in the city, the Moon Gazers were fewer in number.

Although they were few, the noise they made was significant!

Unless one had been in their shoes, it would be impossible to understand just how much pressure and torment the Moon Gazers faced.

The descent of the Demon Monarch! A River Realm Evil Dog!

And an Evil Dog capable of Instant Teleportation, no less!

Every second it existed posed a tremendous threat.

If the Human Clan's great forces were defeated, or if the Evil Dog escaped, no matter where it invaded, the Moon Gazers stationed in that area would have to face it.

Using their lives to fill the gaps!

Including the entire Rain Alley City, everything the Moon Gazers protected—families, friends... could be easily destroyed.

Now, the Demon Monarch was defeated?!

"Hahaha!" Sun Zhengfang slapped his forehead, his hearty laughter incongruous with the creepy night.

Suddenly, a bolt of lightning streaked across the sky, illuminating Sun Zhengfang's ecstatic face:

"I told you so! This lad not only slaughtered his way through the Night of Ghosts but also dealt with the descended Demon Monarch! Hahaha!"

Who knew, moments earlier, someone was slapping their own face, cursing themselves as an unlucky...

"Uh-huh." Even the typically stern Wei Long showed a smile.

Last July, when he first met Lu Ran, the image was still vivid in his mind.

At that time, Lu Ran, relying solely on his Immortal Hoof, dodged and weaved through the Bloody Purgatory, dazzling everyone.

At that moment, Wei Long darkly thought that this unique Immortal Sheep Believer might chart a unique path.

Indeed, it was very different.

In less than a year, Lu Ran had grown to such heights, even qualifying to stand alongside the Human Clan's powers in slaying the descended Demon Monarch.

The joyful atmosphere was transmitted through the cameras into thousands of households.

Although Lu Ran had left the team, the team of three people's cameras were still on.

Sun Zhengfang and others' reactions deeply moved people:

"Has such infectious laughter? Laughing amidst a storm... good job, here's a reward!"

"Ran Shen has a great team captain, huh..."

"And Ran Dog's got a great girlfriend too! Miss Jiang was so worried just now, my, what a beauty, tugs at my heartstrings~"

"Wait, doesn't Lu Ran have a Divine Weapon already? Another one?"

"I can't see anything on Lu Mei's side, it's all fog."

"The Divine Weapon is upgrading, what are you looking at? Can you understand?"

"I thought at first, Ran Dog was just shaking his wrist, playing with us, but this got real..."

Suddenly, Sun Zhengfang's voice came from the screen:

"Little Jiang, Little Lu wasn't injured, right? When is he coming back?"

"He wasn't injured." Jiang Ruyi gently shook her head.

Sun Zhengfang and Wei Long both sighed in relief.

Jiang Ruyi continued, "But, he will have to wait a long time before he can come back, let's continue our mission."

"What do you mean?" Sun Zhengfang's smiling face stiffened, he hastily asked.

Jiang Ruyi showed a light smile, a hint of proud gleam in her eyes:

"Lu Ran's Silent Night Blade, is currently upgrading to a Divine Weapon."

Sun Zhengfang: "What??"

Wei Long also startled, not expecting such a response from a young girl.

Jiang Ruyi gently nodded, confirming, "A senior is accompanying him to the suburban areas."

"Good lad." Sun Zhengfang murmured, "Did he kill the Demon Monarch, kill it glamorously?"

Has the Silent Night Blade become a Divine Weapon?"

"Yep." Jiang Ruyi tried to hide the slight joy in her heart, "Cold Night said, it was indeed Lu Ran wielding the Silent Night Blade who personally beheaded the Demon Monarch."

Sun Zhengfang: "..."

Wei Long: "..."

The power of this statement was even more shocking than when they first received the news of the "Demon Monarch's surrender!"

Sun Zhengfang was well aware that inside the Wu Lie Building, two great powers of the Human Clan were stationed.

He naturally had anticipated that Lu Ran would assist the two powers, using some special Divine Technique to pin down the River Realm Evil Dog.

But Jiang Ruyi said...

That the descended Demon Monarch was personally slain by Lu Ran?

Are you kidding me?!

Sun Zhengfang was gaping, foolishly tilting his head back, gazing at the distant sky as if searching for celestial phenomena.

Sun Zhengfang did not realize that his expression was being furiously screenshotted by viewers.

In the future, it was bound to spread like wildfire on the internet.

Are you kidding me?.jpg

The reason people were particularly watching this trio was because Lu Ran's camera was shrouded in dense fog, revealing nothing.

However, people could still hear voices: "Focus on upgrading, leave the rest to me."

"Yes! Thank you, Senior Liu!"

Lu Ran thanked again and once more arrived at the eastern outskirts of Rain Alley City, near the forest.

This was where his Dawn Blade had upgraded.

This glorious tradition must continue!

Lu Ran clenched the Silent Night Blade, raising it high.

The fog that crazily surged between heaven and earth started spinning on its own, forming swirling fog tornadoes.

And because of the heavy rain, the fog tornadoes turned into water tornadoes, enveloping both the man and the blade.

Not far behind Lu Ran, a huge wutong tree sprang from the ground, its lush branches wildly lashing around, also enveloping Lu Ran within.

With the branches providing shelter, no rain fell on Lu Ran, just dense fog!

"I... I'm going..." Lu Ran couldn't help but tremble as he spoke.

During the earlier fight, he had spent a lot of Divine Power.

But at this moment, in just an instant, Lu Ran's body was filled with violent energy.

"Buzz!!"

The Silent Night Blade vibrated more intensely, and Lu Ran almost couldn't hold it.

Lu Ran focused intently, guiding the weapon in his hand.

Come, Silent Night.

It is time!

Time to gather the Artifact Spirit and open your eyes.

This world's fifteenth night, you also find it noisy.

Right?

Chapter 293: unparalleled in popularity?

As midnight approached, the number of Evil Demons invading the world increased.

Despite this, the promotion of the Silent Night Blade greatly reduced the pressure on the city's guards.

A large number of Evil Demons were attracted to the eastern suburbs, where they were annihilated by Biwu believer·Liu Yunlan without leaving a trace.

Lu Ran, however, paid little attention to the chaos on the battlefield.

He, under the protection of the wutong branches, patiently guided the advancement of the Silent Night Blade until...

"Buzz!!"

Silent Night Tremor!

A surge of air waves rolled out, causing Lu Ran's raincoat to flutter.

Suddenly, a huge phantom spread out from the Silent Night Blade.

It was... another Lu Ran.

A Lu Ran of noble demeanor and icy gaze.

Noble? Icy?

Lu Ran had never expected, in his lifetime, to associate himself with these words.

"Silent Night?" Lu Ran called out softly.

"Master." The brief response confirmed the completion of Silent Night.

Its voice was exactly like Lu Ran's, but the tone was so cold, as if coming from a high and mighty being.

Lu Ran blinked, utterly confused.

This attitude, this demeanor, who exactly is the master between us?

Considering the Dawn Blade Spirit, also a representation of Lu Ran, it was always smiling brightly and had a particularly sunny disposition.

As for the Silent Night Blade Spirit...

Lu Ran scrutinized the Silent Night Blade closely, observing mysterious patterns on it, shimmering with a beautiful deep purple luster.

"Congratulations?" Lu Ran tried to communicate.

The Silent Night Blade Spirit spoke softly, its faint voice echoing in his mind: "Together in joy."

Lu Ran: "..."

Then show some joy, will you?

When Lu Ran first acquired the Silent Night Blade, he had imagined what the blade spirit would look like.

From the material of the Silent Night Blade, Lu Ran envisioned a noble and stunning Dark Night Queen.

Looking at it now, aside from the gender, didn't it match quite well?

Silent Night murmured softly: "It's noisy around here."

Lu Ran looked baffled and released his grip: "Go, then."

"Hmm." The Silent Night Blade instantly flew out, leaving behind a faint purple trail.

Lu Ran: "..."

That faint "Hmm" completely baffled Lu Ran.

He raised his right hand, grasping the Dawn Blade, and whispered, "Silent Night is so aloof."

Dawn Blade Spirit: "It is the continuation of the master's will, you led it down this path."

Lu Ran couldn't help but smirk.

That seemed about right~

Every time he slew an Evil Demon, he emphasized "quiet" to the Silent Night Blade, clearly defining its growth path.

Under such focused education, the Silent Night Blade not only demanded quiet from its enemies but also became reserved and laconic.

Its conduct was probably quite formidable!

"Congratulations." A female voice came through.

"Thank you, Senior Liu!" Lu Ran immediately turned around, looking towards the giant tree.

Liu Yunlan emerged from the tree trunk, a slight smile visible on her face.

Lu Ran finally had time to take a close look at this great power of the Human Clan.

She appeared to be just over forty, with both her appearance and temperament being commendable, much softer in expression compared to when he first saw her.

Lu Ran distinctly remembered Captain Ge Bin calling her "Sister Liu."

This meant her actual age had to be in the mid-forties or older.

Divine Technique·Biwu Holy Light indeed preserves well...

"You're too polite." Liu Yunlan looked at Lu Ran, not hiding the admiration in her eyes, "For someone so young to possess such strength, you are indeed the fortune of Rain Alley."

Lu Ran smiled: "Just luck, pure luck."

Liu Yunlan smiled back at Lu Ran, then stretched out a branch of Biwu and tied it around Lu Ran's waist:

"Let's go back to Wu Lie Building."

"Yes!" Lu Ran scanned the battlefield, and his heart chilled.

The battle was nearing its end, and corpses filled the battlefield!

This giant Biwu tree was simply a divine control technique!

The lushness and spread of its branches were astounding.

Evil Demons that were lured here were pierced and shredded.

Not far away, Lu Ran also saw a Moon Gazer squad, backing them up.

Lu Ran nodded at them and grabbed the returning Silent Night Blade.

"Huff~"

Lu Ran soared into the air, his raincoat rustling.

Only then did he realize that the stormy weather had passed, turning into light rain.

Lu Ran couldn't help thinking back to the confrontation with the Jiang Realm Evil Dog, that earth-shattering thunderclap.

Without such weather or that thunderclap, perhaps the Evil Dog would not have succumbed so easily.

"Heh."

Lu Ran chuckled and shook his head, gripping the Silent Night Blade tightly.

It seemed,

Even the heavens were helping us.

"Buzz~"

The Silent Night Blade gently vibrated.

Now that it had developed its Artifact Spirit, its nature had become fixed, and its responses were no longer as intense as before.

With Silent Night's help, Lu Ran carried Liu Yunlan through the urban area, heading straight for Wu Lie Building.

Once again, he landed at a position several stories high, right in the outdoor restaurant area.

"Lu Ran, I will always be watching over you." Liu Yunlan unbuckled the Biwu branch from Lu Ran's waist and spoke softly, "Wishing you a splendid future."

Lu Ran nodded vigorously: "Senior, take care."

Lu Ran didn't know Liu Yunlan's exact identity or even her exact level of strength.

But with such a Jiang Realm Great Power speaking to him like this, Lu Ran would of course acknowledge her words!

Watching the middle-aged woman leave, Lu Ran pressed a hand to his ear: "Report, am I returning to the team?"

An aged voice came through the earpiece: "Congratulations, Mr. Lu, on the grand accomplishment of your Divine Weapon, and thank you for your dedication to this city.

You may choose to rest in a shelter or rejoin your team, the choice is yours."

"I'll rejoin my team. Where is Squad 004?" Lu Ran asked.

"Hexi Park gate."

"Roger that!" Lu Ran responded, gripping his sword as he flew once again into the night sky.

The dazzling neon night scene grew increasingly distant behind Lu Ran.

Returning to Hexi, the scenery shifted back to dim street lights and the glow from numerous homes.

Outside Hexi Park, on a narrow and old overpass, Jiang Ruyi suddenly stopped.

As she looked up into the night sky, Sun Zhengfang and Wei Long also raised their eyes.

They saw a figure in a yellow raincoat, cutting through the misty rain, slanting downwards.

"Ha ha, the great hero is back!" Sun Zhengfang laughed heartily.

"No, no, no." Lu Ran, looking embarrassed, waved his hands dismissively, "Keep going."

Sun Zhengfang chuckled: "Don't be so modest... eh?"

Wei Long: "..."

"Hehe~" Jiang Ruyi couldn't help laughing, taking the Cold Night Sword that flew to her.

The Cold Night Sword entered her hand.

And she entered someone's arms.

Jiang Ruyi stiffened slightly, tilting her head slightly and whispered a reminder: "There's a camera on."

"Oh, right!" Lu Ran had indeed been too excited and immediately stepped back.

First, he had slain the Demon Lord, then led the Divine Weapon to its promotion.

Each epic event added together, leaving him exhilaratingly triumphant.

At only 18, Lu Ran wasn't some composed middle-aged man... Well, it seemed like Sun Zhengfang wasn't that composed either?

Sun Zhengfang watched the young couple with a smile, timely breaking the awkwardness: "Return to the team, patrol!"

"Yes!" Lu Ran responded loudly.

Jiang Ruyi spoke softly: "Tell me about the battle just now?"

"Let me tell you, that Jiang Realm Evil Dog was truly fierce..."

...

As dawn gradually brightened, the rain in Rain Alley City finally ceased.

Since the arrival of the Demon Lord, the night passed without further incident.

By 6:30 AM, Lu Ran's squad was patrolling according to their route, reaching Rain Alley Home Community.

Lu Ran turned to look at Sun Zhengfang.

Without a word needed, Sun Zhengfang smiled and waved his hands: "Go rest well!"

Lu Ran grinned: "Then I won't be polite, huh?"

"Get lost!" Sun Zhengfang chuckled and continued, "Go on, you've worked hard."

Lu Ran raised his hands, opening his palms.

The Dawn Blade and Silent Night Blade rose up, automatically sliding into the scabbards on Lu Ran's back.

Hmm... quite stylish.

Blades sheathed.

The person sheathed~

Since the advancement of the Silent Night Blade into a Divine Weapon, Lu Ran could indeed free up his hands completely for fancier maneuvers.

He walked backward towards the community, waving at the trio with his now-free hands.

Jiang Ruyi smiled and playfully rolled her eyes at Lu Ran, shouting from afar: "Hurry back."

"Sure... eh?" As Lu Ran retreated, he suddenly heard footsteps behind him.

Still in combat mode, Lu Ran abruptly turned to look and saw a familiar face.

Wasn't that Red Scarf Believer-Chen Jing?

"Kid!" Chen Jing grinned, showing off his white teeth.

His heavy hand landed firmly on Lu Ran's shoulder, his voice boisterous and loud: "Awesome!"

Lu Ran: "..."

You hear that,

Should a Moon Gazer be speaking like this?

Chen Jing patted Lu Ran's shoulder, full of emotion, and spat out three more words: "Really awesome!"

Lu Ran was stunned.

About last night's battle where Lu Ran volunteered to participate in slaying the Demon Lord, the entire Moon Gazer community was aware.

Lu Ran was still unaware of this city defense force's profound gratitude towards him.

And Lu Ran's battle against the Demon Lord had been live-streamed...

In the last episode of "Heavenly Pride," Lu Ran made a name for himself by killing the Tangled Silk Shadow clan during the Night of Ghosts, gaining considerable fame.

This time, with "Heavenly Pride," after this battle, Lu Ran was bound to become widely celebrated throughout Da Xia, unrivaled and acclaimed!

All voices of doubt should be silenced now.

The road ahead, from now on, should only be filled with flowers and applause, right?

In the future, no matter which Demon Cave he journeyed to or what he did, people should be able to facilitate his endeavors, right?

It remains to be seen whether Lord Immortal Sheep will facilitate things, though.

Later, when he got home, he would have to recount tonight's heroic deeds thoroughly to Lord Immortal Sheep!

Hopefully, this performance would satisfy the divine being and open the doors to a new world for him sooner rather than later.

The more Lu Ran thought about it, the more he looked forward to it.

"Thank you, Uncle." Lu Ran patted Chen Jing's shoulder, "I'm going to sleep."

With that, Lu Ran sprinted away.

Chen Jing watched Lu Ran's figure receding, pulling at his hoarse voice: "Keep going! Kid!

Stay increasingly awesome!"

Lu Ran: "..."

Though crude, the sentiment was solid.

Translated, Chen Jing's words were akin to what Senior Liu Yunlan had said: "Wishing you a splendid future"...

Chapter 294: Silent World Sword

Over the next two days, Lu Ran holed up at home, devoting himself to spiritual cultivation.

On the internet, however, a frenzy had erupted.

It turned out that Lu Ran, this particular Immortal Sheep Believer, was not just a flash in the pan!

He had the ability to slaughter his way through the Night of Ghosts, and to do battle with the Demon Lord when he descended upon the world.

Lu Ran's battles, turned into thrilling highlights, exploded across the internet, set to rousing, pounding music that made people's scalps tingle!

Among those battles, the wide-spread solo duel of Lu Ran against a Ghost General on a rainy alley was particularly notorious.

The heavy rain poured, and a black banner whipped and fluttered in the wind.

A semi-transparent black veil encircled both parties, marking the life-or-death arena from which only one could emerge alive.

Beneath this banner, the Ghost General rode a fiery warhorse, looking down upon the diminutive human.

Lu Ran stood tall with sword in hand, fearless and resolute, eyes burning as they met the formidable gaze of the majestic Ghost General.

This image of confrontation became the desktop wallpaper for countless people.

What followed was even more blood-pumping!

The human's dual blades were fierce, his might soared to the heavens!

First, he beheaded the horse, then the General!

His movements flowed like clouds and water, a delight to watch.

Especially mid-battle, when Lu Ran slaughtered the fiery warhorse, stood upon the burning horse's head, pointed his sword at the Ghost General, and uttered the words that went viral:

"Now, it's a fair fight."

Where did it go viral?

Across all platforms!

People engaged in fiery debates about this battle of Lu Ran's, and amidst the thousands of topics, one broke through:

"What defines Heavenly Pride?"

When Lu Ran faced such a powerful Ghost General with such posture, whether he won or lost seemed no longer important.

At this unique moment in time, even factors like strength level, Divine Technique, and martial disciplines were secondary.

The spirit that Lu Ran displayed, his integrity, his pride...

Could be seen as Da Xia's genius!

Without meaning to, Lu Ran had raised the standard of what it meant to be a "Heavenly Pride."

The hundred students from Da Xia participating in the competition would have to try even harder now.

Honestly speaking, when Lu Ran saw himself in the videos, he too was taken aback.

Was he really that intense when in battle?

Hmm... not bad, at least he lived up to the name his parents had given him.

Another battle also went viral on the internet.

That was the fight where Lu Ran joined forces with two Great Powers of the Jiang Realm to battle the Demon Lord.

Lu Ran, serving as bait, helped the Biwu believer, Liu Yunlan, to stab the Evil Dog full of holes.

Lu Ran then cleverly cooperated with the Nuoshasha believer, Ge Bin, to severely wound the Evil Dog and leave the Demon Lord disarmed and dishonored.

The battle was fraught with peril, leaving onlookers with their hearts in their throats.

And the scene where Lu Ran personally beheaded the dog left everyone agape.

It wasn't just any ordinary slash.

It was a strike like thunder from a clear sky!

It was a slash that merged with the stormy night, utilizing the thunder in the night sky to strike as one!

This strike was undoubtedly full of imagination and creativity.

Lu Ran made use of natural environmental factors, the condition of the Evil Dog being blinded, and he knew well the characteristics of the Evil Dog Evil Skill·Evil Recognition, seizing a fleeting opportunity.

Such a strike comes once in a blue moon!

It also caused a great stir among the countless Martial Artists of Da Xia.

Was Lu Ran just lucky?

If Lu Ran were just an obscure high schooler, people might think he stumbled upon success by blind luck.

But Lu Ran stood on the battlefield of "Heavenly Pride," his opponents the Demon Lords themselves!

Could he simply be lucky?

He must have fought for it!

Undeniably, there was an element of luck.

The storm seemed to be a blessing from the heavens.

But...

Heaven helps those who help themselves!

Questions arose again as to why the Martial Monk Sect, the Beifeng Sect did not accept Lu Ran, allowing the Immortal Sheep to scoop up such a talent...

Many other weapon-related sects were implicated as well.

How did the gods overlook such a talented Swordman?

Lu Ran had seen the related short videos.

The one with the most views really did have some flair.

Not only did it feature Lu Ran's first-person perspective, but it even used official surveillance footage from across the central plaza in Rain Alley.

In the video, as the moment Lu Ran slew the Demon Lord played out, the stirring background music suddenly vanished.

Only the sound of the wind, rain, and the ferocious roar of the Evil Dog remained.

The original sound of the battlefield brought the video to its climax.

Thunder broke through the night sky,

A blade wielded by a mortal sliced through the world.

Before the thunder ceased, silence had already fallen over the battlefield.

The Demon Lord lay beheaded, blood flowing freely, as the retreating Swordman cut through cascading curtains of rain and disappeared into the stormy night.

When the silence of the video was broken once more, it was by the humming vibration of the Silent Night Blade!

The beheading of the Demon Lord and the emergence of the Divine Weapon were seamlessly connected.

Even Lu Ran was stunned by the show!

Now ~ that's professionalism!

After the 15th, Lu Ran became explosively popular.

Among the concurrent 50 competitors, as many as 8 students' cities had experienced special events.

Even with eight top-tier battlefields, Lu Ran was the most dazzling among them.

Lu Ran's strike,

Shattered all doubts, carved out a mighty reputation.

And it also won him the laurel of the competition!

The results for the second season of "Heavenly Pride" were announced on the 18th day of the fourth lunar month.

Lu Ran, bearing the title of Immortal Sheep Believer, topped the leaderboard!

He earned a terrifying score of 149.

Nearly perfect!

The runner-up fell behind by a full... erm, 1 point.

The lady in second place remained the once-in-forty-years female Martial Monk Believer.

She had a pleasant name: Qifeng.

Qifeng also experienced a special event and, opening Three Heads and Six Arms, once again tore through the long night.

In the first season of "Heavenly Pride," Lu Ran had acquired a score of 143.

Together, his total score now reached 292.

On the overall leaderboard, Lu Ran climbed from seventh to third place.

The first on the leaderboard remained this female Martial Artist.

Her strength so formidable that it left her peers in despair, and Da Xia Country's people thrilled to the core.

The moment the results were announced, Lu Ran's phone wouldn't stop ringing.

At that time, Lu Ran was checking his scores, and seeing his sister's name on the screen, he picked up immediately.

"Brother!!!"

His sister let out a shrill cry, making Lu Ran recall the thunder on the night of the 15th when he beheaded the Demon Lord.

What's the need to wait for thunderclaps in the night sky when slaying the Jiang Realm's Evil Dogs in the future?

He might as well bring his sister along...

"Uh," Lu Ran suddenly cocked his head, feeling his brain buzzing.

"Big brother, you're number one! Woohoo~"

Little Yuanxi was jubilant.

Lu Ran had planned to chide her, but, feeling his sister's overwhelming joy, he couldn't bring himself to dampen her spirits.

"You're third on the overall leaderboard now! Only a few points behind the first two, haha!"

Little Yuanxi chattered on, her tone brimming with pride and joy.

"Brother? Aren't you going to speak?" After celebrating happily for a while, Qiao Yuanxi suddenly realized Lu Ran had been silent.

Instantly, Little Yuanxi grew unhappy, "Ah, my cold and heartless brother~ Now that you're famous, you disdain your family and look down on your own little sister..."

Lu Ran: ???

Qiao Yuanxi sighed, "Alas, big brother is now Heavenly Pride, so precious. Only sisters on the Heavenly Pride leaderboard are worth his worries, I guess."

Lu Ran spoke irritably, "Speaking nonsense? These past days, we've been texting every day, haven't I been worrying about you?"

Qiao Yuanxi's lamentations continued, her voice haunting, "How could I compare to them, with names of gold and jade, I am but a person of the grass and trees..."

Lu Ran gaped, utterly dumbfounded!

Qiao... Qiao Daiyu?

"I know I'm still in my brother's heart, but seeing them, you've forgotten your sister..."

"Qiao! Yuan! Xi!"

"Pff... hahaha~"

"Speak properly!" Lu Ran was grinding his teeth.

"Congratulations on reaching third on the overall leaderboard, and for winning another Divine Weapon!" Qiao Yuanxi calmed down quite a bit.

She was probably really afraid of upsetting her brother too much.

"Oh, oh, and Niu Zhengzheng idolizes you now, even wants to take you as his master!" Qiao Yuanxi blurted out, "Even Sister Yiren, who doesn't talk much, praised you several times in our group chat!"

"Mhm," Lu Ran responded and didn't continue the topic, instead asking, "Is Mom still at Jinghong Peak?"

Immediately, Qiao Yuanxi pouted, "Yeah! She's almost caught up to you, yet she won't come home."

"I'll call her later," Lu Ran sighed internally and reminded her, "Next month's fifteenth is the college entrance exam. Tomorrow is your last tribulation, make sure you and your two team members do your job well and stay safe."

Lu Ran wasn't really concerned about Qiao Yuanxi's performance.

Firstly, with Guan Yiren and Niu Zhengzheng leading, Little Yuanxi was racking up points like crazy, and her scores were already impressive.

Secondly, this team had forged a different path by accomplishing several special assessments, already securing consideration for Beijing University.

For Qiao Yuanxi at this stage, the college entrance exam wasn't a fate-determining test.

The real test was Beijing University's independent recruitment exam.

Qiao Yuanxi's tone once again grew melancholic, "How can I compare to the sisters of Heavenly Pride... Eh?"

Before she finished, Qiao Yuanxi was met with a series of beeps.

Qiao Yuanxi's lips pursed again as she muttered, "That darn guy, I'm going to complain to Sister Ruyi!"

Lu Ran scrolled through his contacts and settled on his mother's name card.

He knew his mother was in seclusion, cultivating, and shouldn't be disturbed.

But...

Hesitating for a moment, he still dialed his mother's number.

Unexpectedly, it was Chen Jingjing who answered.

"Mom," Lu Ran blurted out, startling Chen Jingjing into a flustered explanation.

"Jingjing," Lu Ran scratched his head, "is my mom available to talk?"

"I'll ask," Chen Jingjing didn't dare to promise anything, "Please hold."

Lu Ran was also quite helpless, needing a transfer to talk to his own mother...

It took a while before a gentle voice came from the other end of the phone:

"Ranran?"

"Mom." Lu Ran cast aside his troubling thoughts, trying to sound cheerful, hoping to infect the listener, "I came first in this season of Heavenly Pride!"

"Oh?" Qiao Wanjun was quite surprised.

Her usually calm heart finally rippled slightly.

She knew her child was strong and stubbornly ambitious.

On the last season of "Heavenly Pride," Lu Ran had already achieved remarkable results.

Qiao Wanjun was already quite content but did not expect her son to push the envelope even further!

Lu Ran spoke cheerfully, "The real deal, there's video proof!"

Qiao Wanjun felt a twinge of guilt, her eyes dimming, "I'm sorry, Ranran, I didn't watch your..."

"That's great!" Lu Ran interjected, cutting her words short.

"Huh?" Qiao Wanjun was confused.

Lu Ran exclaimed, "I'll tell you all about it! Do you have time now, Mom?"

Qiao Wanjun couldn't help but smile.

Lu Ran wasn't the least bit upset nor petulant, instead, he said...

Qiao Wanjun bowed her head slightly, her voice tender, "Sure, tell me all about it."

Lu Ran gathered his thoughts, began to recount slowly:

"Well, the story starts on a stormy night..."

Qiao Wanjun: "..."

...

Chapter 295: The Last Lesson

Lunar day nineteen, the sun shining brightly.

After several months, Lu Ran once again put on his blue and white school uniform and stepped out of his house.

"Ugh~~~"

He stood at the entrance of the apartment building, gazing at the blue sky and white clouds, viciously stretching himself in a lazy yawn.

Time really flies.

Today's morning class is the last one before the college entrance examination.

"The little yellow flowers in the story have been drifting since the year they were born~"

Humming a tune, Lu Ran walked along, casually kicking a little flower by the roadside.

Petals fluttered up in the wind, slowly falling to the ground as Lu Ran's figure receded into the distance.

Lu Ran passed the residential building and saw a tall figure standing under a big tree not far away.

Blue and white school uniform, a refreshing ponytail, and a pure and lovely face.

Yet compared to a year ago, the girl had grown a lot, both emotionally and physically.

"Is your school uniform a bit small?" Lu Ran quickly approached.

"It's fine, I'm just wearing it for today." Jiang Ruyi smiled at Lu Ran.

"Let's go, we need to take the back road." Lu Ran took her soft hand and gently squeezed the palm of her hand.

Jiang Ruyi slightly lowered her head, feeling a sense of joy in her heart, allowing herself to be led toward the exit of the neighborhood.

Today, the school required all students to wear their uniforms, and if Lu Jiang both wore hats and masks, it would be too obvious.

So neither of them was fully dressed in disguise.

Fortunately, Rain Alley City wasn't very crowded, and they intentionally chose desolate sections, so the journey was relatively peaceful.

Until several streets later, in a deserted alley, Lu Ran suddenly said:

"Ruyi, there's something I need to tell you."

"Hmm?" Jiang Ruyi turned to look at Lu Ran, a premonition of unease stirring in her heart.

Every night before bed, they would text each other.

The fact that he didn't talk about it over the phone but wanted to say it face-to-face meant it must be something significant.

Lu Ran spoke, "Lord Immortal Goat has summoned me."

Jiang Ruyi felt a stir in her heart and asked, "For a pilgrimage?"

"Yes." Lu Ran nodded, "Lord Immortal Goat wants me now, but I begged for a delay because I still have to attend the college entrance exam.

After the fifteenth of next month, I must go."

Jiang Ruyi pressed her lips tightly and lowered her head.

Of course, she couldn't stop Lu Ran from going on a pilgrimage.

No believer in the world is qualified to defy the will of a deity.

And once Lu Ran left, it was uncertain how long he would be gone.

Jiang Ruyi herself had once stayed at the foot of Divine Sculpture at Yumen Pass for half a year.

"I'm sorry," Lu Ran stopped, apologizing, "On Children's Day, I won't be able to join you guys at the front line."

Every fifteenth day of the fifth lunar month is the day of the college entrance examination.

And on the first day of June, it's the students' last chance to score.

As known, the first day of the sixth lunar month is the annual Worship God Day.

On this day, deities patrol the human realm and gather believers.

During this time, Evil Demons are most subdued.

Each graduating class of high school seniors would be organized by the school on June first to enter the Demon Cave and go to the front line to observe.

This is the last lesson the school provides for believer students.

Students from Mist Realm and Stream Realm can only climb the city walls to watch.

While those from the River Realm can apply to join the army and carry out tasks under the guidance of soldiers.

Either clear the mountainous bodies piled beneath the walls or advance the front line with the troops.

In any case, the school, in collaboration with the military, ensures the safety of students while allowing them to grasp the cruelty of this world as much as possible.

"The deity has commanded it, then it must be fulfilled." Jiang Ruyi shook her head, "It's okay, I'll go with them."

Lu Ran nodded slightly, also feeling somewhat helpless.

It's not that he wasn't brave enough, but he couldn't go!

Lu Ran couldn't absorb a large number of Evil Demon souls in a short period, as that could likely expose him.

If the Evil Demon itself comes knocking, then things could get really interesting!

The deities would definitely investigate why an Evil Demon is particularly fixated on Lu Ran.

Once the reasons are discovered, the deities themselves would step in...

Take Divine-Forget Spring's current situation!

She was exiled by All Gods into the Demon Cave-Bamboo Sea to barely survive.

Forget Spring Sect was simply growing by absorbing souls.

While Lu Ran owned a Sculpture Garden that could fundamentally shake the foundation of All Gods...

The nature of these was completely different!

Lu Ran never believed the All Gods would spare him.

"Did Lord Immortal Goat mention what you are supposed to do?" Jiang Ruyi held back before asking.

Previously, when she was summoned by a deity, Lu Ran had asked a similar question.

At that time, Jiang Ruyi had shaken her head and laughed, saying how could she possibly know.

Now, with Lu Ran being summoned, Jiang Ruyi realized she just couldn't help but ask.

"I performed well on the night of the past fifteenth." Lu Ran replied, "After returning, I reported the results to Lord Immortal Goat, which pleased him.

It seems Lord Immortal Goat wants to reward me this time, to help speed up my advancement."

"Okay." Jiang Ruyi lowered her eyelids.

"Don't be like this, Ruyi, I still have a month before I leave."

"26 days."

"What?"

"There are 26 days left before you leave." Jiang Ruyi spoke softly.

Lu Ran felt somewhat bitter inside; actually, he was the one who instigated this pilgrimage.

As a Human Clan student, he was aware that every first day of June, the school organized something significant for the graduates.

Lu Ran naturally needed to avoid risks and needed a valid reason not to participate.

After explaining the situation to the deity, Lord Immortal Goat readily agreed, allowing Lu Ran to come to this Divine Sculpture for further studies.

"Are you already starting to count days?" Lu Ran slightly lowered his head and gently bumped her forehead.

Jiang Ruyi: "I...umm."

Her words were blocked back in her mouth.

In the deserted alley, Lu Ran held Jiang Ruyi, capturing her delicate lips.

Jiang Ruyi closed her eyes, her cheeks flushed, her hand tightly gripping Lu Ran's clothing.

After a while, Lu Ran spoke again in the alley, "I'll tell you about it later.

Don't be sad, I'll try to come back as soon as possible."

Last month on the fifteenth, Jiang Ruyi sternly stated that if Lu Ran had any major decisions, he must tell her in advance.

Otherwise, Lu Ran might really drag it out.

People indeed can't be too well-behaved.

"Who's sad." Jiang Ruyi also had her moments of stubbornness, her face pressed against Lu Ran's shoulder, "Just listen carefully to the deity's teachings.

Focus on your cultivation, strength is the most important."

Suddenly, she lifted her head, her face breaking into a smile, "When you come back, I hope you will be River Realm."

Good guy~

Lu Ran laughed, "You really have confidence in me."

"Right, you're applying for Wu Lie River University, right?"

"Yeah."

"Then I'll wait for you at school."

"No, I still have a month before I go, why are we saying goodbye now..."

...

Lu Jiang arrived late. The upside was that there were no students crowding them, asking for autographs or photos.

The downside was...well, there wasn't any.

Always stern, Li Yanzhu stood by the podium, smiling as she let the couple enter.

There were no reprimands or punishments, the class teacher just picked up the pointer and tapped on the blackboard again. There was a phrase written on it:

"The suffering in the world is like this terrifying night of thunderstorms.

There are always people who won't just wait for the storm to pass but will dance in the rain."

When Lu Ran saw this phrase, he was clearly stunned.

This phrase was a comment written for by the judges of "Heavenly Pride" for Lu Ran.

"This is your last morning class of high school," Li Yanzhu said gravely, "Using 'Heavenly Pride's quote for Lu Ran, I offer this to you all."

Li Yanzhu's gaze swept over the only twenty-some students in the class and continued, "This world is not beautiful.

And it seems it won't get any better.

The rain will only get heavier, and the lightning more frequent.

But your lives are just beginning.

After graduation, as you all go your separate ways, I hope you learn to dance in the rain early in your paths."

"Clap! Clap! Clap..."

A solemn and somewhat sad atmosphere was broken by applause.

The over twenty students in the class also began clapping their hands.

Li Yanzhu smiled, "This month's training homework is to prepare for the college entrance exam.

There are no Demon Crystal submissions required.

You can go to any Demon Cave to practice teamwork and tactics, or rest at home.

When you stand in the examination room on the fifteenth of next month, you will get your scores for this month's training homework."

With that, Li Yanzhu added, "Twenty points, full marks."

For a moment, students exchanged glances.

The final assignments of past years weren't like this.

Is it because Rain Alley City has endured too much, and the students have borne too much, that the school has made such arrangements?"

Li Yanzhu continued, "On the fifteenth of next month at eight a.m., meet on the school playground for the final exam.

No tardiness allowed, do you hear me?"

"Got it!"

"Yes!"

Li Yanzhu nodded in satisfaction, "Additionally, on the first of June, the school will organize a trip to Evil Dog Village to the front lines for observation.

No avoidance, no leave, all students must attend, otherwise a large number of believer points will be deducted.

For the vast majority here, this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, cherish it."

A few students responded, most remained silent.

Li Yanzhu glanced at her watch before continuing, "Everyone tidy up your appearance; we're starting to take graduation photos soon, it will be Class Four's turn shortly.

Any questions?"

The class was silent.

Today's class headteacher was unusually gentle, "After the graduation photos are done, everyone is free to leave.

Lastly, I wish you all a bright future."

Bright future.

Again, these words.

But this time, no matter how Lu Ran heard them, they felt somewhat sad.

Minutes later, the twenty-something students of senior class four stood in front of the academic building.

School leaders and teachers sat in the front row, the students standing row by row on the steps.

Lu Ran was asked to stand in the very center of the crowd, Jiang Ruyi next to him with a slight smile on her face.

Today in Rain Alley City, the sun was brilliant with blue skies and white clouds.

It was indeed perfect for taking photos.

Amidst the sound of shutter clicks, Lu Ran fiddled with Ruyi's fingers and quietly took her hand.

...

Chapter 296: Visits Again

Although the school had not assigned homework, Lu Ran had not been idle; he had a clear goal—Yan Zhi.

For the purpose of enhancing his strength, Lu Ran dared not delay a moment.

He took Jiang Ruyi with him and called upon his capable assistant Si Xianxian, under Chen Jingjing's protection, to create a bloodbath within Yan Zhi Village.

For this, Si Xianxian had some complaints, not understanding what kind of madness had gotten into Lu Ran!

With the college entrance exam approaching, instead of practicing formations with his teammates or resting at home, you returned to killing Yan Zhi?

What did that mean?

Did you enjoy this, liked killing new brides?

Although she grumbled in secret, when Lu Ran called her, Si Xianxian naturally scampered after him.

Perhaps because of Lu Ran's widespread fame, this time, the military guarding the Yan Zhi Demon Cave exceptionally allowed him 15 days of practice.

Lu Ran's wish was finally fulfilled!

He cultivated the Yan Zhi Evil Sculpture up to River Realm·Third Rank and equipped the much-desired Evil Technique·Paper Mache!

Of course, Lu Ran dared not use it in front of others, waiting until he returned to his own den to study it carefully.

Little civet, you're in for a treat~

Staying by Lu Ran's side allowed one to taste a variety of evil techniques...

After the arduous training ended, the two Lu Jiang companions accompanied Si Xianxian in crazy fun for two days before returning to Rain Alley City.

Poor Sister Xian'er also felt rather humble.

Pulled into hard labor, the half-month of toiling offered no more than a "weekend" for compensation...

Indeed!

Those who stayed by Lu Ran's side were indeed blessed with good fortune~

When the two Lu Jiang returned to their homeland, it was the sixth day of the fifth lunar month.

"Finally back."

Lu Ran stood at the departure gate of Rain Alley Station, looking at the overcast sky, he couldn't help but sigh.

"Let's go," urged Jiang Ruyi softly, tugging at Lu Ran's sleeve.

The sixth day of the fifth lunar month was already very hot.

Others dressed in summer clothes, but only the two of them wore training uniforms and were wrapped tightly with hats and masks.

Such attire was quite conspicuous, causing the surrounding travelers to take clandestine glances.

The two escaped the train station as if fleeing, running an entire street before the surroundings quieted down.

"Only nine days left," Jiang Ruyi remarked as she looked at the familiar streetscape and slowed down.

"Yeah, the college entrance exam is coming up," Lu Ran whispered in reply.

Jiang Ruyi fell silent; she was not counting down to the college entrance exam.

They walked for quite some time, and then she suddenly asked, "Have you decided when to go to Cai Nan?"

Lu Ran thought for a moment and said, "After the city is unsealed, on the nineteenth of the lunar month.

Although Lord Immortal Goat indulges me, I've delayed for a month already, leaving a divine being waiting isn't quite right."

"Mm..." Jiang Ruyi walked with her head bowed.

So that's thirteen days then.

"Ruyi."

"Hm?"

"Are you going to miss me?" Lu Ran tilted his head slightly, looking at the girl with a cheeky grin.

"Who's going to miss you?" Jiang Ruyi turned her head to look at the distant street scene, with a demeanor that suggested otherwise.

Lu Ran took it as confirmation and nodded: "Indeed, after spending half a month slaughtering together in Yan Zhi Village.

Being together day and night, you must be sick of seeing me by now."

"Not at all, don't talk nonsense," Jiang Ruyi quickly retorted, yet she caught Lu Ran's teasing gaze.

Even with the mask covering his face, she could imagine his taunting expression.

With a mix of embarrassment and annoyance, she quickened her pace.

As they say, concern leads to chaos.

The usually poised and calm Jiang beauty, the steady and cool commander Jiang, was always a different person in front of Lu Ran.

Hmm... quite amusing~

"Slow down, slow down," Lu Ran hastened to catch up, muttering under his breath, "Don't you know how long your legs are..."

Jiang Ruyi's cheeks reddened further, and four White Jade Stones quietly appeared around her waist.

"No, wait!" said Lu Ran at once, reaching out carefully to avoid the Jade Tokens and grabbed her wrist.

Jiang Ruyi struggled lightly a couple of times but couldn't break free; thus, the White Jade Tokens gradually dissipated.

"I was wrong, I was wrong," Lu Ran said hurriedly.

"Hmph," Jiang Ruyi huffed, still looking away.

The tender and gentle Jiang Ruyi rarely got angry.

He wondered what was different about today.

Maybe, with the date of their separation drawing closer, and the thought of being apart for a long time, was making her upset?

Playing with her slender, fair fingers, Lu Ran accompanied her home while softly cajoling her.

As they approached Shui Yi Fang Complex, Lu Ran looked up at Jiang Ruyi's family home and said:

"During these few days of rest, should I pay a visit to uncle and aunt?"

Originally, the two had agreed that Lu Ran would visit after the college entrance exams.

But now that wouldn't work; by the time Lu Ran returned, who knew when that would be.

"Mm, I'll talk to my mom and dad," replied Jiang Ruyi softly.

"Not mad anymore?" Lu Ran looked at the girl beside him.

During the whole trip, it had been he who spoke while she remained silent.

"When was I ever mad?" Jiang Ruyi playfully blinked her eyes.

Lu Ran was startled!

He last heard this phrase when they were freshmen in high school three years ago.

At that time, the two had casually encountered each other after class...

No!

The last time he heard that phrase was in March on Ghost Moon Mountain, in the eyes of the Ghost Moon Fox.

"Rest well when you get home; I'll send you a message once there's news," Jiang Ruyi said with a smile as she turned to leave.

When Lu Ran emerged from his memories, the girl had long disappeared from sight.

He shook his head with a smile.

Just as Lu Ran turned to leave, he was surprised to hear a call:

"Lu Ran?"

"Huh?" Lu Ran, with his excellent hearing, turned to look upward to the ninth floor.

Jiang Ruyi stood at the balcony window and said, "My mom and dad are home right now."

"Ah? I... Uh?" Lu Ran stammered, clearly unprepared, "Isn't it a bit rushed?"

Jiang Ruyi watched Lu Ran flounder and couldn't help but laugh to herself.

She said nothing, just observing him.

After a long hesitation, Lu Ran finally clenched his teeth and stomped his foot: "All right!"

Rushed?

Indeed it was rushed, but the workings of this world were always "rushed."

Rushed schooling, respecting gods, graduating, finding a job, marrying and having children.

Life rushed, as did death.

In the chaos of a world filled with evil demons, really, no one knew if they could see that familiar person tomorrow.

"Wait for me," Lu Ran shouted loudly.

He glanced around and found the familiar fruit shop, then quickly headed over.

Minutes later, Lu Ran returned to the complex holding fruit and carrying two boxes of milk.

Jiang Ruyi was already waiting downstairs; seeing him approach, she couldn't help but say, "You sure have a trick up your sleeve."

"Heh heh~" Lu Ran turned his head to look behind him.

The Dawn Blade and Silent Night Blade overlapped each other, floating in mid-air, with two boxes of milk neatly stacked on top.

The pair entered the building one after the other and took the elevator.

"Don't be nervous, my mom and dad have nice personalities."

Speaking softly, Jiang Ruyi took off Lu Ran's hat and mask and wiped the sweat from his forehead: "They like you too."

"That's reassuring," Lu Ran said, glancing at the girl beside him, "You seem a bit different today."

"Different?" Jiang Ruyi raised her eyebrows slightly.

"Mm," Lu Ran nodded, "You seem a bit..."

"Ding~"

The elevator came to a halt and slowly opened, interrupting Lu Ran's words.

The door of room 901 was wide open, and a middle-aged woman stood at the doorway, probably in her late thirties.

She bore a resemblance to Jiang Ruyi and had an elegant air about her, with her long hair in a bun and a soft, motherly smile on her face.

"Aunt Zhuang, sorry to disturb you," Lu Ran said at once.

Lu Ran was aware of the general situation of Jiang's family; Jiang Ruyi's mother was named Zhuang Jingyi, a judge.

The first meeting wasn't as stern as he had imagined.

Jiang Ruyi's father, named Jiang Zheng, also held a public office, working in the town government.

It was worth mentioning that both parents were ordinary people.

In this world, there's a phenomenon where, in certain specific sectors, non-believers predominated.

That said, after various hardships, fleeing Rain Alley had become a trend.

Now, those who still lived in this small town were mostly public servants.

"What's this, child? You didn't need to bring anything." Zhuang Jingyi looked at Lu Ran with a smile, her voice very gentle, "Come inside."

"Eh." Lu Ran stepped forward quickly, allowing Jiang's mother to take the fruit from his hands.

Greeting the approaching man with a smile, Lu Ran nodded: "How do you do, Uncle Jiang."

"Good, good." Jiang Zheng reached out with a thick hand and laughed, "You bring honor to our humble home."

Jiang's father wore glasses, was tall and slightly stout.

"Not at all, I'm the one who is honored," Lu Ran replied quickly while shaking hands, speaking modestly.

This time, it was Jiang Ruyi's turn to take Lu Ran's shoes.

"Over there, the shrine is on the south balcony," Jiang Ruyi reminded him.

Lu Ran's heart sank.

The deity Jiang Ruyi worshiped was Lord Jade Talisman!

It was the same deity his father Lu Xing had worshiped, and the deity Lu Ran had revered since childhood.

"All right." On the surface, Lu Ran looked unfazed, put on the slippers, and walked towards the south balcony.

With his excellent vision, he could see from a distance the familiar Divine Sculpture in the small shrine.

Lu Ran thus halted, his heart tumultuous with emotions.

Countless childhood memories came flooding to his mind.

The young Lu Ran revered it deeply, prostrating day and night, worshiping together with his father.

Later, the small Divine Sculpture was taken away as his father departed, and the household was left without divine protection.

In his youth, Lu Ran longed to welcome back Lord Jade Talisman home, to continue the daily offerings and follow in his father's footsteps.

But fate would not have it.

On the first day of June last year, all his illusions shattered.

"Lu Ran?" Jiang Ruyi came to Lu Ran's side and called softly.

"Oh." Lu Ran snapped back to reality, apologizing with a smile and stepping towards the south balcony.

As he slid the glass door open, Lu Ran inhaled the rich fragrance of incense.

The small incense burner contained many ashed incense sticks, and several plates of fruit were offered next to it, all showing the believer's piety.

After years, Lu Ran stood before Lord Jade Talisman once again.

The incense was right there beside him.

This time, he didn't reach for it.

The prayer mat lay at his feet.

This time, he didn't kneel.

Lu Ran looked quietly at the Divine Sculpture inside the small shrine for a long while, then spoke softly, "Sorry for the intrusion."

The shrine was silent, with no response from the sculpture.

Smiling to himself, Lu Ran turned and left the balcony.

...

Chapter 297: Bad Intentions

As Jiang Ruyi had said, the Jiang family couple indeed had great personalities.

The group was sitting on the living room couch, chatting for a long time, and having a delightful conversation.

Jiang Ruyi had been sitting on the floor next to the coffee table the whole time, constantly refilling the tea for everyone.

Her face was always beaming with laughter, and every time she heard her parents praise Lu Ran, her heart felt sweet as honey.

Her lovely and charming appearance made Lu Ran look at her repeatedly.

Lu Ran was invited to stay for lunch, and it was not until he saw the zongzi on the dining table that he finally realized why the Jiang family couple were at home on leave.

It turned out that yesterday was the Dragon Boat Festival.

There was another thing Lu Ran was slow to realize.

When he tasted the dishes made by Jiang's mother, he was astonished to find that the taste of the dishes was somewhat familiar.

Jiang Ruyi often brought packed lunches for Lu Ran, it turned out, some of the dishes were made by Jiang's mother.

"Eat more, young Lu, you are too thin," Zhuang Jingyi said as she picked a piece of braised pork ribs for Lu Ran.

"Thank you, Aunt Zhuang," Lu Ran quickly grabbed his rice bowl.

Zhuang Jingyi smiled as she looked at the young man in front of her.

She had seen Lu Ran's impressive demeanor on TV.

It was really hard to connect that prestigious figure from Da Xia's genius with this gentle young man sitting in front of her.

She had also heard many stories about Lu Ran from her daughter.

Zhuang Jingyi was also aware that Lu Ran, in real life, was just like this.

"Young Lu, I heard you want to go to Wu Lie River University?" Jiang Zheng suddenly spoke.

"Yes," Lu Ran nodded.

Upon mentioning this, Zhuang Jingyi said gratefully, "In the past few months, people from the admissions office of various universities have been calling us. Ruyi is really fortunate to follow you and can now freely pick any university she likes."

Lu Ran smiled, "It's because Ruyi is excellent and highly capable."

Jiang Zheng smiled broadly and asked, "With your great results, you would have more than qualified for Beijing University; isn't it a pity?"

A better university naturally meant more resources and more opportunities.

However, Lu Ran didn't care about these.

He responded, "If there was a university in Rain Alley City, I would just stay there."

"Hehe~" Zhuang Jingyi chuckled softly, "So homesick, huh?"

Lu Ran silently nodded.

Zhuang Jingyi sighed inwardly.

She knew that Lu Ran had come back from Beijing, living alone.

Lu Ran's self-reliance and independence deeply moved Zhuang Jingyi, who was a mother herself.

She also knew that there was something here in Rain Alley that Lu Ran could not bear to part with.

Jiang Zheng spoke up in time, "Actually, Beijing isn't far from us, just an hour by high-speed train."

As a father, he naturally hoped his daughter would go to a better university, which was understandable.

However, his daughter had turned down many invitations from prestigious universities and had made up her mind to go to Wu Lie River University with Lu Ran.

After contemplating, Lu Ran finally said, "Uncle Jiang, my roots are here. I'm not choosing Wu Lie River University because it's in this province. It's because this mother river flows through the city where the university is located."

Lu Ran was aware, like a tree, to grow taller and blossom leaves, his roots would need to reach deeper.

"Dad," Jiang Ruyi slightly furrowed her brows, somewhat displeased.

"Alright, alright," Jiang Zheng repeatedly begged for forgiveness, "Your uncle is just an ordinary person, ignorant about many things; I shouldn't have spoken out of turn."

Lu Ran smiled and shook his head, "No, Uncle Jiang is also thinking of our best interests."

"Let's continue eating." Zhuang Jingyi picked a few more ribs for Lu Ran.

Suddenly, Lu Ran spoke up, his expression serious, "I will try my best to take good care of Ruyi."

Jiang Zheng looked at Lu Ran's very earnest face, his smile filled with relief, "Uncle believes you."

Lu Ran was not just any ordinary young man, but the famous Da Xia's genius.

It was extremely fortunate for his daughter to be romantically involved with such a person.

Zhuang Jingyi spoke softly, "Young Lu, you have already taken very good care of her. Your Jiang uncle and I are just ordinary people, passionate but powerless. The sword you gave to Ruyi can protect her for a lifetime, and that reassures us a lot."

Jiang Ruyi was eating the dishes in small bites, her head lowered.

There were some things her parents did not know.

For instance, what the conditions were for the Cold Night Sword to become a Divine Weapon.

...

The meal was thoroughly enjoyable for both host and guests.

Lu Ran stayed a little longer at the Jiang family home before leaving with Jiang Ruyi, accompanied to the door by the Jiang family couple.

The two walked slowly down the street; the only imperfection was that the clouds had dispersed, leaving the afternoon sun somewhat scorching.

Hmm...Lu Ran felt even hotter.

Because he was still wearing his black combat uniform.

Jiang Ruyi, on the other hand, was dressed in a white short-sleeved shirt and denim shorts, stepping in a pair of exquisite sandals.

This youthful, pretty, and somewhat laid-back style was making Lu Ran fall for her even more.

I don't know who is so blessed to have such a fair and beautiful girlfriend... oh, it turns out it's me!

Hehe~

How do you even argue with that?

Jiang Ruyi spoke softly, "Don't be upset about what my dad said, he..."

Lu Ran interrupted her, "Fathers understand. If we ever have a daughter, I'll be just as anxious."

"Go away," Jiang Ruyi's cheeks flushed instantly, and she gently spat at Lu Ran.

Lu Ran said, "Your uncle and aunt really are good people, very down to earth. You weren't this relaxed when you met my mom, were you?"

"Don't talk nonsense," Jiang Ruyi slapped Lu Ran's shoulder in dissatisfaction, "Aunt Qiao was very nice to me."

Lu Ran smiled.

Defending her already?

Looks like the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship is quite harmonious.

In the afternoon, the two returned together to the Rain Alley Home Complex.

As soon as they opened the door, they heard "meow meow meow."

The Calico cat darted over and completely ignored Lu Ran, running straight to the girl's ankles and continuously rubbing against them.

Lu Ran pouted, "When I'm away, I'll trouble you to look after the Calico. If your uncle and aunt don't like it, just leave it here and refill the cat food once a month."

Jiang Ruyi bent down to pick up the little guy and gently poked its little nose:

"Don't worry, I'll take it back with me."

"Meow~" The Calico cat stuck out its pink tongue, continuously licking the girl's fingertips.

The more he watched, the more annoyed Lu Ran became.

Damn!

I've never even licked them...

Wait till she leaves, I must give you a big blessing!

And wait till I use the Vermilion Paper Evil Technique·Paper Mache to control you and roll you into a little cat stick~

Lu Ran reached out and rubbed the fluffy cat head, then stooped down to get the slippers for Jiang Ruyi.

The two went to the bedroom to greet the Lord Immortal Goat, after which Jiang Ruyi left with the Calico.

Lu Ran closed the bedroom door and went to the altar, pressed his hands together, and whisper,: "Lord Immortal Goat, I have fulfilled your requirements."

"Not bad," a raspy voice echoed in Lu Ran's mind.

Lu Ran immediately said, "After the college entrance examination, I will go on a pilgrimage. Do I need to prepare anything else?"

White Sheep Jade Carving: "Just bring your life."

Lu Ran: "..."

That scary, huh?

Lu Ran could foresee that going to Lord Immortal Goat would definitely involve a training session in the Demon Cave.

Without his teammates beside him, Lu Ran could let loose and delve deep into the Demon Cave, freely wielding the Evil Technique.

Perhaps, just by elevating his power to a higher level or by integrating all his Evil Techniques, he should be able to earn Lord Immortal Goat's approval?

A thought crossed Lu Ran's mind, and he continued, "Lord Immortal Goat, should I go to the Ghost General Demon Cave and run amuck before coming to you? If I can activate this Evil Sculpture, I could acquire Spirit Defense Techniques. With that, wherever I venture, I would be much safer."

"Consider it yourself." Though the words were as such, the deity's tone carried a hint of commendation.

Lu Ran's heart leapt, thinking as expected. In Lord Immortal Goat's view, the more cautious... well, the steadier the better!

Lu Ran pressed his hands together and slightly bowed in respect.

Afterward, he changed into shorts and a t-shirt and walked out of the bedroom.

In the living room, Jiang Ruyi was sitting on the sofa, petting the Calico while watching TV.

Lu Ran stepped over and sat next to the girl, snatching the lazily enjoying Calico.

"Meow~Meow!" The Calico resisted helplessly.

But after Lu Ran "baa'd," the Calico no longer yearned for its owner.

A single Voice of Compassion cast, and it was no longer Lu Ran wanting to hold the Calico; rather, the Calico was frantically embracing Lu Ran...

"You, stop bullying it all the time," Jiang Ruyi said, displeased.

Lu Ran, holding the restless Calico, looked at the girl, "Let's not go back today."

Jiang Ruyi shifted her gaze towards the TV.

However, the TV still showed the image of Lu Ran.

Three hosts were discussing something, and the background screen showed Lu Ran killing the River Realm·Evil Dog with grandeur.

"After dinner, I will go back," Jiang Ruyi whispered softly.

This time, Lu Ran was persistent, "Your uncle and aunt have already agreed."

Jiang Ruyi's heartbeat sped up because Lu Ran had put down the Calico, and his face drew closer.

She could feel Lu Ran's burning gaze.

After hesitating for a long time, Jiang Ruyi finally spoke, "... hmm..."

Lu Ran kissed her directly.

Jiang Ruyi's face grew redder, realizing she was being lifted.

It was her first time entering the main bedroom of this house, just not in the way she had expected.

Inside the main bedroom, everything had been tidied up.

The sheets and bedding were all changed to new ones, and the wedding photo above the bed had also been stowed away in the wardrobe of the small bedroom by Lu Ran.

Lu Ran had plenty of tricks up his sleeve.

He had been prepared for this day; this home should have its mistress now.

This morning, in the elevator, Lu Ran had told Jiang Ruyi that there was something different about her today.

His speech had been interrupted by the opening elevator doors.

What Lu Ran wanted to say was that she had been somewhat proactive, after all, this visit was orchestrated by her.

They had already committed to each other, and now with both families' approval, Lu Ran didn't need to hold back anything.

About being proactive, he didn't want to fall behind.

Lu Ran placed his girlfriend on the bed and supported himself with his hands on either side of her body, lowering his head to look at her blushing, beautiful face:

"Let's not leave today."

Jiang Ruyi turned her head to one side and closed her eyes, remaining silent.

Lu Ran turned and went back to the door, closing the bedroom door.

Just right, the Calico was standing at the door, curiously poking its head around.

"Click."

"Meow~Meow~Meow~Meow!"

Outside, the Calico's grumbling voice could be heard.

...

Chapter 298: joy, sorrow

In the early hours before dawn, the sky began to show its first light.

Inside the master bedroom of Lu Ran's house, on the large bed, Jiang Ruyi quietly opened her eyes.

She looked at the ceiling, slightly dazed.

Where is this...

Oh, this is Lu Ran's home.

A flush of red colored Jiang Ruyi's fair cheeks.

She turned her head slightly and saw the person beside her.

In her eyes was a face deep in slumber.

By her ear, his long and rhythmic breathing sound gave her a sense of great comfort.

Jiang Ruyi's eyes held a touch of shyness and a sliver of joy as she quietly watched the annoying fellow.

As she watched him, memories began to surface in her eyes, recalling the journey they had taken together.

The first meeting between the boy and the girl at the start of high school, the names written down on paper.

Under the setting sun, the two of them walked home together, their shadows elongated by the evening glow.

By the banks of the Wu Lie River, she secretly followed him and discovered his secret training ground for the first time.

On the rooftop, they prepared for the martial arts exam, blades and swords clashing;

Panting, they leaned against the railings, watching the rushing waters of the Wu Lie River, speaking laughable yet ambitious words of changing the world.

"Meow~"

A sudden cat's meow snapped Jiang Ruyi out of her reverie.

She pursed her lips, unable to resist any longer, and tentatively leaned forward to plant a light kiss on Lu Ran's lips.

Finally.

"Mmm..." Lu Ran was sleeping soundly and uttered a vague noise.

Jiang Ruyi's heart tightened and she dared not move.

A few seconds later, realizing he hadn't awakened, she breathed a sigh of relief.

Jiang Ruyi quietly got up, lazily running her fingers through her long hair.

The slightly messy master bedroom, the clothes scattered on the floor, all signified something.

Jiang Ruyi's lazy demeanor vanished without a trace, her cheeks reddening even more.

She extended her long legs to the edge of the bed, her fair feet tiptoeing on the floor, in search of her slippers.

"Meow~" Through the door, the little tabby cat looked up at the doorknob, seemingly recalling its unique skills.

Just as it was about to execute its plan, the room door suddenly opened.

"Click."

The woman of the house emerged from the bedroom, not quite fitting into the oversized white short-sleeved shirt, and looked down at the little creature.

"Hush." Jiang Ruyi carefully closed the door, lifting a slender finger to her lips.

"Meow?" The little tabby tilted its head, round eyes full of confusion.

Jiang Ruyi bent over to pick up the tabby and hugged it to her chest, rubbing its little head as she walked towards the bathroom.

It wasn't until half an hour later that Lu Ran in the master bedroom finally opened his eyes, groggy.

"Uh..."

It took Lu Ran a while to come to his senses and realize where he was.

He reached out to the side, only to find emptiness, with just a faint scent of jasmine lingering in his nose.

Memories gradually surfaced.

The battle had started yesterday afternoon.

First this, then that.

And then this and that...

Both of them being strong cultivators with youthful vigor, naturally, they had a long tussle before calling a truce.

What Lu Ran didn't expect was that he had actually slept until daylight?

"Good fellow~" Lu Ran sat up, realizing the seriousness of the situation.

Where's Ruyi?

Had she woken up?

She actually woke up before me?

Lu Ran scratched his head, feeling somewhat embarrassed.

Ah... blame it on the Yan Zhi!

During their recent trial, the two had been slaughtering their way through Yan Zhi Village.

Jiang Ruyi only needed to swing the White Jade Token.

Whereas Lu Ran had to shuttle back and forth, cleaving with his swords – after a battle, the physical toll was clearly greater on him!

After a half-month of rigorous trials, Lu Ran was both physically and mentally exhausted, which was why he had slept until now.

That's it,

Blame it on the Yan Zhi.

Content with his excuse, Lu Ran got out of bed and found only his shorts; no sign of his shirt.

He put on his shorts and exited the master bedroom, following sounds to the kitchen.

"Meow~" The little tabby cat was at the dining table, eagerly nibbling on a small plate of luncheon meat.

Jiang Ruyi stood at the counter, apparently chopping meat.

On her, Lu Ran spotted his shirt; her black hair still damp, implying a recent shower.

The oversized shirt hid her denim hot pants, creating an illusion.

Below the hem of the shirt, her fair, long legs were truly a sight that dumbfounded Lu Ran.

No!

Is it okay for me to look at this?

Oh... right, she's my girlfriend, so no problem there.

"Finally awake?" Jiang Ruyi turned and saw Lu Ran's dumbfounded expression.

Lu Ran: "..."

What kind of remark was that!

"Go put on your shirt," Jiang Ruyi turned her head away.

"I've prepared a bathrobe for you, it's hanging in the bathroom," said Lu Ran.

"I saw it, and the new toothbrush too," Jiang Ruyi looked slightly bemused, "When did you prepare all this?"

So, this annoying guy had been planning all along?

Lu Ran shrugged his shoulders: "At midnight, I woke up hungry, and while I was at it, I prepared them for you."

Jiang Ruyi gave Lu Ran a teasing glance and laughed: "I'll make a dish, just a moment."

Lu Ran stepped forward: "I'm good with a knife, let me do it."

"You should go put on your clothes... mmm." Jiang Ruyi closed her eyes as Lu Ran wrapped his arms around her and began to play.

She couldn't remember how many times he had interrupted her mid-sentence.

He seemed to like doing this.

After a while, Jiang Ruyi gently pushed Lu Ran away, panting softly, and whispered, "Go on."

"Hmm." Lu Ran pursed his lips, satisfied, and left the kitchen.

Jiang Ruyi turned around, placed her hands on the kitchen counter, took a deep breath, and calmed her rapidly beating heart.

Such a scene seemed too perfect.

That was the problem.

The essence of this world was not so.

The misery of beings was far from beautiful.

Once Jiang Ruyi assured herself that all this had indeed happened, she began to worry about the future.

As the saying goes: extremes meet, and fortune breeds disaster.

This world never concealed its cruel face.

Could it possibly tolerate us?

"Ruyi?" Lu Ran's voice came from behind her.

"Hmm?" Jiang Ruyi suddenly returned to reality, turning to look.

She saw Lu Ran, fresh from the shower, wearing a clean and breezy white T-shirt, his smile sunny, standing behind her.

"What's wrong?" Lu Ran's smile faded as he sensed something amiss.

His expression showed concern as he looked at the untouched beef on the chopping board: "Lost in thought for so long?"

"I..."

"Hmm?"

"I'm fine." Jiang Ruyi looked down slightly, not wanting to spoil the mood with any concerns.

Yet the worries in her heart were hard to hide.

Just the thought of Lu Ran leaving soon to make a pilgrimage to the distant southwest filled Jiang Ruyi with sadness.

Jiang Ruyi realized she had changed.

Once calm and composed, she now fretted and felt unsettled.

"What about my knife skills?"

Lu Ran took the knife from her hand, trying to lighten the atmosphere, approaching the matter from a different angle.

What he didn't expect was for Jiang Ruyi to suddenly embrace him.

"What's really the matter?" Lu Ran asked gently, his hand softly stroking her back.

Even more unexpectedly, Jiang Ruyi blurted out two words:

"Bad person."

Lu Ran: "..."

After repeated prodding by Lu Ran, Jiang Ruyi deftly played down the matter, saying she was just feeling sad about their impending separation.

No sooner had she finished speaking than she regretted it.

She realized that she shouldn't be hindering Lu Ran's progression.

Thinking back, when she went to Jade Gate Pass for her pilgrimage, Lu Ran rarely sent messages.

It was only through Little Yuanxi that Jiang Ruyi came to know Lu Ran was afraid of disturbing her, afraid that saying too much would make her lose concentration in her cultivation or want to return home early.

With that in mind, Jiang Ruyi felt a sense of self-reproach.

As Lu Ran comforted her, Jiang Ruyi quickly adjusted her state of mind and dismissed all her jumbled thoughts.

Some ten minutes later, the dishes were served.

Stir-fried beef, tomato and eggs, and a fragrant pot of white rice.

Lu Ran was truly hungry, polishing off two bowls of rice.

Jiang Ruyi also had a good appetite, which relieved Lu Ran a great deal.

After the meal, Lu Ran washed the dishes, then escorted Jiang Ruyi home.

Since she lived in Yan Zhi Village and had the conditions to Worship God, the daily offerings were essential.

Lu Ran escorted her to her doorstep, whispered concerns until she closed the door, and then he left.

When he got home, the little tabby cat immediately rushed up to him.

Seeing that only Lu Ran had returned without the mistress, it meowed dispiritedly and ran away.

"You little ingrate!"

Lu Ran closed the door with a "bang" and clenched his right hand in mid-air.

Along with a surge of energy, a tiny Paper Mache Man appeared in his hand.

Vermilion Paper Evil Technique·Paper Mache!

Lu Ran stared intently at the little tabby cat and, with a mere thought,

the Paper Mache Man in his hand became tightly linked to the little tabby cat.

Just as the tabby cat was running into the house, its body suddenly stopped.

Because of the inertia, the stiff-limbed tabby cat slid more than a meter forward on the floor...

Lu Ran slightly raised his eyebrows, continuously impressed in his mind.

Ordinary beings, whether human or animal, really don't stand a chance against this.

"Little tabby, fortune comes your way~"

Lu Ran murmured softly, raising his right hand and carefully examining the palm-sized Paper Mache Man.

It seemed to be made of white paper, complete with head, torso, and limbs, but faceless.

Lu Ran gently touched the Paper Mache Man's left hand, with a light touch and careful movement.

Not far away, the stiff-limbed little tabby's left foreleg twitched and swayed slightly.

"Hmm..." Lu Ran nodded to himself.

As expected, there was no significant "delay" when dealing with ordinary beings.

Against an Evil Demon, however, this trick wouldn't work.

The Evil Technique·Paper Mache was extraordinary yet flawed.

If you crushed the Paper Mache Man swiftly, the strong foe would break free from control and remain unscathed.

You needed to crumple the Paper Mache Man bit by bit, inch by inch, so that the misfortune befalling it could be perfectly replicated on the strong enemy.

The underlying reason was the issue of mental strength!

Indeed, executing this technique required not only energy.

The reason why the Paper Mache Man could so strongly bind to the enemy's physical body was due to the caster's spiritual power!

The higher your level of strength and mental intensity, the tighter the Paper Mache Man would bind to the target.

Likewise, the higher the enemy's mental strength, the harder they are to manipulate.

"Go then." Lu Ran thought, and the Paper Mache Man in his hand was no longer tightly connected to the little tabby cat.

Now able to move, the tabby immediately turned its head towards Lu Ran, clearly knowing who was up to mischief.

"Meow! Meow meow~ Meow! Meow!!"

Lu Ran: "..."

Chapter 299: The Last Target

For Lu Ran, the past week had flown by incredibly swiftly.

He even had the illusion that time was hastening.

After much contemplation, Lu Ran concluded: perhaps it was because he was too happy, too joyful.

The logic was simple and easy to understand.

The forty-five minutes of class time were sheer torment.

But browsing on the phone, playing games, time blinked away overnight...

During this time, Lu Ran and Jiang Ruyi trained together, dined together, and practiced martial arts together on the rooftop of the Wu Lie River neighborhood.

Under the intensive training of a great master, Jiang Ruyi's close-combat survival skills had significantly improved.

As a top student, Jiang Ruyi naturally was not lacking in martial skills.

Adding the master's guidance and her own "Defense Skill-Golden Jade Eight Talismans"...

Even Lu Ran had to put in considerable effort to break through her defense.

Alas, the joyful times were always short-lived.

The fifteenth day of the fifth lunar month had eventually arrived.

In the dimness of the early morning, in the master bedroom, Lu Ran slowly opened his eyes.

He turned his head slightly and saw Jiang Ruyi, who was fast asleep on her side.

She was sleeping deeply, with one hand on Lu Ran's arm, clutching it lightly.

Sunlight filtered through the beautifully patterned curtains, casting both light and shadow on her face.

Lu Ran carefully reached out his hand and gently pried her slender jade fingers from his arm.

After some effort, Lu Ran managed to get up and quietly slipped out of the room.

"Phew..."

Lu Ran stood outside the door, took a deep breath, and stretched lazily.

He first went to the small bedroom, bowed respectfully to the deity, and then headed straight to the bathroom.

After his shower, Lu Ran glanced at the time and then headed towards the kitchen.

Undeniably, Jiang Ruyi's arrival had changed him somewhat.

Lu Ran, who had always lived alone, had never used his kitchen, always settling for simple meals.

But lately, he had started learning to cook.

Well... half was learned from Jiang Ruyi, and the other half from his phone.

Technically, frying an egg or cooking plain porridge wasn't complicated.

Only for stir-frying did he need to look up the steps on his phone.

"Pray that heaven spares a couple in love, hoping what's feared never comes to pass..."

Lu Ran hummed softly, slicing the pork into thin pieces.

He was quite confident in his knife skills.

In no time, Lu Ran looked satisfied with his creation and picked up the mushrooms nearby, cutting them in half:

"Pray to the Heavens to be kind for ten minutes, bestow her kiss upon me, as if pitying a sinner...
Hmm?"

Lu Ran suddenly closed his eyes, slightly tilted his head as if he heard something.

Shortly after, a tall figure appeared at the kitchen doorway.

Jiang Ruyi stood silently, watching Lu Ran busying himself at the counter.

The sunlight streaming through the windows cast a light glow on his white T-shirt.

"Finally awake?" Lu Ran didn't turn his head, a comment slipping out.

Jiang Ruyi couldn't help but laugh, leaning her shoulder against the door frame, "You hold grudges well."

"I'm just joking." Lu Ran smiled and turned to face her, "Go freshen up."

Since you're awake, I've started cooking."

However, Lu Ran noticed that Jiang Ruyi looked sleepy, as if she hadn't fully woken up.

"We agreed yesterday that I would make breakfast." Jiang Ruyi complained, stepping into the kitchen.

"Whoever wakes up first makes it," Lu Ran remarked indifferently.

Jiang Ruyi moved behind Lu Ran, leaned forward, resting her cheek against his shoulder:

"Yours isn't tasty."

Lu Ran: ???

Is that even a thing to say?

"Ha ha~" Jiang Ruyi couldn't help but giggle, closing her eyes.

Lu Ran huffed, "Be careful what you say, I'm holding a knife here."

Jiang Ruyi then fell silent.

Lu Ran nudged his shoulder, signaling the person behind him, "Hey, wake up! Or maybe you should go back to sleep?"

Jiang Ruyi suddenly said, "After the exams, I won't come over anymore."

"Why, you don't like the food I make that much?"

Jiang Ruyi gently rubbed her cheek against Lu Ran's shoulder, "With the city lockdown, it's not good for me to keep coming and going.

Tomorrow morning, I'll come back with you one more time to take little Calico back."

City lockdown?

Ordinary people indeed need to stay at home and not step out.

But for Lu Ran and Jiang, such rules were virtually negligible.

Lu Ran was silent for a while before asking, "Not even coming on the nineteenth to see me off?"

"Meow~" Out of nowhere, little Calico came to Jiang Ruyi's feet, rubbing its fluffy little head against her ankle.

"You're awake too." Jiang Ruyi didn't respond to Lu Ran but bent down to look at the little one at her feet.

"Meow~" Little Calico hummed softly.

Jiang Ruyi leaned down, picked up little Calico, and walked out of the kitchen.

Lu Ran turned and watched Jiang Ruyi's departing figure.

He could indeed sense Jiang Ruyi's increasingly complex emotions these past days.

Perhaps, she feared becoming too attached, afraid to entangle herself?

Lu Ran shook his head with a smile, turned back to the frying pan, and tossed in the meat slices.

"Sizzle~~~"

How could it not be delicious?

Before each dish is served, I always sneak a few bites~

....

At 7:30 AM, Lu Ran and Jiang, fully equipped, left the house.

The weather in Rain Alley City was exceptionally clear and sunny today.

Perhaps they would see a full moon tonight.

Familiar with the route, they walked through desolate areas, hurrying to the campus.

It had been a long time since a large notice had been posted at the entrance of the campus.

On the fifteenth of the previous month, Rain Alley City had faced the descent of a Demon Lord, so there was no need for rankings.

All surviving students had received perfect scores.

If not for today's special circumstances, being the day of the grand exam, many students would likely have been confined at home for the night.

Once Lu Ran and Jiang entered the campus, they immediately became the center of attention.

Teachers, students, and Moon Gazers all stared at these two Heaven's Chosen.

"Wow, Ran Dog!"

"Bro, you are truly bold! I thought you were typing at home. You should keep it down, what if he hears you?"

"Oh my! Lady Jiang is really beautiful..."

"Go for it, friend, I support you! Go and have a fierce duel with Ran!"

"Right! Take down Lu Ran, and you'll be third on Da Xia's list!"

Among the murmurs, Lu Ran and Jiang, with heads down, quickly made their way to their usual spot.

It was exactly one year ago that Lu Ran had been punished here, forced to stand and set up a stall.

The trio, Deng Tianchang, immediately came over to greet them.

"Sister Ruyi!" Tian Tian rushed forward and grabbed Jiang Ruyi's arm.

"Congratulations on advancing to the River Realm Second Rank." Jiang Ruyi smiled and patted Tian Tian's little head.

Just a week ago, the small team had shared cold drinks, at which time Tian Tian was still at River Realm·First Rank.

According to Tian Tian, right after everyone dispersed that day, she had launched into upgrade mode as soon as she got home.

Lu Ran raised his fist and bumped it against Deng Yutang and Chang Ying's fists, "How about you guys, did you advance?"

Deng Yutang's smile froze for a moment, awkwardly saying, "Soon, soon."

It had been nearly three and a half months since Deng Yutang had advanced to River Realm·First Rank, which indeed was a bit long.

Chang Ying couldn't stop smiling, giving Lu Ran a thumbs up.

"Oh?" Lu Ran's eyes lit up.

Back then, Chang Ying had been stuck at Stream Realm·Fifth Rank, advancing to the River Realm a few days later than Deng Yutang.

Now, she had unexpectedly moved ahead, advancing first?

There truly was a gap in talent between a fourth rank believer and a fifth rank believer.

Chang Ying leaned forward slightly, covering her mouth with a hand, and whispered, "I did just as you taught me, worshipping non-stop at home!

Day and night, fruits and candles and all..."

Lu Ran: "..."

Did I teach you that?

Well... more or less.

"Ran treasure." Chang Ying, curious, suddenly said, "Did you get handsomer?"

Lu Ran: "Ah?"

Chang Ying nodded seriously, scrutinizing Lu Ran, "You look so sunny.

That chilly vibe is all gone."

Lu Ran couldn't help but laugh, "Wait until tonight, I'll kill a few Evil Demons, and then I'll change back."

Beside him, Jiang Ruyi stole a glance at Lu Ran.

Indeed, Lu Ran's eyes, always cold and distant, had only warmth now, without a trace of harshness.

"Everyone assemble!!"

A male teacher's voice came from the podium.

The field was chaotic for a full several seconds before the students finally formed lines.

"Today is your college entrance exam day!" the male teacher walked back and forth on the podium, microphone in hand, "And also the hundred-point scale final exam!"

Lu Ran was uninterested in listening further; his gaze searched the crowd until he spotted the class teacher at the back.

Li Yanzhu noticed Lu Ran signaling with his eyes and immediately came over.

Lu Ran whispered, "Teacher, I need to ask for leave, I can't participate in the school's June 1st task.

I have to leave after the exam."

Li Yanzhu looked puzzled, "Why?"

If it were someone else asking for leave, Li Yanzhu might think they were scared.

But Lu Ran?

He had faced off against a River Realm Evil Dog; how could he possibly be frightened?

Lu Ran explained, "I need to go on a pilgrimage.

The Divine sent a message, ordering me to listen to teachings at the foot of the Divine Sculpture."

"Oh, that's wonderful." Li Yanzhu immediately nodded, "Of course you should go!

I'll speak to the school authorities for you. You have a valid reason, so the school won't deduct any believer points from you."

"Thank you, teacher." Lu Ran smiled.

Li Yanzhu also smiled, patted Lu Ran on the shoulder, and was about to say something more, but suddenly a voice came from the podium:

"Before we proceed to the next item, I want to specially commend a student!

Class Senior 3 (4), Immortal Sheep Believer, Lu Ran!"

Lu Ran: "..."

Again?

Are you really that persistent?

Today of all days, the day of the college entrance exam, you still make me a target?

The male teacher declared loudly, "Everyone knows, Lu Ran is Da Xia's genius, ranking third on the heavenly list!

On the fifteenth of last month, Lu Ran helped the Moon Gazer forces by slaying a descended Demon Lord!"

Lu Ran could certainly feel countless eyes fixed on him.

He kept his head down, pretending to be modest.

However, with such glorious achievements, being low-key was futile.

The male teacher held up a document: "Lu Ran voluntarily requested to fight for the people of Rain Alley.

He showed the spirit of a great general and recorded remarkable military merits.

To acknowledge Lu Ran's outstanding contributions to this city, the Divine People Bureau awards Lu Ran 30 believer points."

Hearing this, Lu Ran was somewhat astounded.

On the Night of Ghosts of the Tangled Silk Shadow family, he had discussed this with Captain Sun Zhengfang.

But Uncle Sun had made it clear that Lu Ran was participating in "Heavenly Pride" and could not earn points from both sides.

But this time...

Was it because his military merits were too remarkable, the contribution too significant?

The male teacher put down the document: "Our school also awards Lu Ran 20 believer points.

Thank you for bringing honor to our alma mater and protecting our hometown."

"Good!!"

"No problem, well-deserved! Ran Shen is awesome!!"

"Applause!" Cheers erupted, and applause thundered.

Initially, when Lu Ran was made a target, students had all sorts of thoughts. Now, everyone was simply in awe!

Jiang Ruyi looked tenderly at Lu Ran, who kept his head bowed in silence.

The people living in Rain Alley indeed should be grateful to you, and no amount of applause or praise was too much for you.

You deserve it.

After a while, the field quieted down.

The male teacher continued, "Including these points, Lu Ran's score has now reached 639.6 points."

"Sss..."

"Damn!" A series of breaths were sharply drawn.

Keep in mind, the hundred-point scale final exam hadn't even started yet!

Lu Ran's college entrance exam score...

Was he aiming for 700 points now?

Chapter 300: Invitation from the Mighty

The teacher's long discourse finally ended, and with spirited applause, the oath-taking ceremony concluded.

It was time, and the team set out!

Lu Ran proceeded with his squad, and as they passed the stage, they encountered an old acquaintance—Zhang Feng.

"Brother Zhang!"

"Hello, Brother Zhang~" Several people greeted him in turn.

"Good morning." Zhang Feng smiled and nodded, his gaze sweeping over everyone before settling on Lu Ran.

Zhang Feng remembered that during the final exams of the third year of high school, Rain Alley City had encountered the Straw Demon clan's Night of Ghosts.

That night, Lu Ran had received an urgent summons from his superiors, and single-handedly defended the peace.

When Lu Ran fought until dawn and returned to the shelter, what floated behind him was a newly promoted Divine Weapon—the Dawn Blade.

Even then, Zhang Feng had held great admiration for Lu Ran.

He was sure that Lu Ran's future was boundless.

After that night, within Rain Alley City, people used four words to describe Lu Ran—peerless in Rain Alley.

Reality had indeed struck a blow to the people of Rain Alley City, including Zhang Feng.

Zhang Feng's judgment was accurate; Lu Ran indeed rose rapidly.

However, like others, Zhang Feng could never have imagined that Lu Ran could grow to such an extent!

Peerless in Rain Alley?

Too modest.

It should be renowned throughout the lands, the pride of Da Xia!

Zhang Feng looked at Lu Ran and couldn't help but sigh deeply.

It really was like a dream.

"Let's go, Brother Zhang." Lu Ran looked at the leading soldiers, lowering his voice, "Autographs and photos will have to wait until after the mission."

Zhang Feng: "..."

Do I look like some star-chasing fan?

I've been watching you grow up as your leader... Well, an autograph might be okay.

Maybe bring it back for my son, he might like it?

"Hehe~" Chang Ying couldn't help but giggle, "I want one too!"

Lu Ran spoke irritably: "What are you fussing about?"

Lu Ran and his teammates were as close as comrades, ready to risk their lives for each other.

And you're asking for an autograph?

"Go!" Zhang Feng barked an order, leading the group of five toward the school gate.

Outside the gate, several buses were already waiting.

Lu Ran boarded the bus with his team; as he passed the third row of seats, a delicate white hand suddenly reached out and grasped Lu Ran's arm.

"Hm?" Lu Ran turned his head and saw the Caster Believer—Bai Manni.

Jiang Ruyi followed closely behind Lu Ran; her eyes were deep, and her gaze fell on the girl's palm.

Bai Manni didn't speak but just looked up at Lu Ran and shook her head slightly.

Lu Ran's good mood instantly vanished.

"Thank you." Lu Ran nodded slightly and whispered, "Take care."

A hint of sadness appeared on Bai Manni's face as she whispered back, "You too."

Like Chang Ying, Bai Manni had long become one of Lu Ran's advisors.

Every fifteenth morning, Lu Ran always had Chang Ying calculate a divination and would also ask if Bai Manni felt uneasy.

Compared to Chang's divinations, Bai the Caster's predictions were more accurate.

After all, hers were not based on calculations.

A powerful divination Believer could achieve accurate predictions in nine out of ten cases, naturally with one exception!

But a Caster Believer was different; they didn't deal with probabilities but genuine premonitions of crises.

Bai Manni's sad expression was because this graduation exam was different from the usual nights defending the city.

The students were no longer organized by class to defend a single shelter.

Instead, they would be deployed in small teams across various locations in Rain Alley City.

In other words, Bai Manni's team might not be together with Lu Ran's team.

Except for the very few still in the Mist Realm, students of the Stream Realm or higher were not allowed to stay inside the shelters but had to carry out tasks outside the buildings.

This was indeed worrisome.

For the Believer students, the person comes first, and then the examinee.

Scores are indeed important, but life is even more so!

And the words "Lu Ran" were a golden sign of safety.

For most, these two words brought far more reassurance than the three words "Moon Gazer."

"Jiang," Bai Manni seemed to have noticed something and immediately addressed her.

It wasn't hard to see that she meant to please, perhaps worried that Jiang Ruyi might misunderstand.

Though not one of the Heavenly Pride, Jiang Ruyi was as impressive as one.

Her aura was invisible yet clearly felt by all those around.

"Hmm." Jiang Ruyi was quite magnanimous; as she passed by, she patted Bai Manni on the shoulder, "Take care."

As the students took their seats, the vehicles started moving eastward.

There were only five teams from class three-year-four, just over twenty people.

After arriving in Hedong, the bus stopped twice, and three leaders took their respective teams off the bus in groups.

On the bus, only Lu Ran's team and Bai Manni's team were left.

"Will we be with Brother Ran?" Qian Hao gripped his chubby hands and nervously looked out at the street scene from the window.

He was afraid the bus might stop again.

"Where is this..." Bai Manni realized the vehicle was heading towards the city center.

Under the blue sky and white clouds, the towering Wu Lie Building was getting closer and closer.

Qian Hao scratched his head, looking towards the team leader: "They wouldn't assign us to guard the headquarters, would they?"

Bai Manni's eyes lit up.

The Wu Lie Building, as the location of the command center, had extremely strong security forces!

If their team could take the exam here, safety would naturally be much higher.

Furthermore, at the very top of the Wu Lie Building, there was a Human Clan Great Power stationed!

Though the Great Power wouldn't easily make a move, they would definitely act in the case of a special event.

Beneath Bai Manni's prayers, the vehicle indeed stopped at the entrance of the Wu Lie Building.

"Let's go, off the bus!"

The two team leaders stood up simultaneously, making Qian Hao beam joyfully and jump up: "Haha!"

This action also amused the two Moon Gazer team leaders.

Of course, they knew what the students were thinking.

And since the chubby boy was naturally funny, the two Moon Gazers didn't scold him.

However, after getting off the bus, Qian Hao's face fell.

The female leader took them to the west side of the Wu Lie Building.

Zhang Feng, on the other hand, led Lu Ran and the others straight to the main entrance, the north door.

The area in front of the main entrance was a huge plaza, offering an expansive view.

The bustling commercial street was built around the plaza.

It wasn't hard to imagine what kind of neon-lit urban nightscape it would present in the evening.

"Brother Zhang." Deng Yutang looked at the revolving doors of the Wu Lie Building, "Will we be guarding this door tonight?"

Including the main entrance, soldiers could be seen standing guard all around the building.

The Wu Lie Building was undoubtedly a critical location!

Even on ordinary days, most floors inside the building were off-limits.

Around the fifteenth of the lunar month, the area was even more tightly guarded.

Did they need a student team here?

Zhang Feng thought for a moment and raised his hand pointing ahead: "There."

The few followed where he was pointing and saw the vast plaza.

Tian Tian opened her mouth slightly: "They want us to guard the plaza?"

The central plaza, with an extremely open view, was also a hub of convergence from all directions.

The team standing in the open plaza, the approaching Evil Demons from the surrounding areas, would be immediately visible.

Weren't they just making targets out of them?

Zhang Feng spoke: "We will be stationed in the area in front of the door."

If any Evil Demons appear on the plaza, we will naturally go to clear them."

Deng Yutang weighed the Heavenly Star Spear in his hand: "With this, it's impossible not to score highly."

Everyone: "..."

"Brother Lu, I remember, wasn't it here that you slaughtered the Demon Lord?" Deng Yutang raised his spear towards the eastern area of the plaza.

"Exactly, exactly!" Chang Ying nodded repeatedly, "It was there, where Ranbao's blade swung down and the evil dog's head flew so high!"

Lu Ran's first-person perspective couldn't see the full scope of the battlefield.

But this was the city center, surrounded by cameras, presenting Lu Ran's battle to the world in all directions, without blind spots.

"Such a pity." Lu Ran sighed, "The Demon Crystal from the River Realm Evil Dog was claimed by the Moon Gazers.

If I could have brought it back, it would have helped you break through and advance."

Zhang Feng: "..."

The teammates just smiled warmly, knowing how fortunate it was to be with Lu Ran.

They knew Lu Ran well, and knew he was sincere when he said he would have given it to them.

"Little Lu, you want that Jiang-grade Demon Crystal?" Suddenly, a middle-aged man's voice came from behind.

Everyone turned, and Zhang Feng instantly stood at attention and saluted.

Ge Bin, however, gestured with his hand for them not to be too formal as his eyes scanned the young people.

"Team Leader Ge." Lu Ran smiled sheepishly, "I was just saying that, I know the rules."

He said so, considering himself a part of patrol team number 004.

The others stood properly, not daring to make a sound.

Ge Bin was of average build and ordinary appearance, appearing unremarkable.

But he had been featured in Lu Ran's camera, and everyone knew this man was a Jiang Realm Great Power, the stabilizing force of Rain Alley!

Ge Bin nodded: "Come up for a chat?"

"Ah?" Lu Ran was a bit startled.

Lu Ran considered himself a team member, but Ge Bin didn't treat Lu Ran as a subordinate.

Ge Bin smiled and asked, "Do you have time?"

"Yes." Lu Ran immediately agreed.

It was morning, and night was still far off, so Lu Ran certainly had time.

Moreover, with a Human Clan Great Power personally coming down to invite him, Lu Ran couldn't well refuse.

Ge Bin looked at Jiang Ruyi and said, "Come along."

"Alright." Jiang Ruyi nodded gently. Since returning from a pilgrimage, she accompanied the patrol team on their missions every fifteenth.

She was like half a team member.

Ge Bin nodded towards Zhang Feng, not as severe as one might expect, and smiled: "I'll take your folks away for a bit, I'll return them later."

"Yes!" Zhang Feng's spine was straight, his voice loud.

Putting aside Ge Bin's identity as a human clan great power, he was the deputy leader of the Yunshan City Divine People Bureau—Moon Gazer subdivision.

Zhang Feng, meanwhile, was a member of the Rain Alley City Divine People Bureau—Moon Gazer division.

The two had a proper superior-subordinate relationship.

"Let's go." Ge Bin turned towards the revolving door and made a hand signal to the soldiers standing by the door, indicating they were allowed to pass.

Lu Ran let his right hand hang naturally, gently swinging his fingers.

Jiang Ruyi glanced at him almost imperceptibly.

Still, she reached out her hand, allowing Lu Ran to lead her into the landmark building of Rain Alley City—the Wu Lie Building.