

Old Gods 371

Chapter 371: The Emperor of the Serpent's Bane

"Whooosh~~~"

Wisps of Immortal Fog suddenly appeared around the Jade-faced Snake.

Evil Technique·Immortal Realm!

The Jade-faced Snake, while still cautious of Yan Zhi, readied her defenses and immediately activated the Purification Skill.

At that moment, the paper figurines in Yan Zhi's hands could no longer interfere with the Jade-faced Snake.

A hint of irritation in Lu Ran's heart had turned into secret joy.

The Jade-faced Snake, though seemingly aloof and looking down on all, had clear thoughts and acted cautiously.

A phrase surfaced in Lu Ran's mind:

"Contempt for the enemy strategically, respect for the enemy tactically!"

Good!

Worthy of being the arch-nemesis of a First-class God!

Worthy of being a being that could match the Evil Spear Emperor in terms of wits!

Such an Evil Demon, if under his command, would be fit to lead the Servant Squad.

"Swoosh~"

Lu Ran's figure quietly vanished, Eight Desolate Annihilation in hand, as he appeared abruptly behind the Jade-faced Snake.

A crisp "ding" sound.

Lu Ran had been fast enough, yet his curved sword still stabbed into the snake's tail!

"Oh?" Lu Ran's eyebrows slightly rose.

Truly a River Realm Demon Monarch!

The Ran Sect Blade Technique Third Form·Shuo Star actually blocked?

Always before, the body of the Jade-faced Snake, with her tail in a spiral, wrapped around her upper half.

And just as Lu Ran vanished, the coiled snake tail suddenly tightened, causing him to return without success.

Swoosh~

Lu Ran's figure disappeared again.

The next moment, a thick snake tail swept across with incredible force!

"Smack! Smack! Smack!"

At least sixteen thick, white-scaled snake tails went crazy.

A large number of trees were broken off, and the ground buzzed and trembled.

The Jade-faced Snake's crawling speed was also not to be underestimated.

Temporarily unable to find Lu Ran, she went straight for the annoying Yan Zhi.

"Errr..."

Yan Zhi let out a low moan, eyes filled with indignation.

But there was a difference in realm after all.

Even though Yan Zhi's aura was not inferior, she was but River Realm·Fifth Rank, how could she contend with a River Realm Demon Monarch?

Another point made Yan Zhi restrained.

Over the past half month, Lu Ran had trained her not to fly high, lest her identity be exposed.

Therefore, Yan Zhi could only flee backwards through the woods, dodging the Jade-faced Snake's pursuit.

"Hiss."

The hissing of the Jade-faced Snake was also shallow, seemingly indifferent, but her movements were not slow!

She crawled forward at high speed, several snake tails clearing the path, leveling the mountains and forests in front of her.

Several other tails whipped viciously at Yan Zhi.

Yan Zhi fled backward quickly, dodging left and right with exceptional agility.

But the white-scaled snake tails were even more agile!

"Smack!" A tail brushed past the expensive phoenix crown, shattering a nearby tree trunk.

Yan Zhi was both shocked and furious!

Seeing another snake tail attacking and having no way to avoid it, Yan Zhi flung her robe forward.

Vermilion Paper Evil Technique·Red Wedding Dress!

"Crack!!"

The tip of the snake tail swept the hem of the robe, emitting a harsh shattering sound.

Yan Zhi still wore the Big Red Robe, but from the level of Evil Techniques, the defensive garment had already shattered!

Yan Zhi's expression changed drastically!

In her view, a thick snake tail attacked like a giant spear.

At the same time, in the nearby woods.

Lu Ran reached out toward the side, a small ancient bronze mirror hovering in front of his palm.

The next moment, the oval-shaped mirror transformed into a large, standing mirror.

Evil Technique·Mirror Flower Moon!

Simultaneously, another standing mirror appeared in the woods, hanging on the path of Yan Zhi's backward flight.

"Whoosh!"

Yan Zhi flew backward into the mirror and also emerged from the standing mirror beside Lu Ran.

The Big Red Robe flattered in the wind.

Yan Zhi's floral beauty faded.

The scene was somewhat tragic, yet Lu Ran had no time to appreciate it.

Because in the mirror, the thick snake tail also followed through!

The standing mirror wasn't particularly large, barely three to two meters in length and width.

How could it possibly allow the passage of a bulky snake tail?

The fact... proved it could!

The standing mirror was forcibly expanded!

The thick white-scaled snake tail managed to squeeze through, transforming the rectangular mirror into a large round one...

How to describe that scene?

Well... um, must be sliced!

"Zzzt!"

A sweep of rosy clouds passed by, and Lu Ran finally wielded the Divine Weapon, cutting off a snake tail in an instant.

"Hiss!!"

A shrill scream came from afar as the Jade-faced Snake cried out.

At this strike, the snake tail became docile,

Quickly retracting back,

Leaving only a neatly severed section of snake body on the ground, which then disintegrated into mist.

The gap between the Divine Weapon and ordinary blades was glaringly obvious.

Before, the Eight Desolate Blade couldn't penetrate the scales,

But the Dawn Blade directly severed the snake body!

"Hmm..."

Ten or so meters away, Yan Zhi's backward momentum slowed.

Having escaped from the brink of death, she looked towards the young emperor holding the Dawn Blade.

For a moment, Yan Zhi's eyes were full of emotion, tender as water.

Even her paper-white complexion blushed slightly.

Lu Ran paid no attention to Yan Zhi, his focus was all on the Jade-faced Snake.

He dispersed the standing mirror, looking interestingly at the Jade-faced Snake from afar.

The once lofty White Snake Immortal had finally changed color.

Her pair of eyes was no longer cold and indifferent but filled with indignation as she stared at Lu Ran from a distance.

"Heh."

Lu Ran grinned, weighing the Dawn Blade in his hand.

Ancient ancestors slew snakes,

Today, as a descendant, I shall emulate my predecessors!

It's only right for someone wearing this Black Gold Emperor Robe.

Lu Ran, brandishing the Dawn Blade, rode a black cloud straight towards the Jade-faced Snake!

He seemed to have no regard for the wildly flailing hefty snake tails.

"Hiss!!"

The Jade-faced Snake's voice was sharp, spitting serpentine sounds.

The white-scaled tail whipped fiercely.

The Dawn Blade immediately cleaved down!

The thick snake tail fell to the ground, its cross-section smooth, blood gushing forth and then breaking into mist.

Lu Ran's pupils were cold as he continued to soar!

Multiple snake tails flailed about, seemingly fierce and imposing.

Yet, wherever Lu Ran passed with the Dawn Blade, section after section of snake tails were cleanly severed.

"Hiss..."

The Jade-faced Snake was in excruciating pain, its normally icy visage twisting somewhat.

Lu Ran's black gold Emperor Robe fluttered as he advanced with sword in hand.

He looked at the Jade-faced Snake's frightened eyes, whispering softly,

"I still prefer you when you're high and mighty."

"Hiss!!"

A piercing luster suddenly burst from the Jade-faced Snake.

"Hm?" Lu Ran's body leaned back as the black cloud beneath his feet came to a sudden halt.

Is the Jade-faced Snake... about to evolve?

In Lu Ran's mind, even the background music of Digimon was playing!

He covered his face with one hand, squinting through his fingers, and through the brilliant light, he saw a humongous python soaring out!

This was the Jade-faced Snake clan's ultimate move!

Jiang Grade Evil Technique·White-Scaled Immortal Heavenly Python!

The Jade-faced Snake finally revealed its true form, no longer possessing the upper half of a human body, its entire being transformed into a massive python.

It was incredibly impressive in stature, spanning over a hundred meters in length!

"Well played~"

Lu Ran's mouth hung open slightly as he looked up at the White-Scaled Immortal Heavenly Python coiling through the sky.

Its eyes burned crimson as its robust serpent body was covered in minute white scales.

Every scale shone like polished white jade, exuding a beautiful luster.

If one were to capture this as a mount...

Wouldn't it be a splendid way to die?

"Hiss!!!"

The White-Scaled Immortal Heavenly Python hovered high above, opening its huge jaws to spray a stream of Immortal Breath below.

Evil Technique·Immortal Breath!

Suddenly, a red robe swept over, covering the sky above Lu Ran.

Yan Zhi swiftly flew over, her big red robe fluttering, attempting to protect Lu Ran.

"River Grade won't do," Lu Ran remarked offhandedly as he changed outfits with the push of a button.

His black gold Emperor Robe abruptly transformed into a big red robe.

Although it was not the attire of a bridegroom,

Lu Ran's and Yan Zhi's outfits could now be considered a matching couple set...

Lu Ran raised his right hand, and the ornately patterned sleeve suddenly expanded.

Evil Technique·Yan Paper Sleeve!

"Stop casting," Lu Ran ordered.

Yan Zhi stood beside Lu Ran and promptly withdrew the trailing end of her robe.

The Immortal Breath that was being sprayed from above was all drawn into the sleeve by Lu Ran's hand.

Yan Zhi watched for a moment, then she too raised her right hand, her sleeve expanding in size.

In her movements, she stole a glance at Lu Ran and slightly curled her lips.

Lu Ran: "..."

No!

Me! You... sigh...

Who could have imagined that the horrifying Yan Zhi in the eyes of the world was actually lovestruck?

No, a new servant was required.

Well... never mind.

It was already the seventh of November, with only two days left until the end of the trial, so let it be for now.

"Ouch!" Yan Zhi suddenly cried out in pain.

Lu Ran decisively pressed down her arm, "You have the River Grade Yan Paper Sleeve; you can't withstand it."

Yan Zhi bowed submissively, placing her hands together over her abdomen.

Like a docile little wife.

If anyone were to see this, their eyeballs might pop out!

A few meters around Lu Ran was considered a safe area.

But this entire mountain forest had been thoroughly devastated.

Wherever the Immortal Breath passed, flowers and grass were shredded, trees rapidly withered.

Even the ground itself was being dissolved along with everything else.

"Are we not done yet?" Lu Ran didn't look too pleased.

The Jade-faced Snake had been attacking without success yet didn't change tactics.

It just hovered in the sky, blowing Immortal Breath at Lu Ran.

It seemed the Jade-faced Snake was quite wary of Lu Ran and did not wish to come down.

"Fine, then just stay up there."

Lu Ran raised his right hand high, holding the expanded Yan Paper Sleeve.

With his left hand to the side, he clenched his fist and the Dawn Blade swiftly flew over, the hilt landing in its master's palm.

"Hum!"

The Dawn Blade quivered slightly.

Strands of rosy light emerged like ribbons of Chaos Sky Silk, dancing softly from the tip of the blade.

They meandered outside the absorbing range of the Yan Paper Sleeve, then spiraled up to the sky.

"Hiss!"

The White-Scaled Immortal Heavenly Python hissed angrily, increasing the intensity of its breath as if to extinguish the rosy light.

But it miscalculated.

As soon as the Immortal Breath touched the rosy light, it was completely consumed by the flames!

The White-Scaled Immortal Heavenly Python's eyes shifted, its body thrashing restlessly as its pupils nearly reduced to a vertical slit!

The "Chaos Sky Silk" had already struck, entwining around the python's body.

"Hiss! Hiss..."

The White Jade Immortal Heavenly Python, heedless of its noble stature, turned its head to flee, but it could not outspeed the rosy light!

In an instant, there were piercing screams that echoed through the sky.

The incredibly hard scales were being burned away, inch by inch.

The enormous python contorted its body in agony, crying out in pain, its body wrapped in brilliantly shining brocade, plunging headlong into the forest.

"Boom!"

The earth trembled, trees toppled.

Lu Ran lowered his raised right hand as an Ancient Bronze Mirror emerged once more.

With a thought, the image within the mirror shifted rapidly, locking onto the target area.

The Connection Mirror quietly expanded, transforming into a freestanding mirror.

Lu Ran stepped into it, the dust and dirt swirling in the air, obscuring vision.

He closed his eyes and listened intently.

"Hiss..."

The Jade-faced Snake lay limply on the ground, her eyes vacant, spitting out fresh blood.

By now, she was no longer the grandiose heavenly python of great stature.

By shrinking back to her half-human, half-snake form, she managed to break free from the entanglement.

But her body still bore the scorched scars, charred and bloody.

"Hiss!" The Jade-faced Snake suddenly widened her eyes in shock.

That human youth in the black gold Emperor Robe, unbeknownst to her, was now standing in front of her.

He did not move.

But a sharp Tang sword plunged down swiftly, nailing into her skull.

The Jade-faced Snake's head went blank, and by the time she came to her senses, she had turned into a Dead Soul, floating away from the body.

However,

That insignificant and lowly human still wouldn't let her go.

"Hiss! Hiss!!"

The Jade-faced Snake was livid with rage, reaching for Lu Ran's neck with one hand.

Lu Ran still did not move but silently watched her.

The soul of the River Realm Demon Monarch was continuously drawn in, merging into his cold, horizontal pupils.

Compared to the Evil Spear Emperor,

You, still lack a bit of finesse.

Lu Ran casually lifted his hand, the Silent Night Blade that had pierced through the enemy's head automatically took flight, slowly returning to its sheath.

"Hum!!"

Lu Ran's mind buzzed.

Inside the God Demon Sculpture Garden, the Jade-faced Snake Evil Sculpture absorbed the monarch's Lost Soul and then began to quiver!

Chapter 372: Chui Si Immortal

The drifting dust slowly dispersed, and Lu Ran stood quietly on the battlefield.

Not far away, Yan Zhi looked at Lu Ran's figure with increasingly fervent eyes.

This was the difference between Yan Zhi and Night Charm.

Night Charm would certainly remain alert to her surroundings, searching for any approaching enemies.

But Yan Zhi...

Her eyes held only him.

Only when Lu Ran looked at her did Yan Zhi lower her gaze modestly, restraining herself somewhat.

"It's done."

Lu Ran shivered slightly and murmured to himself.

His brain no longer buzzed—the Jade-faced Snake Evil Sculpture had advanced to the next level!

River Realm-First Rank!

Lu Ran could finally create Jade-faced Snake servants.

Of course, he had been able to use various techniques of the Jade-faced Snake clan for a while, but now he had added a powerful move—the White-Scaled Immortal Sky Python!

Actually, Lu Ran was a bit puzzled, not knowing if he could transform into a giant python.

Hmm... Should he give it a try?

The River Realm·Jade-faced Snake Evil Sculpture granted Lu Ran seven Evil Techniques, namely:

Jade Ruyi, 2 Immortal Breath, 3 Immortal Realm, 4 Immortal Scales, 5 Immortal Tail, 6 Immortal Sky Python, 7 White-Scaled Immortal Sky Python.

Evil Technique·Immortal Breath allowed Lu Ran to exhale immortal Qi, producing gusts with a powerful erosive effect.

Evil Technique·Immortal Realm, a Purification Skill, enabled Lu Ran to summon wisps of mist that could purify the abnormal states within an area.

Evil Technique·Immortal Tail enabled Lu Ran to grow several ethereal snake tails which could autonomously strike at the enemy!

Evil Technique·Immortal Sky Python allowed Lu Ran to summon a giant python, either ethereal or substantial, to charge at his opponent.

The aforementioned four Evil Techniques were quite remarkable.

Firstly, Lu Ran had been after the Purification Skill-Immortal Realm.

Secondly, who wouldn't want to cleave a giant ethereal python with a single strike?

Recalling several months ago, when Lu Ran went to Wu Lie River University and battled with the Martial Monk Believer-Zhao Zhenren.

At that time, Zhao Zhenren had punched out a golden dragon!

Cool as hell!

Don't worry about how miserably Zhao Zhenren was later slain by Lu Ran.

Strength is temporal.

But coolness, that lasts a lifetime!

Now Lu Ran could do it too.

Whenever he wished, he could also blast out a 30-meter long ethereal white python!

The remaining three Evil Techniques deserved further explanation.

Evil Technique·Jade Ruyi.

This was not a Basic Technique, and whether Lu Ran had a Jade Ruyi in his hand or not, it did not interfere with his use of other Jade-faced Snake Evil Techniques.

However,

Jade Ruyi was an "amplifier for casting effects"!

With it, the immortal Qi that Lu Ran exhaled could cover a wider area, eroding entire forests.

With it, the ethereal giant python Lu Ran blasted out could become a substantial python!

The difference in strength was stark.

The last Evil Technique·Immortal Scales.

The effect of this technique was similar to that of a Golden Body that shielded the user, rendering them impervious to all attacks once activated!

Lu Ran... couldn't use it.

When a Jade-faced Snake activated Evil Technique·Immortal Scales, there was no change to the upper half of her flesh body.

Only the lower half of her snake body, covered with scales, would transform into Immortal Scales, maxing out her defense.

Lu Ran had no snake body!

No snake scales to speak of, so how could he have Immortal Scales?

Thus, this powerful defensive technique, while equipped by Lu Ran, was fundamentally unusable.

But now it was different!

The Jiang Realm ultimate skill of the Jade-faced Snake clan was to transform into a giant python.

If Lu Ran could become a giant python, wouldn't his entire body be covered in snake scales?

"Stay vigilant," Lu Ran spoke in a deep voice.

Yan Zhi instinctively shifted her gaze, then followed the command, looking around attentively.

Lu Ran closed his eyes, connecting closely with the Jade-faced Snake Evil Sculpt.

His heart was full of anticipation, eager to try the Jade-faced Snake clan's ultimate move.

second, 2 seconds, 3 seconds...

Lu Ran smirked.

Damn, can't he use the ultimate skill either?

The reason the Jade-faced Snake could transform into a hundred-meter python was that she was essentially composed of energy.

Lu Ran's body, however, was made of flesh!

He couldn't become a snake!

Hmm... never mind, if he can't use it, he can't use it.

Anyway, he was after the Purification Skill.

And activating the Jade-faced Snake Evil Sculpt was also to appreciate her combat prowess and intellect, hoping to have her join his command and lead the servant squad.

"Wait a minute!"

Lu Ran suddenly furrowed his brow.

The Spear Withering Divine Skill-Shattering Cloud Body allowed a small part of the human body to temporarily turn into a cloud form.

Regardless of how short the effect lasted or how small the altered body part was.

Its effect was genuine!

Does this mean that the fleshly bodies of the Human Clan could actually transform into energy bodies?

"Hmm..."

Lu Ran stroked his chin, wondering if Lord Immortal Goat could provide an answer.

He'd ask him when he returned.

Lu Ran reached forward with one hand, energy swirling in his palm.

Yan Zhi, who was standing guard nearby, suddenly changed her expression.

The fervent look in her eyes turned into one of deep resentment.

Because under Lu Ran's palm, a beautiful snake woman was gradually taking shape.

"Sss..."

The Jade-faced Snake parted her thin lips, letting out a soft hiss.

She opened her beautiful eyes with an indifferent expression, looking at the young man from the Human Clan before her.

Slowly, the Jade-faced Snake, with an eight-meter long body, coiled around, clinging to the ground.

The upper half of her body leaned slightly forward, bowing her head in submission to Lu Ran.

Lu Ran, holding the Eight Desolate Annihilation, used the back of the knife to gently lift her chin.

She retained her ethereal beauty, with a noble and cold face.

Like a white lotus unsoiled by mud, to be admired from a distance but not to be defiled.

"Indeed, you can be hurtful."

Lu Ran suddenly smiled.

He sighed inwardly.

Clearly, the Jade-faced Snake was looking up at Lu Ran.

But her manner,

Still was one of superiority, as if looking down at him.

The cold eyes, the indifferent expression.

The attitude of regarding all beings as mere ants.

"In another two days, we will need to leave. You stay close to me and let myself be influenced by you."

Lu Ran slightly raised the blade, and as the Jade-faced Snake's chin was propped up, her face tilted up a bit more.

He observed her carefully, striving to mimic her.

Planning that when he faces an enemy again, he will throw them this "contempt for all beings" look.

No need for taunting techniques at all!

If he comes across someone hot-tempered, just one look from Lu Ran might cause the enemy to mentally implode, right?

...

The tenth day of the winter month, Beijing airport.

A young man, holding three knives wrapped in cloth, wearing a gray fisherman's hat and a white mask, emerged from the airport terminal.

With just a glance, he found among the crowd waiting to pick people up, a woman Sword Immortal with an extraordinary demeanor.

As an impressive Jiang Realm Power, she was utterly different from the ordinary masses...

There were truly many people there to pick up travelers, but there was a small clear space around Chen Jingjing.

Those feeling self-conscious didn't dare to get too close to the Female Sword Immortal.

Peoples' eyes glanced her way, somewhat expectantly, curious about the kind of person such a woman was waiting for.

"Lu... Xiaolu!" Chen Jingjing raised her hand to greet, immediately changing the form of address.

Lu Xiaolu?

Lu Ran smiled, his eyes reflecting a hint of apology: "I've troubled you, Sister Jingjing."

"It's no bother at all," Chen Jingjing smiled back at Lu Ran.

Through their few encounters, Chen Jingjing had become much more "lively."

At first,

Lu Ran was the son of Peak Master, seen by Chen Jingjing as a young master.

Later, Lu Ran became Da Xia's genius honored by Chen Jingjing.

And then, Lu Ran was an imposing Jiang Realm Power, the number one talent of Da Xia.

In terms of realm, they were now equals.

In terms of combat prowess, even the proud Chen Jingjing had to admit her inferiority.

From looking down on Lu Ran, to looking at him as an equal, and then looking up to him...

Chen Jingjing had experienced significant changes within herself, unknown to others.

And what truly surprised Chen Jingjing was that Lu Ran's attitude towards her had never changed.

"I shouldn't have told Little Yuanxi," Lu Ran said with some helplessness.

That morning, after Lu Ran left Lingyun Mountain, he sent messages to a few people to tell them he was safe.

And since he had to transit through Beijing on his way back home to Yuxiang, it was inevitable.

Qiao Yuansi, after completing the assignment from school, still had to return with the group and was unable to leave.

Therefore, at the young mistress's instruction, Chen Jingjing was here for the airport pick-up again.

"If the young master returns home, of course there must be someone to pick him up," Chen Jingjing said teasingly.

The observers around them watched quietly, some with a stunned look on their faces, astonished by Chen Jingjing's smile.

What is this...?

Aren't you the disciple of Sword One?

You can actually smile?

Lu Ran's expression was strange: "Maybe you should keep calling me Lu Xiaolu."

The aloof disciple of Sword One, how could she be making jokes?

This is unscientific!

"Heh heh~" Chen Jingjing could feel the veiled stares of those around and hurried them along, "Let's go."

"Alright." Lu Ran walked briskly with Chen Jingjing, murmuring quietly, "How is my mother?"

Chen Jingjing's smile faded, and she gently shook her head: "Peak Master Qiao is still in seclusion."

"Sister Jingjing."

"Hm?"

"I'll be in Beijing for another two days, waiting for Yuanxi's team to go together to Yuxiang. Do you think if I visit Mother, she would agree?"

Hearing this, Chen Jingjing was troubled.

She couldn't provide a definite answer and cared deeply for Qiao Wan jun, really wanting him to visit the Peak Master.

After a moment's thought, Chen Jingjing said: "After returning to Jinghong Peak, I'll try to help you with the inquiry?"

Lu Ran looked at the woman: "You won't be punished for this, right?"

Chen Jingjing laughed: "Your words are my talisman.

If the Peak Master feels bothered and truly blames me, on account of your face, the most I'll have to do is kneel for a few days."

Lu Ran: "..."

Is this rule too strict?

Chen Jingjing, the great power of the Vast River, would have to kneel too?

Judging by Chen Jingjing's demeanor, it seems she doesn't feel humiliated but thinks it's normal?

Lu Ran sighed inwardly.

He felt that his understanding of his mother, his perception of the world, was still lacking.

Before him, Qiao Wanjun would always be his gentle mother.

But within the sect, Qiao Wanjun was the absolute authority.

She was also a formidable being capable of destruction.

"Do you want me to inquire?" Chen Jingjing asked.

"I can't implicate you," Lu Ran pondered, "So, Sister Jingjing, take my Dawn Blade with you.

If my mother truly blames you, just let the Artifact Spirit appear.

The spirit form of the Dawn Blade is me; it might awaken some maternal feelings..."

Chen Jingjing: "..."

The two reached the parking lot, and Lu Ran opened the rear car door, holding the fabric bundle with care as he got into the car.

Chen Jingjing had already sensed something amiss and asked softly, "It smells so fragrant, is it from flowers?"

Lu Ran nodded lightly: "Picked from Lingyun Mountain."

The three knives wrapped in the fabric seemed more like a stand protecting a small flowerpot.

Chen Jingjing inhaled deeply, her eyes suddenly brightening: "Chui Si Immortal?"

Lu Ran said with a smile: "I saw it on the first day, but then the Jade-faced Snake ate it, and I was heartbroken.

After half a month of cultivation, I finally encountered it again."

The Chui Si Immortal jasmine,

A rare plant from the Demon Cave, only produced by Lingyun Mountain.

It resembled a miniature tree, and after spreading its branches and leaves, fine branches would hang down, each bearing a blossom of the Immortal jasmine.

Not only did it emit a faint jasmine fragrance, but it also released a bit of energy.

As a cultivation aid, it wasn't highly valuable since the energy it released was too slight.

But it was beautiful!

And it was precious due to its rarity!

What girl wouldn't like flowers?

Mom would like it too, right?

Chapter 373: Sword

Immortal Scenic Garden, the Qiao Mansion.

Chen Jingjing took out the key and helped Lu Ran unlock the front door.

Lu Ran smiled and shook his head.

It was odd that he needed an outsider's help to access his own home...

"I'll wait for you, no hurry," Chen Jingjing said softly.

"I'll be right out," Lu Ran quickly changed shoes and entered the living room.

Dawn Silence Night unfurled and soared, to prevent the falling of petals.

Lu Ran also sheathed the Eight Desolate Blade behind him.

He stood in the living room, his gaze sweeping back and forth between his mother's bedroom and her study.

After a moment's hesitation, he still chose the study.

His mother's study.

The home's forbidden area.

Even the small shrine and Sword One Divine Statue were placed inside Qiao Wanju's grand bedroom, not in the study.

Lu Ran had lived in this home for three years.

And he had only been inside this study once.

Lu Ran had once stood at the doorway of his mother's study in the dead of night, holding a cup of hot milk.

At that time, just after his father's death, Mother had newly accepted Lu Ran back home.

Then, he hoped to take the opportunity to get closer to Mom.

Lu Ran wouldn't deny that there was a hint of trying to ingratiate himself.

Maybe, a mother and son shouldn't bear such feelings.

But truly, it had been a long time since Lu Ran had seen his mother.

After his father's sacrifice, the young boy's sky had collapsed.

In a daze, Qiao Wanju appeared before him, gently took his hand, and brought him back to Beijing.

That night, that cup of hot milk, it ended up entering the study after all.

Qiao Wanju allowed Lu Ran to come inside.

But when he left, Qiao Wanju softly told her son not to disturb her in the study again.

Lu Ran would always remember the feeling in his heart upon hearing those words.

He left silently, gently shutting the door behind him.

Mother seemed to have realized something.

But she didn't come out after him, and that night, she did not leave her study.

However, after that evening, she became gentler toward Lu Ran.

Little Yuanxi even threw a tantrum, claiming that Mom only liked her brother and was only kind to him, not loving her at all.

Following a few days of uproar, Little Yuanxi's antics led to being punished by their mother to kneel for an entire day.

And on that very night,

Qiao Yuansi received a stealthily passed hamburger from his guilt-ridden brother for the first time.

In short,

Since Lu Ran had delivered that hot milk, he never stepped foot in the study again.

"Sigh..."

Lu Ran exhaled deeply, standing at the doorway of the study, hesitating again.

To enter or not?

He could place the flowers in the living room, on the balcony, or even in his mother's bedroom.

But... Lu Ran wanted to enter.

He needed to reconcile with younger self.

That self-doubting, sensitive, and overly cautious version of himself.

His mother was not unapproachable. On the contrary, she loved him dearly.

It was just that at the time, she hadn't found a proper way to interact with him.

"Knock knock knock~"

Standing before the study, Lu Ran knocked gently on the door, softly saying,

"Excuse me."

After a brief wait, with no response from inside, Lu Ran carried the potted plant inside.

The study was spacious and plainly decorated.

So plain that there wasn't even a single potted plant.

Instead of an office desk and computer, there was a writing table.

On the writing table, pen, ink, paper, and inkstone were arranged. It appeared Mother had left in a hurry the last time and had not put them away properly.

On the adjacent bookshelf stood many books, and a large calligraphy scroll hung on the wall.

Sword.

On the vertically hanging scroll was but a single massive character.

With the flourish of knife-like strokes, hook-created by a brush of iron.

In Lu Ran's eyes, that was not just a calligraphy character but a word composed of numerous sharp swords.

Within each horizontal and vertical stroke, a hidden edge of crossed swords could be sensed.

Lu Ran did not know who the word was written by.

Everything in the room was a vague memory for Lu Ran, considering he had only been here once.

And now, as Lu Ran saw the character again, he stood frozen at the doorway.

The sensation was profound.

It was as if...

The word on the paper conveyed a message that never changed.

When Lu Ran was young and naive, he could recognize each character.

When he went to school, he understood the meaning of the sentence.

And as he entered society, weathering trials, he read the line again and comprehended the deeper metaphor behind it.

Was this "Sword" character written by Mom?

Unyielding, with a spirit that soared with pride!

Was she... wronged?

Was she fighting against something?

"Buzz~"

"Buzz!"

Suddenly, a vibrating sound of trembling weapons arose from the right side.

Lu Ran turned to look.

Two treasured swords hung on the wall, unexpectedly flying down.

These were Divine Weapons!

Chillingly radiant, their edges unmistakably sharp!

They buzzed, as if expressing discontent with Lu Ran for lingering too long.

"Buzz!"

"Buzz!"

Dawn Blade and Silent Night Blade buzzed in unison!

The twin blades swiftly entered the study, positioning themselves before the two treasured swords.

Dawn Blade shined brilliantly.

Silent Night Blade emanated an aura of murderous intent!

As they stood opposed, the Divine Weapons protected their owner!

Accompanying the crisp "clang clang" sounds, the blades and swords intertwined.

"Stop!" Lu Ran bellowed sharply.

Before opening the door, Lu Ran had knocked and said "Excuse me," addressing the two swords inside.

The former Lu Ran knew nothing of them at all.

Only after returning here for the New Year did Lu Ran realize:

There were Divine Weapons in his mother's study!

Of course, even then, Lu Ran had not entered the study.

It was the Dawn Blade and Rebirth Money that informed Lu Ran of the kindred presence within that ever-closed room.

"I am the son of your master."

While speaking, Lu Ran gestured for his Divine Weapons to retreat.

The twin blades slowly disengaged, gradually flying back, but still guarding in front of Lu Ran.

"I'll just put the flowers down and leave right away."

Holding the pot, Lu Ran stepped forward, under the watchful eyes of the treasured swords, and reached the writing table.

He picked up the pot and placed the Chui Si Immortal on the corner of the table.

Without meaning to, he also saw an unfinished piece of writing on the table, with only half a line:

"Don't say women cannot form part of greatness..."

Lu Ran's brow furrowed.

He wasn't looking at the poetry, nor reading into its meaning.

Instead, he noticed the sword-like strokes within every curve and line, revealing subtle rage and sorrow.

Rage and sorrow?

"Buzz!" The treasured three-foot blade trembled once more, seemingly reminding Lu Ran it was time to depart.

Lu Ran turned to look at the Divine Weapon, his face somber, and spoke lightly,

"That's enough now."

Another sword suddenly pressed against the vibrating blade, retreating a half-inch backward.

Lu Ran turned his gaze to the Chui Si Immortal, his expression softening slightly.

This plant from the Demon Cave, both its branches and petals were delicate.

But its vitality was incredibly tenacious!

It didn't even require light or water.

The Chui Si Immortal would silently draw energy from the world around it, sustaining itself and releasing any excess energy.

That's what the soldiers from the Demon Cave told Lu Ran.

Initially, Lu Ran thought the plant self-generated energy.

Turns out, it was just a transporter of nature's gifts...

Regardless, its beauty, fragrance, and rarity were genuine.

The subtle jasmine scent also reminded Lu Ran of Jiang Ruyi.

When he saw Mother, he would mention her, too.

That way, every time Mother entered the study and saw the beautiful Chui Si Immortal, smelled its sweet fragrance, she might think of Jiang Ruyi too.

Over time, this might improve Mother's impression of Jiang Ruyi.

Lu Ran exited the study, gently closing the door behind him.

He pulled out his phone, thinking of the incomplete poem on the desk, and immediately searched for it.

Seconds later, Lu Ran's brow quirked.

"Say not that women are unfit for heroics; their swords clash by the wall every night."

Lu Ran silently stared for a long time, then let out a deep breath.

"Little Lu?" At the doorway, Chen Jingjing's soft call came through.

"Ah, sis, let's go," Lu Ran hurried towards the doorway.

Chen Jingjing: "Just now?"

Lu Ran shook his head, "It's nothing."

Chen Jingjing faintly heard the clashing of blades and Lu Ran's commands, but she did not enter out of trust for Lu Ran.

Another reason was that this was Qiao Wanjun's home, and without the explicit command of the Peak Master, Chen Jingjing would not daringly intrude.

"Want to eat something first?" Chen Jingjing led Lu Ran toward the elevator.

"Do you still eat meals, Jingjing?" Lu Ran was rather surprised.

Chen Jingjing shook her head: "Very rarely, the last time was when I dined with you at Autumn Water Home."

Lu Ran: "..."

Well, that's still not necessary. Business prioritizes.

They drove away from the Immortal Scenic Garden, heading straight for Jinghong Peak.

On the way, Lu Ran sent a WeChat message to Qiao Yuansi, fearing she wouldn't find him when she got home.

But Qiao Yuansi didn't reply; she must be busy at school.

As the setting sun gradually fell, Lu Ran and Chen reached the base of Jinghong Peak.

As a man, Lu Ran did not rashly climb the Spirit Mountain of the Sword One sect.

He handed the Dawn Blade to Chen Jingjing and then waited at the mountain's foot.

Hopefully, the Dawn Blade will keep Jingjing safe...

Considering things, the Divine Weapons in the study should rightfully belong to Mother.

Lu Ran could contact Qiao Wanju directly through the Divine Weapons.

However, seeing the attitude of those two swords, Lu Ran did not impose.

And in Lu Ran's mind, coming to the foot of the mountain to ask to see her should increase the likelihood of success, right?

Soon, Lu Ran heaved a sigh of relief.

The Dawn Blade brought good news: Mother would see him!

Hmm, that's good.

Putting aside the mother-son relationship, after all, he was Da Xia's foremost Heavenly Pride.

Should Peak Master Qiao refuse to see me...

Wouldn't that hurt my face?

Subsequently, Lu Ran saw the joyful figure of Chen Jingjing descending rapidly.

She guided him, circling half the base of the mountain before flying straight up.

"Little Lu."

Midway up the mountainside, Chen Jingjing suddenly spoke.

"Hm?" Lu Ran looked down, to see Chen Jingjing hovering on her sword.

"I won't go. Peak Master Qiao asked you to come alone."

"Thank you, Jingjing," Lu Ran replied.

"Young master, let's not be so formal anymore," Chen Jingjing said with a smile, slowly descending.

Lu Ran: "..."

He clutched the Silent Night Blade and flew straight up, heading to the peak behind Jinghong Peak.

Under the afterglow of the sunset,

The peak was covered in pure white snow.

A striking figure suddenly caught Lu Ran's eye.

Dressed in a gold and white dress, with an antique charm, the mountain breeze caused her skirt to flutter playfully alongside her raven-black hair.

The setting sun tinted her features with warmth.

Yet it was a superficial remedy.

Eyebrows like distant, misty mountains, eyes like the depths of serene lakes.

Only when Qiao Wanjun turned to him did Lu Ran see the profound indifference within her eyes, now revealing a faint warmth.

"I thought you had forgotten me."

Qiao Wanjun stood with her hands behind her back, speaking lightly.

"Ah?" Lu Ran clutched his sword, hanging outside the cliff.

Qiao Wanjun smiled faintly: "What was the promise you gave your mother last time?"

Lu Ran suddenly remembered that Qiao Wanjun had once asked him if she were to retreat right here, whether or not Lu Ran would come to see her.

At that time, Lu Ran had agreed eagerly.

"Heh."

Suddenly, Lu Ran laughed.

Looking at the woman before him, with a gentle expression.

I was worried about being turned away, afraid you would drive me off.

Yet,

You were waiting for me.

Chapter 374: In the human world, you can also ascend to heaven step by step

Lu Ran landed slowly at the edge of the cliff, facing Qiao Wanju, and sheathed the Silent Night Blade.

The two of them were about a meter apart, with the latter half of Lu Ran's foot hanging in the air.

Towards his mother, Lu Ran had always been filled with both love and respect, reluctant to make her step back, so he settled for this.

It was rather funny when one thought about it.

Lu Ran had thought that upon entering that study, he had let go, that he had reconciled with his younger self.

Yet upon returning to Jinghong Peak, he realized that he was still as cautious as ever.

As if nothing had changed.

The emotions filling Lu Ran's mind at the prospect of meeting his mother weren't expectations, longing, or joy.

His first thought was a worry about being turned away at the door.

That alone said a lot.

Before Lu Ran could speak, Qiao Wanju joked in a way that indicated she had been waiting for him.

A simple sentence dissolved all of Lu Ran's worries.

Perhaps, on the night when Lu Ran had brought her warm milk, Qiao Wanju had already figured out how she would take care of Lu Ran.

Only Lu Ran,

was still trapped in those special years of youth.

Cautious, nervous.

"You surpassed my expectations, having opened the Divine Weapon Domain with it," Qiao Wanju spoke gently.

Lu Ran glanced at his mother's side.

In Qiao Wanju's hand behind her, she was holding the Dawn Blade.

The Dawn Blade that was struggling vehemently.

"Hum! Hum!!"

The Dawn Blade kept trembling, its brilliance dazzling, as if trying to break free from the woman's control.

Yet, Qiao Wanju held the hilt firmly, preventing any movement.

Relaxed and content.

Lu Ran questioned in his heart whether he could do the same.

Even as a Jiang Realm Great Power, even if he activated the Evil Technique·Soul Splitting Power, he still struggled to confine the Dawn Blade.

This was a Divine Weapon, after all!

And one that had opened the Divine Weapon Domain!

After a moment of silence, Lu Ran said, "Mom, you told me before that once the Dawn Blade opened its Divine Weapon Domain, it would be hard for you to wield it."

Qiao Wanju smiled, "The Divine Weapon Domain has its levels of strength and weakness.

Whether it's people or weapons, the path of ascent is endless.

You could help it more."

Lu Ran: "..."

As expected, the more beautiful the woman, the more deceitful.

Wait until I bring the Dawn Blade and understand deeper layers of the Divine Weapon Domain, and unleash the auspicious cloud vortex...

Will it still not move in your hands?

"Alright," Qiao Wanju spoke lightly, her thumb gently stroking the hilt.

The Dawn Blade: "..."

Are you telling me to stop causing trouble?

You...well, okay, you're the mother of my master.

The Dawn Blade seemed resigned and quieted down.

Sensing the Dawn Blade cease its struggle, Qiao Wanjun let go.

Her genuine son was standing right in front of her.

The "Artifact Spirit son" could indeed leave now.

She just didn't want to let go abruptly when the Divine Weapon was resisting fiercely, for the Dawn Blade would have shot out fiercely and possibly shattered the cliff.

"Hum~"

The Dawn Blade flew back to Lu Ran's side and didn't return to its sheath but pushed its hilt into his hand.

Such a powerful Divine Weapon now had a wronged look.

Seemingly seeking comfort?

Qiao Wanjun didn't pay attention to the Dawn Blade; instead, she gently gazed into Lu Ran's eyes,

"It's been a long time since we've seen each other, and you've had an incredible adventure."

Lu Ran nodded, "Mom, I am now the master of Luoxian Mountain."

Qiao Wanjun slightly frowned, pondering, "The master of Luoxian Mountain?"

Lu Ran: "..."

Is my small sect unworthy of your attention?

I mean, in terms of rank, I am higher than you!

Mine is a true divine mountain!

But yours is just a branch, and it's without divinity.

Of course, these were words Lu Ran dared not voice.

Qiao Wanjun seemed to remember something, "Cainan Province, Yeyu City, the Sect of Immortal Sheep, Luoxian Mountain."

"Yes!" Lu Ran nodded vigorously.

Unexpectedly, Qiao Wanjun did not show a smile.

Even the warmth in her eyes quietly faded, turning back into deep pools.

She mused for a moment and said softly, "It seems Lord Immortal Goat holds you in high esteem.

He has granted you the status of Human World Sect Master."

Lu Ran's heart stirred, probing, "Mom disagrees?"

"How could that be." Out of nowhere, Qiao Wanjun softened again, gazing at Lu Ran with a smile, "Do you plan to face me like this the whole time?"

"Oh, oh." Lu Ran quickly removed his mask and fisherman's hat.

Qiao Wanju quietly looked at Lu Ran; suddenly, she became speechless.

Not just the Human World Sect Master of the Sect of Immortal Sheep.

Have you also been blessed by a deity?

Qiao Wanju, immersed in cultivation, was completely cut off from the outside world.

She didn't know the Dawn Blade had opened a domain, nor was she aware of Lu Ran being bestowed with a blessing.

But after Lu Ran removed his disguise, his heavenly demeanor was enough for Qiao Wanju to infer a lot.

There was silence on the cliff.

Only the sound of the cold wind and the fluttering frosty snow.

"Mom?" Lu Ran called out softly.

Qiao Wanju snapped out of her memories, shaking her head with a smile, "Originally, you had a three parts resemblance to him.

Now, you surpass him by far, there's no comparison."

Lu Ran's heart was filled with mixed emotions.

In Lu Ran's heart, his father had always been a hero, the goal he looked up to and chased.

But when Lu Ran accomplished all this and even obtained Qiao Wanju's approval, he didn't feel as much joy as he had expected.

Not knowing what to say, Lu Ran switched topics,

"By the way, mom, I brought you back a gift. It's in your study."

Qiao Wanju was quite surprised, "Study?"

Lu Ran shrugged, nonchalant, "You told me not to enter the study and disturb you."

But since you weren't in the study, I obviously couldn't disturb you."

"Hehe~" Qiao Wanju chuckled.

This Female Sword Immortal standing atop Jinghong Peak seemed more alive.

She raised her hand, waving Lu Ran over.

Lu Ran took a step forward, finally able to stand without half of his foot scraping the ground.

Her palm rested on Lu Ran's head, gently tousling it.

She didn't rebuke him, but rather seemed somewhat relieved, her eyes showing a hint of approval.

However, her body seemed to have been soaked by frost.

Her hand was terribly cold and not as soft as imagined.

Lu Ran suddenly spoke, "Mom, are you fighting against something?"

Qiao Wanju paused for a moment, then covered it up quickly, whispering, "What makes you think so?"

Lu Ran, "The calligraphy on the wall."

He intended to continue, talking about the character "Sword," about the strokes and the brushwork.

But as soon as she heard Lu Ran speak, Qiao Wanju suddenly lifted her gaze.

Those depths, colder than her hand, sent a chill through Lu Ran.

"What gift did you bring your mother?" Qiao Wanju smilingly asked.

Her tone was normal, as if nothing had happened, as if that look never came from her.

Lu Ran sighed heavily in his heart.

It seemed she didn't want to speak.

Did she have some concerns?

Just now, when he mentioned becoming the master of Luoxian Mountain, her reaction was off.

There wasn't the comfort or joy from a mother, but rather she sunk into deep contemplation.

This...

"Wait until you get home, then you'll know," Lu Ran answered heedlessly, his thoughts in disarray.

Qiao Wanju didn't press further, but instead said, "They didn't trouble you, did they?"

Lu Ran instantly understood that his mother was referring to the pair of Divine Weapons in the study.

"No, not at all," Lu Ran shook his head repeatedly, suddenly remembering something, "Right, you better not ask them!"

"Alright, alright."

That slightly helpless indulgent tone finally sounded like that of a normal mother.

"Mom, how goes your cultivation here? Is everything smooth?"

"It's okay."

"When will you come home?"

"Do you want me to come back?"

Qiao Wanju teased with a smile.

The longer they talked, the more human she seemed.

Lu Ran pondered a moment, probing, "Would you come back for Little Yuanxi's birthday on the fifteenth of the first lunar month?"

The hopeful look in Lu Ran's eyes and his cautious plea softened Qiao Wanju's heart.

She could feel that the relationship between the siblings was genuinely good.

If it weren't for Qiao Yuansi, Lu Ran would never be so "insistent."

Seeing his mother remain silent, Lu Ran continued, "I accompanied Little Yuanxi through new year's eve.

You come back for Lantern Festival, celebrate both our birthdays with us.

Just for one night, okay?"

Lu Ran knew well that one must not be disturbed during a retreat.

Even more so for someone like Qiao Wanju.

To this day, Lu Ran didn't know the extent of Qiao Wanju's strength.

But he would not be recklessly fearless due to ignorance.

Rather, because of ignorance, Lu Ran held even more reverence.

"Alright, I promise you," Qiao Wanju said, her eyes fleeting with guilt.

Lu Ran sighed with relief.

Little Yuanxi would be thrilled for a long time.

"By the way, Mom, there's something else."

"Mm?"

"Lord Immortal Goat communicated with me, saying that he was going to open a Divine Ruins and that I should prepare well."

The smile on Qiao Wanju's beautiful face slowed.

Like a receding tide, it vanished completely.

Frigid.

Once again, through his mother's eyes, Lu Ran felt a cold that reached straight to his heart.

Qiao Wanju was silent, and Lu Ran grew more anxious.

Wasn't he a Jiang Realm Great Power? How had he become so weak?

Lu Ran suddenly realized something!

Why Chen Jingjing naturally assumed she would be punished to kneel by Qiao Wanju.

Chen Jingjing, as a Jiang Realm Great Power, was respected wherever she went.

But when she mentioned it, there was no discontent.

Nor did she feel the slightest humiliation!

Standing before Qiao Wanju, Lu Ran truly understood.

In the eyes of Qiao Wanjun, a Jiang Realm Great Power was no different from any ant!

Lu Ran and his mother Wanjun, after all, had a mother-son bond.

Lu Ran knew she wouldn't hurt him.

But what about others?

"Lord Immortal Goat," Qiao Wanjun said, unfeeling.

Lu Ran's scalp tingled!

Could you, perhaps, add "Lord" after "Immortal Goat"?

Lu Ran opened his mouth, "You don't want me to go?"

Qiao Wanjun, "Do you know when your sect's Divine Ruins will open?"

"Three months...uh, in two months, just in time to celebrate Little Yuanxi's birthday."

Qiao Wanjun took a step forward.

Lu Ran, quick to react, stepped aside at once.

Qiao Wanjun stood at the edge of the cliff, gazing at the distant snow-covered peaks.

Lu Ran was silent, watching her serene figure.

After some time, Qiao Wanjun spoke softly, "It won't be easy for you to come back alive."

Lu Ran spoke lowly, "I'm prepared mentally."

"Still want to go?"

"I still want to go!"

"Why?" Qiao Wanju's voice was light, "You're growing fast, far beyond my expectations.

In the mortal world, you could ascend step by step."

Lu Ran absorbed his mother's peculiar words, not replying immediately.

There were too many reasons for him to go.

About fulfilling Lord Immortal Goat's expectations.

About uncovering the secrets of this world.

"I will come back, Mom," Lu Ran said firmly, "Lord Immortal Goat has granted me immeasurable grace."

Qiao Wanju lowered her gaze to the vast snow forest at her feet.

Lu Ran asked, "Mom, have you been to the Divine Ruins? Do you know what's behind the Divine Ruins?"

Qiao Wanju suddenly said, "Ranran."

"Hmm?"

"Promise Mom one thing."

"What?"

"If you find out that this world isn't as you've imagined..."

...

I'd like some monthly tickets.

Chapter 375: brand?

At nightfall, Immortal Scenic Garden, Qiao Mansion.

The room was pitch black, with no lights on.

After his bath, Lu Ran, wearing pajamas and with a towel still draped over his head, sat blankly on the sofa.

Atop Jinghong Peak, his mother's words still echoed in his ears:

"Do not lose yourself."

This was a piece of advice.

She also indirectly informed Lu Ran that this world was different from what he perceived.

From Qiao Wanjun's perspective, her words might have caused a great stir in Lu Ran's heart.

However, in reality, Lu Ran was already prepared.

After all, Lord Immortal Goat had explicitly told Lu Ran about the huge risks involved in challenging the Divine Ruins and venturing into another realm.

And that going there would let Lu Ran realize the true nature of the world.

Qiao Wanju clearly did not realize that Divine-Immortal Goat was different from other deities.

From the moment Lu Ran began to worship God, Lord Immortal Goat had often instilled certain ideas in him.

For example:

Deities?

Heh, just a bunch of stones.

Or:

Everything about Human Clan believers does not belong to them.

People's lives, their thoughts and beliefs, even their souls after death, all serve the deities.

These utterly rebellious views and transformative perceptions had always influenced Lu Ran.

Even the deities fervently worshiped by the people were regarded by Lu Ran with a different attitude...

Was there anything else Lu Ran could not accept?

From the beginning, Lu Ran was never a conventional believer!

But indeed,

there was one thing that hugely shocked Lu Ran!

It was when Qiao Wanju uttered the words "Do not lose yourself" and her action right then!

She gently hugged Lu Ran, brought her lips close to his ear, and spoke those words.

Each and every word, resonating in his ears.

At that moment, Lu Ran was dazed!

Um... well, even now, Lu Ran still sat blankly on the sofa, dazed.

Lu Ran held immense respect for his mother.

He didn't need her to be stern; even if she advised him with a smile, Lu Ran would listen earnestly.

Lu Ran had never imagined!

She would lean into his ear and feed him those words, one by one.

Just... like casting a spell.

To this moment, the phrase "Do not lose yourself" still echoed in Lu Ran's mind!

"Brother?"

"Ah, damn!" Lu Ran was startled, quickly moving to the side.

He turned his head, only to see Qiao Yuansi standing in front of the sofa, curiously watching him.

The lights in the house were already on, though Lu Ran did not know when they had been turned on.

"What's wrong?" Qiao Yuansi looked worried, "I've been calling you for a while, and you didn't respond."

"Ah... ah." Lu Ran raised his hand, wiping his head with the towel.

Watching her brother's preoccupied look, Qiao Yuansi grew even more anxious.

She couldn't just play around; she sat down next to Lu Ran, hugged his arm, and whispered:

"Bro, did you experience a breakup?"

Lu Ran: "..."

Qiao Yuansi's eyes widened: "Does Sister Ruyi not want us anymore?"

Lu Ran rolled his eyes.

Qiao Yuansi panicked: "Did you guys fight?

Did she fall for someone else?

Did... did you cheat?"

Lu Ran: ??

What's all this mess!

He turned his head to look at Qiao Yuansi and pushed her away: "It has nothing to do with Ruyi."

"Then what's wrong?" Qiao Yuansi was genuinely worried.

"I..." Lu Ran opened his mouth.

How should I say this?

Can I say that Mom 'cast a spell' on me with her devilish voice?

That wouldn't be appropriate!

Sigh...

Truly, a world-shattering figure among humans!

A simple phrase, and it still dominates my mind.

In the future, who knows how long it will persist... wait!

Did she anticipate I would encounter trouble in the future and left a phrase in my mind beforehand?

That's possible!

It sounds like something she would do.

Due to Qiao Wanju's cold nature, the love she showed her children had always been tepid.

In the three years Lu Ran had lived here, some things she did and some words she spoke often took a long while before Lu Ran realized their significance.

Perhaps some care had still gone unnoticed by Lu Ran.

Moreover, the hug today was one of the reasons for his daze.

The last hug dates back to when Lu Ran was under five years old.

In any case, the scene today at Jinghong Peak had thoroughly made its mark in Lu Ran's heart.

"Why are you zoning out again?" Qiao Yuansi held Lu Ran's arm, swaying it back and forth, "Bro, don't scare me!"

"If it doesn't work out, just break up, I'll find you another one!"

"You are Da Xia's number one Heavenly Pride, still lack a girlfriend?"

"What do you think about Sister Yiren?"

"Bro~~~"

Lu Ran was numbed.

He turned his head to look at Qiao Yuansi, helplessly saying: "Is there anything else in your head besides dating?"

Qiao Yuansi looked doubtful: "Really not a breakup?"

Lu Ran exasperatedly said: "Why must it be a breakup?"

Qiao Yuansi muttered: "Wang Ling looked just like you when he had a breakup!"

All distraught and disheveled like a drowned... cough, so what is it then?"

Lu Ran: "I went to see Mom."

Qiao Yuansi suddenly changed color, grabbing Lu Ran's wrist, anxiously saying: "What happened to Mom?"

Lu Ran: "She's fine, she's at Jinghong Peak in cultivation retreat, I visited her.

She taught me a lesson on life, ideals and such, I'm just coming to terms with it."

Qiao Yuansi breathed a sigh of relief, then her eyebrows shot up: "You went to see Mom?"

"Yes."

"You went secretly without me, to see Mom?"

"What kind of accusation is that! I... ah! Ah?"

Qiao Yuansi grabbed a pillow from the sofa, cheeks puffing up in anger: "Stinky brother, why didn't you take me with you, huh?"

"You're so rebellious!" Lu Ran also grabbed a pillow.

"Ah! How dare you retaliate? You... Brother! Brother~ I was wrong!"

"Who's the stinky brother?"

"Bro~ good brother! Uh~ bullying, boo hoo~~~"

"Speak up! Open the mic! Come on!" At this moment, Si Xianxian's soul took over.

"I am I am! I'm the stinky sister..."

Lu Ran threw aside the pillow, freeing Qiao Yuansi's restrained hands.

Qiao Yuansi quickly ran away, pointing at Lu Ran, too agitated to speak.

Finally, she angrily stomped her foot and stormed off, huffing.

Watching the adorable little pufferfish, Lu Ran suddenly said, "Shall we go for burgers in a bit?"

Qiao Yuansi unconsciously paused.

Lu Ran stayed in Beijing for a few days, then joined Qiao Yuansi and her squad, heading to Rain Alley City.

He participated in "Heavenly Pride" every even-numbered month.

Therefore, this November 15, Lu Ran and others were not wearing cameras.

This time, Lu Ran and the Beijing team continued to be stationed in the plaza area.

The good news was, that night in Rain Alley City, there were no special events.

The bad news, even without special events, the frequency of Evil Demon invasions had increased significantly.

This world,

was becoming increasingly troubled.

Until the 16th of the lunar month, as the sky lightened with the dawn, Lu Ran gazed at the devastated Rain Alley City, feeling very heavy-hearted.

Rain Alley,

I'm about to leave.

What will you do?

"Sigh..." Lu Ran thought, deeply sighing.

"Lu Ran."

"Hm?" Lu Ran turned to look at Guan Yiren.

After a night of battle, she still looked as pristine as freshly fallen snow.

Compared to last month, this proud Sword One disciple had finally regained her usual grace.

Guan Yiren hesitated to speak.

Lu Ran instinctively lowered his cap brim and pulled up his mask: "Speak."

After a moment of hesitation, Guan Yiren finally spoke: "Your state seems off, have you noticed?"

"Yes, Ran bro." Wang Ling, who was nearby, immediately chimed in, "Are you having some troubles?"

Guan Yiren obviously made a big effort to boldly point out the issue with Da Xia's number one Heavenly Pride:

"During breaks in the battle, you occasionally seem distracted."

Lu Ran did not explain, humbly nodding: "Thanks for the heads up, I'll be more attentive going forward."

Qiao Yuansi pouted: "My brother got a lecture from my mom!

What you're seeing now is already him being better!

On the night of the tenth, he was like a lost soul.

I even thought he had a breakup!"

Niu Zhengzheng ran over, his loud voice booming: "What's going on? My Ran bro broke up?"

Lu Ran: "..."

"Smack!"

Niu Zhengzheng's face lit up, slapping his hands together: "Haha! Isn't this an opportunity!"

Lu Ran: ?

Wang Ling quickly punched Niu Zhengzheng: "Ran bro didn't break up, don't spout nonsense!"

Niu Zhengzheng paused, then chuckled sheepishly: "Heh heh~"

Lu Ran's smile was peculiar, looking at Niu Zhengzheng: "How are things with you? I've been meaning to ask, did that girl contact you?"

Since it was already day and the battle had ended long ago, Lu Ran opened up as well.

Niu Zhengzheng grinned: "We added each other last month, and the talk has been good.

Our two squads even agreed to train together this month!"

This was something Lu Ran had learned from Qiao Yuansi.

Otherwise, he wouldn't have brought it up.

In reality, Lu Ran also knew about the two sides exchanging WeChat contacts.

On the eighteenth of last month, after he pushed Chang Ying's business card, Chang Ying kept sending messages.

First were emojis drooling,

then "hissing" and "my type, my type," etc.

Clearly, the female savage was quite satisfied.

A little interlude:

Lu Ran had a lot to tell Chang Ying, but she suddenly stopped responding, making Lu Ran wait for quite a while, pushing him to ask what she was doing.

Chang Ying replied: "Hehe~ I just went to grab some chopsticks."

Which made Lu Ran smile widely.

"Hehe." Niu Zhengzheng seemed to recall something, again smiling broadly, "When I first saw her photo, I was totally shocked!

Such a beautiful and wild dark beauty, really rare ah haha!"

Lu Ran also laughed: "Chang Ying has a good personality, very straightforward, though her talent is a bit lacking..."

"What's that to fear!" Niu Zhengzheng thumped his chest, "I'll protect her!"

Lu Ran was somewhat surprised.

He thought of praising Chang Ying a bit more, saying some nice things to lessen the gap in talent between them.

After all, in Lu Ran's eyes, Chang Ying wouldn't follow Divine-Spiritual Sign forever.

Eventually, she would join the Ran Sect, and Lu Ran would arrange for Divine Blessing.

Unexpectedly, Niu Zhengzheng had already declared his stand?

"Yo~" Qiao Yuansi smiled at Niu Zhengzheng, "Niu head is so manly~!"

Niu Zhengzheng's dark face flushed, scratching his head.

Qiao Yuansi, full of gossip, prodded: "Tell me, what do you guys usually talk about?"

Niu Zhengzheng's face turned even redder: "Ran, Ran bro."

Lu Ran: "Ah?"

"Pfft~Hahaha!"

Qiao Yuansi laughed uncontrollably: "You and Sister Yingying are dating, and you talk about my brother?"

Niu Zhengzheng grinned: "Yingying really admires Ran bro."

Lu Ran helplessly said: "But you can't just talk about me."

Niu Zhengzheng with a righteous air: "But the thing is, I admire you too!"

Yingying and I really have a lot in common!"

"Pfft~" Guan Yiren, who had been standing silently, finally couldn't help laughing out loud.

Lu Ran was dumbfounded.

No!

You two—while talking—have ended up dating me...

...

Chapter 376: Land Undefeated?

The lunar nineteenth, the city unlocked.

Once again, under Little Yuanxi's reluctant gaze, Lu Ran steeled his heart and sent her onto the off-road vehicle.

Watching the large G gradually fade away, Lu Ran's heart was also bittersweet.

Over the past three days, his life had been very warm.

Perhaps Qiao Yuansi realized that the day of Lu Ran's departure was drawing nearer, so she became extra clingy.

Lu Ran also tried his best to play the role of a good elder brother.

He tried to prepare every meal well for her, cultivated with her, and accompanied her to watch dramas and variety shows.

But this warm time, along with Qiao Yuansi's departure, also disappeared.

Lu Ran felt an emptiness inside.

He returned to his empty home, took a moment to calm his mind, then picked up his phone to look at the schedule listed in the memo.

"Black Grave Mound, Black Soul Wood Forest, Emperor's Mausoleum, 'Heavenly Pride' event."

Lu Ran sat on the sofa, pondering for a moment.

Black Grave Mound and Black Soul Wood Forest were the Demon Caves of the Dark Lantern Clan and the Soul-splitting Demon Clan, respectively.

The Emperor's Mausoleum,

was the Demon Cave of the Evil Demon-Evil Spear Emperor.

In Lu Ran's God Demon Sculpture Garden, these three sculptures of Evil Demons were all from the River Realm.

Two were of the Fourth Rank and one of the Fifth Rank.

Lu Ran planned to exert extra effort this month to travel to the three sites, aiming to upgrade all three Evil Sculptures to the River Realm.

Preparation for battle, of course, required a proactive attitude!

Although Lu Ran possessed many Evil Sculptures and Evil Techniques.

But the Dark Lantern Clan was the only one that could provide Lu Ran with Healing Techniques.

Caged Fire-Bath!

Lu Ran could summon gentle black flames to heal the target's injuries.

This technique had a very low usage rate for Lu Ran.

Regarding this, his principle was: I might not use it, but I must have it!

This was a lifesaving technique!

It could save others,

and even more so, save oneself.

As for the Soul-splitting Demon Clan, there was even less to say.

This clan possessed a Power Amplification technique—Soul Splitting Power!

This was an essential for Lu Ran!

The Evil Spear Emperor was designated by Lu Ran as the leader of the servant squad, naturally requiring careful cultivation.

"Hmm..." Lu Ran looked at the memo on his phone.

The 'Heavenly Pride' event was scheduled for the first day of the twelfth lunar month, lasting two days.

And the location was in the Three Qin Land, quite close to the Evil Spear Emperor's Demon Cave.

In that case, he could first visit the Dark Lantern Demon Cave and the Soul-splitting Demon Cave, then participate in the 'Heavenly Pride' event and subsequently head to the Emperor's Mausoleum for a fight!

Once these three Evil Sculptures ascended to the River Realm,

the ranks of Lu Ran's subordinates would all be of the River Realm!

Thinking of this, Lu Ran felt a stir in his heart and quickly rose to walk towards the small bedroom.

"Lord Immortal Sheep."

Lu Ran bowed respectfully and continued, "Disciple has decided to start the Barbaric Woman sculpture and the Tangled Silk Shadow sculpture.

Do you have time now to accompany me for a walk in the God Demon Sculpture Garden?"

In the small shrine, the Immortal Sheep Jade Carving was silent.

Lu Ran waited for a moment and continued, "In less than two months, your disciple will challenge the Divine Ruins.

I plan to make use of the time to add two more generals beneath my command, and next month I will cultivate them to the River..."

"Hmm."

Before Lu Ran could finish his sentence, a deep voice entered his mind.

"Thank you, Lord Immortal Sheep." Lu Ran sat cross-legged, closing his eyes tightly.

The next moment, he entered the spiritual world, returning to the God Demon Sculpture Garden.

"Huh~"

Lu Ran tilted his head up to see a fiercely burning Black Fire Sheep Head floating in mid-air.

That pair of lifeless horizontal pupils glanced at Lu Ran, then looked upwards.

Lu Ran immediately turned and saw a pair of stone boots.

He recognized the style of these battle boots, of course.

Lu Ran kept looking up, and then up again...

A tall and mighty female general stood imposingly.

The Barbaric Woman!

This was a gray stone sculpture, but Lu Ran accurately imagined her real appearance.

Messy red hair, bloodthirsty red pupils.

The wild smile at the corner of her mouth.

Armored and wielding an axe, exuding a menacing air!

Her extremely sultry body could be described as "arrogant."

Hmm... truly damn wild!

"Please, Lord Immortal Sheep, lend a hand!" Lu Ran spoke in a deep tone.

"Buzz!!"

The Barbaric Woman sculpture trembled.

Mists and silk threads shot out from the massive sculpture, tightly connecting to the tiny Lu Ran.

Mist Realm, Stream Realm, River Realm...

River Realm·Second Rank!

Lu Ran sighed inwardly, just Second Rank?

Next month, there'll be a lot to do.

Subsequently, Lu Ran went to the Tangled Silk Shadow sculpture.

Alright,

another "arrogant" female Evil Demon.

This one, however, was of the sexy and enchanting type.

Extremely seductive and bewitching!

In Lu Ran's eyes, the Tangled Silk Shadow was far more enticing than "Big Chang Ying"!

"Sinful, sinful."

Lu Ran murmured to himself to prevent his path from being disturbed by the temptress.

With the help of the Black Fire Sheep Head, the Tangled Silk Shadow sculpture was activated.

Mist Realm, Stream Realm, River Realm...

River Realm-First Rank!

Just the First Rank?

Lu Ran grimaced, not daring to raise his head to look at the Tangled Silk Shadow's sculpture.

Even though he didn't look up, he could still see under her ragged skirt, those exquisitely sculpted stone feet.

She was standing on her tiptoes,

the arch of her foot was so elegant.

It was as if every detail of this sexy physique could captivate and mesmerize.

Damn,

she's purely a disaster!

You can just stand there; why go on tiptoes...

Lu Ran simply closed his eyes.

Moments later, Lu Ran in the small bedroom opened his eyes.

He immediately got up and bowed towards the small shrine, "Thank you for your help, Lord Immortal Sheep."

The divine being did not respond.

Ever since Lord Immortal Sheep mentioned preparing to open the Divine Ruins, it seldom spoke.

Lu Ran no longer bothered the divine being and approached a small table, sitting down.

The techniques of the Barbaric Woman Clan were mostly high-output and unsuitable for practice at home.

But the techniques of the Tangled Silk Shadow Clan could be played with.

Droplets of Tangled Silk Needle,

imprisoning the enemy with Tangled Silk Web.

Controlling all things with Tangled Silk Line,

disrupting the enemy's Divine Power with Tangled Silk Chaos.

Exceedingly heavy, capable of shooting out myriad silk threads, the Tether Silk Robe.

And the terrifying Illusion Technique, Tangled Silk Pupil, that torments the spirit.

"Swish~"

Lu Ran raised his hand, twining fine red threads around his fingers.

It's said:

Better to barge into King Yan's palace than to touch a silk thread!

Little Calico, today I'm going to let you touch... eh?

Lu Ran's hand stiffened.

Little Calico was not home.

Tch~

What a pity.

Such a blessing, and Little Calico couldn't enjoy it.

Hmm... how about visiting Jiang's Family?

Lu Ran raised his hand, gazing at the beautiful red threads wound around his fingers.

Four words suddenly popped into his mind:

Dongfang Bubai?!

His fingers were slender, his palm sufficiently fair, making him perfectly able to cosplay the character!

Lu Ran had practiced martial arts since childhood, and the hand he frequently used for holding a blade was somewhat rough.

But Lu Ran had received a divine blessing!

Twice!

This husk of his was flawless in every detail.

Speaking of which, even if he hadn't been blessed, Lu Ran also possessed the Healing Technique·Caged Fire (Bath).

This fire, not only healed wounds but also nourished the skin...

"Calico ah Calico, no blessings for you~"

Lu Ran waved his hand, and the red silk threads on his fingers quietly vanished.

Today he wouldn't become Dongfang Bubai.

When he went to the Black Soul Wood Forest, he'd jab those Soul-splitting Demons with needles...

Lu Ran picked up his phone to check the time.

Seven fifty in the morning.

The train to Liaodong Province·Jinchuan City was at nine ten.

Lu Ran hesitated for a moment, then sent a WeChat message to Jiang Ruyi, planning to report his itinerary.

But unexpectedly,

Si Xianxian sent a WeChat message:

"The young mistress has just completed her morning exercise and is bathing."

Ran: "..."

Sister Xian'er: "Is there anything you need, Young Master? Shall I relay it?"

Ran: "How are you finding Luoxian Mountain?"

The message had just been sent when a video call popped up.

Lu Ran directly answered, seeing the very cheerful Sister Xian'er.

"Young Master~" Sister Xian'er's voice was sweet, her smile even sweeter.

Lu Ran looked at the background behind her, knowing she was in the master bedroom, and asked, "Getting used to living there?"

Just one question, and Si Xianxian revealed her true self, pouting, "It's okay."

Ran: "Do you find it boring?"

Si Xianxian casually straightened her disheveled hair and huffed, "At least it's better than at home; no one nags me here."

Ran chuckled, "Your heart, has it calmed a bit?"

Si Xianxian stared at Lu Ran's face, a surge of gratitude welling up inside her.

As a Fierce Heavenly believer, she knew better than anyone else what she truly needed.

Si Xianxian was grateful at heart, but aloud she said, "It's alright."

Ran advised, "You could enjoy the mountain flowers and plants with Ruyi more often.

Watch Cang Mountain, Erhai, and the evening sunsets."

The words spoken by Lu Ran were precisely what Jiang Ruyi had been doing with Si Xianxian every day for nearly a month.

Si Xianxian knew in her heart that this young couple was trying to help her.

Or rather: they were saving her.

Si Xianxian rested her chin on her hand, uncommonly not being stubborn, and whispered, "Hmm."

She didn't consider what would happen after leaving Luoxian Village or how to handle herself if sent back to her old self.

It had been so long; Si Xianxian had grown accustomed to living in the moment, not thinking about the future.

Those beautiful lives, those happy times, were never meant for someone like her.

If she was truly fortunate to have a segment of it...

It was either charity from others.

Or something she had stolen.

Ran: "Have you visited Luoxian Village?"

Si Xianxian's smile grew even sweeter: "Ruyi and I often go to worship Lord Immortal Sheep.

The uncles and aunties in the village are very enthusiastic and treat me well."

A world filled with tolerance and kindness, for the Lie Tian Girl, seemed somewhat unrealistic.

"That's good." Lu Ran nodded, "Try to stay longer.

If you really want to have fun, let Ruyi take you out to the city."

Ran: "Lu Ran."

"What?"

Si Xianxian: "I'm not someone who likes to travel everywhere."

Ran: "Ah?"

Aren't you being hypocritical?

Have you forgotten how you begged me to take you flying everywhere?

Si Xianxian shrugged, "It's only after coming here that I realized I don't actually like traveling."

Lu Ran didn't respond, seeming to understand her meaning.

Si Xianxian fell silent for a moment, then said, "Or perhaps I still like it, but it doesn't matter.

I know very clearly that I prefer staying here more."

Ran: "I can't guarantee other things, but as long as you want, you can stay there forever."

Si Xianxian lowered her eyelids and whispered softly, "Thank you."

"Who are you chatting with?"

Suddenly, a cool voice came through.

Si Xianxian's demeanor changed, and she looked up smiling, "Has the young mistress finished bathing and dressing?

Quick, quick, it's the Young Master on the phone!"

Sister Xian'er!" Jiang Ruyi was quite helpless.

This had been a joke between Lu Ran and Si Xianxian, but Si Xianxian had really taken the title to heart.

In daily life, Si Xianxian listened to Jiang Ruyi attentively, serving her as much as possible.

This made Jiang Ruyi quite uncomfortable.

She had seriously discussed this with Si Xianxian, hoping their relationship would be that of good girlfriends.

But Si Xianxian was more stubborn than expected.

Jiang Ruyi couldn't change the reverence the Immortal Sheep sect had for her, nor the hierarchical beliefs of the Immortal Sheep believers.

Likewise, she couldn't change Si Xianxian's attitude.

And all because of one person.

Because of the guy on the phone screen.

"Tsk, absolutely beautiful~"

The hateful guy uttered embarrassing words.

Jiang Ruyi's face turned slightly red, and she discreetly glanced at Lu Ran, quietly explaining, "I've been trying to restrain myself.

Now, when Sister Xian'er look at me, she doesn't get lost in thought anymore."

Ran: "Are you sure it's not because she's seen you so often that she's gotten used to it?"

Jiang Ruyi looked dissatisfied and scrunched her nose at him.

Her cool demeanor, coupled with a playful expression, had a distinct charm.

Lu Ran admired her quietly for a moment and then began, "This month, I'll be participating in the 'Heavenly Pride' event, then heading to the Emperor's Mausoleum, and sparring with the Evil Spear Emperor again..."

Jiang Ruyi listened, quietly watching his eyes.

Her thoughts, drifting far away.

Chapter 377: assigned to Luoxian Pavilion!

In the next twenty-plus days, Lu Ran traveled east and west, busy yet fulfilled.

He caused chaos in Black Grave Mound and ran wild in the Black Soul Wood Forest.

He joined the "Heavenly Pride" team in giving love and contributing effort.

He also traveled to the Three Qin Land, where, in the Demon Cave-Emperor Tomb, he drank and chatted merrily with the Evil Spear Emperor.

Why say they drank and chatted merrily?

Because the Evil Spear Emperor Clan loved to drink a little alcohol.

The strong smell of alcohol

was the best way to draw out this clan.

It is worth mentioning that First-class God-Gun Ruin also loved to drink.

Among the gods of Da Xia, this old codger Gun Ruin was also one of the few deities infatuated with worldly pleasures.

Honestly, Lu Ran always felt something was off!

Gun Ruin and the Evil Spear Emperor both used spears.

They even shared the same hobby, shouldn't they appreciate each other?

Instead, they became mortal enemies!

Well...

Perhaps it was because Gun Ruin was aloof and solitary, while the Evil Spear Emperor was overly arrogant.

On the morning of the tenth day of the twelfth lunar month, Lu Ran stepped out of the Emperor Tomb.

His heart was full of accomplishment!

After more than twenty days of hard fighting, the Black Lantern Evil Sculpture, Soul-splitting Demon Evil Sculpture, and Evil Spear Emperor Evil Sculpture had all reached River Realm·First Rank!

Black Lantern and Soul-splitting Demon, none had the grand spells of the Jiang Realm.

However, the Evil Spear Emperor Clan possessed a grand spell of Jiang Realm—Sky-reaching Demon Spear!

This spear, pieced together by dark clouds, was a hundred meters long!

Not only was its size massive, its destructive power was also astonishing!

Lu Ran knew nothing about spear techniques.

But that didn't stop him from using a spear to stab people.

Or, Lu Ran could treat the Sky-reaching Demon Spear as a javelin and fiercely throw it.

Not a bad method for demolition...

Moreover, during this training, Lu Ran didn't make any more Yan Zhi paper figures.

Those yearning eyes of Sister Yan, Lu Ran never wanted to experience again.

Here he was, tensely preparing for battle and enduring rigorous training.

And yet, he ended up feeling like a total jerk!

So, Lu Ran chose the Jade-faced Snake.

Sister Snake good, Sister Snake wonderful~

Sister Snake looks at me like I'm trash!

Completely indifferent to love.

Sister Snake was truly amazing, fighting the Evil Spear Emperor single-handedly, with both sides seeing victories and defeats, evenly matched.

Outer Heaven Female Immortal VS Evil Demon Emperor!

Lu Ran immensely enjoyed each battle.

Unfortunately,

the joy of fighting crickets was something others couldn't experience.

In the morning of the tenth day, Lu Ran arrived at Yeyu City.

He didn't choose to return to the capital or go back to Rain Alley City to prepare for "Heavenly Pride".

He missed his fiancée.

He had been fighting continuously for more than twenty days without a moment's relaxation.

Couldn't he enjoy a bit of leisure time?

The moment the plane landed, Lu Ran wished he could immediately use the Evil Mirror Demon Technique·Mirror Flower Moon!

From inside the cabin, step directly into Luoxian Mountain Residence...

Luckily, Lu Ran restrained himself.

The Evil Mirror Demon's grand spell of Jiang Realm·Mirror Flower Moon had a considerably long teleportation distance!

Within the same dimension, teleporting a hundred kilometers was no problem.

The prerequisite was: Lu Ran had to have a clear understanding of the teleportation area.

If he had been there before, from the level of Evil Technique·Mirror Flower Moon, pinpointing the spatial coordinates would make the spellcasting more successful!

In the end, Lu Ran honestly climbed the mountain.

Luoxian Mountain was indeed large, but with Immortal Sheep Believers picking herbs all over the mountain, one might bump into an old lady anywhere.

Luo Xian Residence and Luoxian Pavilion area, however, were forbidden areas.

But if Jiang Ruyi or Si Xianxian came across him, that could not be explained away.

Lu Ran had no choice but to resign himself to mountaineering and reached the exterior.

Before offering incense to Lord Immortal Goat, Lu Ran specifically instructed the Believers guarding the exterior not to reveal his whereabouts.

...

"Sister Xian'er?"

In the deep forest, a calling voice resonated.

"I'm here!" Si Xianxian loudly responded from beside some bushes.

She wore a straw hat, and next to her feet was a bamboo basket, somewhat filled with wild vegetables, but mostly mushrooms.

It had rained in Yeyu City the previous two days.

The little Xianxian, picking mushrooms, was unbearably happy.

"It's noon, time to head back."

Jiang Ruyi stood on a high spot, draped in a white Taoist robe, exuding an elegant fairy-like charm.

"Right away!"

Si Xianxian eyed the chubby bolete mushrooms, gently patting the umbrella-like mushroom cap.

"Pat~pat~"

"Grow longer, sister will come again next time."

Si Xianxian patted several times before grasping the chubby stalk and plucking the mushroom.

Her fair hands became dirty.

But her gaze remained clear and pure.

Though she was around twenty years old, she looked like a little girl of a few years.

"Ruyi, look!" Si Xianxian held the bolete mushroom as she ran out.

Jiang Ruyi smiled lightly, "Where's the bamboo basket?"

"Ah, wait for me!" Si Xianxian turned and ran back into the bushes.

Jiang Ruyi smiled and shook her head, a hand resting on her wrist, her fingertips gently twiddling a small red bean on her bracelet.

"Missing him again?" Si Xianxian, carrying the bamboo basket, noticed Jiang Ruyi's action.

Si Xianxian had been living on Luoxian Mountain for a long time, always staying close to Jiang Ruyi.

She knew that whenever Ruyi thought of someone, she would always caress the red bean bracelet.

Jiang Ruyi, realizing her thoughts were detected, immediately turned and walked away:

"I'm going to take a nap."

Si Xianxian took a few steps forward, grinning as she looked at Jiang Ruyi's profile: "If you miss him, just call him!"

Jiang Ruyi gently shook her head.

Si Xianxian walked in front of Jiang Ruyi, walking backward: "Today is the tenth, he should have walked out of the Demon Cave, he should be able to receive calls."

Jiang Ruyi's expression was a mix of chiding and annoyance: "Watch the road."

Si Xianxian sighed heavily: "Poor Ruyi sister.

You have to hold your phone again and replay the video report of him participating in the 'Heavenly Pride' event from a week ago~"

"Hey, Sister Xian'er!" Jiang Ruyi's face was slightly red, somewhat embarrassed.

"Haha~" Si Xianxian burst into cheerful laughter.

She discovered something interesting.

Jiang Ruyi, this Jiang Realm Great Power, graceful and elegant, commanding a powerful presence.

In this Luoxian Mountain,

her conduct was worthy of the repeated titles of "Mountain Master's Wife", "Lady Luo Xian".

Only when the topic involved that person would Jiang Ruyi act like an eighteen-nineteen-year-old girl, often blushing.

"Don't laugh!"

"Mhm mhm." Si Xianxian nodded repeatedly, instantly breaking it, "Shall I ask him then?"

"Stop talking."

"Mm!" Si Xianxian pinched her two fingers at her mouth, making a zipping action.

Jiang Ruyi was both amused and annoyed as she glanced at Si Xianxian.

Sister Xian'er was becoming more cheerful, making communication easier, and there was no longer much concern that she would burst into rage and spurt blood all over.

Jiang Ruyi saw all of this and felt joy in her heart.

Just that...

After Sister Xian'er became mentally healthy, her mouth became sharper at teasing people.

"Sigh." Jiang Ruyi sighed lightly.

"Mm! Mm~" Si Xianxian made a gesture as if she wanted to speak.

Jiang Ruyi: "Go ahead."

But Si Xianxian just pouted her lips, reaching toward Jiang Ruyi.

In Jiang Ruyi's helpless eyes, there was a hint of indulgence.

She reached out to Si Xianxian's mouth corner, pretending to slide horizontally, opening the nonexistent zipper.

Si Xianxian then spoke: "It's only five days until 'Heavenly Pride' begins.

This is the last season of 'Heavenly Pride', the last battle!

Even if you don't miss him, as his fiancée, as Lady Luo Xian, you should still remind him, cheer him on...eh?"

Jiang Ruyi's finger fell on Si Xianxian's mouth corner, zipping it shut again.

Si Xianxian looked dissatisfied, but Jiang Ruyi seemed oblivious.

She walked silently forward, her fingertips playing with the red bean bracelet, gazing towards the northern sky.

Not disturbing him,

not letting him be distracted or worried.

That must be the greatest support for him.

Si Xianxian carried the bamboo basket with both hands, no longer joking.

She had persuaded and teased enough; since Ruyi was unwilling, it was time for her to stop.

She silently followed behind Jiang Ruyi, watching that fairy-like drifting figure.

Suddenly, for a moment,

Si Xianxian felt that the figure was somewhat forlorn.

The two of them, one after another, returned to Luo Xian Residence.

In a corner of the courtyard, a bamboo basket was placed.

Jiang Ruyi wasn't in the mood to eat, casually saying, "You eat, I'm going to rest."

As a Jiang Realm powerhouse, she didn't need to eat.

"Creak~"

Jiang Ruyi arrived at the front of the mountain residence, pushing the door open.

She swayed her wrist, feeling the red bean jade on the bracelet, then turned left into the bedroom.

Suddenly a hand reached over!

It encircled her slender waist.

Jiang Ruyi was startled out of her thoughts, her body trembling, and immediately, eight Golden Jade Talisman Stones appeared around her!

Divine Technique·Golden Jade Eight Talismans!

"Eh?" someone exclaimed.

Jiang Ruyi's eyes turned incredibly cold.

The temperature in the surroundings dropped sharply, and the bedroom felt like an ice cave!

As she lifted her beautiful eyes in an instant, a certain debauchee had already ascended to heaven.

But in the next moment, her angry expression changed.

It turned astonished, and then...

both shocked and delighted!

"What's wrong?" Si Xianxian quickly ran in, then raised her eyes.

In mid-air, a person was firmly restrained.

Two Golden Jade Talisman Stones, one in front and one behind, were tightly clamped to Lu Ran's chest and back, fiercely squeezing together.

Another four Golden Jade Talisman Stones each clamped to the palms and back of Lu Ran's hands, squeezing and immobilizing them.

The remaining two Golden Jade Talisman Stones, were placed dangerously.

One pressed against Lu Ran's throat, another against his neck.

As a defensive technique, Divine Technique·Golden Jade Talisman was indeed formidable.

The durability of the stone tablets was beyond doubt.

And as a Jiang Realm Divine Technique, the force of the Golden Jade Talisman was unquestionable!

With just a thought from Jiang Ruyi, the trapped person's chest, hands, and neck would all be crushed and ground to powder.

"Pfft...hahahaha~"

Si Xianxian couldn't help but laugh out loud.

Jiang Ruyi, looking at the figure she had been pining for, for some reason felt a hint of grievance welling up inside her.

Lu Ran sheepishly said: "Can you let me go first?"

Si Xianxian stepped forward, looked up at Lu Ran fixed in the air, and joked: "What a bold little thief!

You dared to intrude into our Lady Luo Xian's boudoir?

Say, are you tired of living?"

Lu Ran: "..."

Oh?

Adding to the drama?

Si Xianxian moved closer to Jiang Ruyi: "Madam, you can't let him go, this could ruin your reputation!"

If the Mountain Master finds out, then it's all over!"

Jiang Ruyi's lips curved slightly, looking up at Lu Ran: "What should we do?"

Si Xianxian gestured a hand knife, whispering: "Let's kill him to silence him!"

In these deep mountains and old forests, we can just find a place, bury him, and no one will ever find out."

Jiang Ruyi nodded lightly: "Okay, go near Luoxian Pavilion to find a place to bury the body."

Si Xianxian paused: "Luoxian Pavilion?"

Jiang Ruyi softly instructed: "Choose carefully.

You don't need to return tonight, just stay in the pavilion and pick a good spot."

Si Xianxian: "..."

Lu Ran's expression was quite wonderful, almost bursting out in laughter.

Poor Sister Xian'er,

was she being assigned to Luoxian Pavilion?

Jiang Ruyi instructed: "Go ahead."

Lu Ran watched Si Xianxian, holding back laughter.

"Hmph!" Si Xianxian fiercely glared at Lu Ran, then turned her head and left.

Jiang Ruyi waved her hand, the Golden Jade Eight Talismans quietly dispersed, and Lu Ran landed steadily on the ground.

Lu Ran finally laughed: "Madam, this maid of yours is quite vicious, huh?

Both murdering to silence and burying in the mountains."

Jiang Ruyi also smiled, glancing at Lu Ran: "I wonder who found her for me."

Lu Ran stepped forward and wrapped his arms around Jiang Ruyi's slender waist:

"Madam, when will the Mountain Master return?"

Jiang Ruyi's complexion changed.

Then, her cheeks turned completely red.

She smacked Lu Ran's shoulder hard, both embarrassed and annoyed: "Hey, stop messing around, don't talk nonsense...mm!"

Chapter 378: Half Day Joy

Silver steps swayed beneath adorned hairpins and glowing cheeks,

Warmly tucked in a lotus tent through the spring night.

Clouds dispersed and rain ceased, the afternoon sun was just right.

In a corner of the mountain abode's courtyard, two clad in white robes were seated at a table.

Lu Ran basked lazily in the sun, gazing at the distant serene forest.

Jiang Ruyi, holding a porcelain teapot, silently poured tea.

Watching his deeply contemplative expression, Jiang Ruyi picked up a small porcelain cup and gently placed it before Lu Ran on the table.

From initially being shocked and joyous about Lu Ran's sudden appearance, to inexplicably feeling wronged,

And now,

Feeling his real presence before her, all her complex emotions dissipated like smoke.

Blue skies and soft breezes,

The mountain wind lifted his white robe, carrying fallen leaves that floated past his peaceful gaze.

In that moment,

Jiang Ruyi wished time could stand still here forever.

Regarding this world, she harbored no grand dreams or desires.

Regrettably, fate plays its tricks.

In her youth, she met a proud, ambitious boy.

Promises he made still echoed in her ears.

Some people, some words, once spoken, leave indelible marks.

The wind will remember, so will the clouds.

And so will the passing years.

And she would remember too.

Whether he remembered or not, she had always been there, accompanying him on his journey.

However long Lu Ran was lost in thought, Jiang Ruyi sat quietly just as long.

When Lu Ran finally snapped back to reality and turned to her, he caught her averting her gaze.

A hint of fluster flashed across her face.

A faint pink tinted the delicate lobes of the young girl's pale ears.

"What are you thinking about?"

Jiang Ruyi picked up the small tea cup, speaking softly before taking a sip.

Lu Ran asked, "The New Year is approaching, what are your plans?"

Jiang Ruyi fiddled with the white porcelain tea cup, "I won't be going back."

"Hmm?" Lu Ran expressed his surprise.

"My master said my swordsmanship has just begun to advance, and I am making significant daily progress.

I want to continue this state."

"How about your uncle and aunt?"

"I was thinking of bringing my parents here for the New Year. I could find them a place to stay temporarily in Luoxian Village."

"Of course, that's possible," Lu Ran promptly nodded.

The Jiang Family had toiled hard all their lives, confined to a cursed land.

Taking a holiday during the New Year to relax and recuperate in Cai Nan was something Lu Ran wholeheartedly endorsed.

Jiang Ruyi showed a slight smile, "Hmm."

Lu Ran thought for a moment, "Then I'll also bring Little Yuanxi over, how about we celebrate New Year's together?"

"What about Aunt Qiao?"

Lu Ran shook his head, "She's in seclusion, not emerging until New Year's Eve."

Jiang Ruyi nodded silently, her fingertips gently touching the tea cup.

Suddenly, Lu Ran suggested, "Why not call them now? Today's the tenth, a few days before the city lockdown.

Why not have your uncle and aunt come over now?"

"Hmm?"

Lu Ran shrugged, "Apply for a holiday or something. Work is never-ending.

Come earlier, have a peaceful fifteenth.

Before the New Year, we can also take your uncle and aunt to see Cang Mountain and Erhai, visit Dali Ancient Town."

Energy fluctuations often attract the Evil Demon's invasion,

But this place is, after all, the residence of a deity.

Of course, Lord Immortal Goat wouldn't intervene lightly, God's protection is the last line of defense.

Mainly, because the Da Xia military is stationed here!

The corps guarding Demon Cave and Galaxy Bay are exceedingly strong and have always secured Luoxian Mountain comprehensively.

One word: Stable!

Jiang Ruyi pondered for a while before nodding.

Suddenly, Lu Ran's gaze shifted, seeing the door of the mountain residence open, the Cold Night Sword slowly flying in.

Resting on the sword was a mobile phone, presented beside its owner.

Jiang Ruyi made a call to her parents, Lu Ran's ears twitched, and he turned to look behind.

He spotted only half a head peeking over the flower-covered fence.

Oh?

Isn't that the malevolent maid of the mountain master's wife?

Maid Si peeked around, her beautiful eyes meeting Lu Ran's.

Maid Si didn't duck back down.

Despite sneaking around, she acted as if she was entitled to be seen.

Lu Ran, amused, gestured for her to come over.

"Hmph." Maid Si leapt into the air and vaulted over the fence.

Lu Ran made a quiet gesture, indicating Jiang Ruyi who was still on the phone.

Maid Si pouted but didn't act like a third wheel and simply sat at the table.

Lu Ran took the empty tea cup and motioned it towards Maid Si.

She, engrossed in peeling pistachios, pretended not to notice.

The calling Jiang Ruyi's lips curled slightly.

She too pushed her tea cup towards Maid Si.

"..."

Moments later, Maid Si grudgingly picked up the porcelain teapot, pouring tea for both.

Lu Ran blissfully picked up his tea cup, sipping it and winked at Maid Si.

She faced the sky, rolling her eyes at the clouds above.

Minutes later, Jiang Ruyi hung up.

"Here." Maid Si had peeled many pistachios, passing a small plate to Jiang Ruyi.

Jiang Ruyi softly said, "My parents are coming the day after tomorrow, let's visit the ancient city together after the fifteenth."

Maid Si nodded repeatedly, "Sounds good."

Lu Ran surprised, "You agree just like that?"

"You have quite the influence with my parents," Jiang Ruyi explained as she passed the plate to Lu Ran.

Maid Si: "..."

Unabashedly, Lu Ran picked up a pistachio, crunching loudly.

Such childishness prompted Maid Si to roll her eyes at the blue sky.

Jiang Ruyi couldn't help but smile, asking, "The New Year is nearly upon us, what are Sister Xian'er's plans?"

"I..." Maid Si opened her mouth, turning to look at Lu Ran, "Can I spend New Year here?"

Lu Ran nodded immediately, "As I said, you can stay here as long as you like."

Maid Si's face lit up with joy!

She picked up a pistachio, intending to feed it to Lu Ran.

Jiang Ruyi raised her eyelids, just watching.

Lu Ran jumped back startled, "Hey! Hey?"

"Oh!" Maid Si, holding the pistachio, shifted her target mid-way, headed towards Jiang Ruyi's mouth.

Jiang Ruyi looked somewhat helplessly at Maid Si.

Maid Si kept appeasing, saying "I was wrong, too excited," as she finally popped the pistachio into Lady Luo Xian's lips.

"And Aunt Si?" Jiang Ruyi asked softly.

Seeing Jiang Ruyi's gentle demeanor, Maid Si breathed a sigh of relief.

She replied hurriedly, "She went back to her maternal home, like every year, mum takes me back for the New Year."

As she spoke, Maid Si buried herself in peeling pistachios, her voice growing fainter, "They probably wish I wouldn't come back.

Heh.

Without me, the whole family would probably be happier, not frightened all the time."

Jiang Ruyi's heart softened, grasping Maid Si's hand gently, "You have us."

"Hmm." Maid Si's face brightened into a sweet smile.

Sickly sweet.

She picked up another pistachio and brought it to Jiang Ruyi's lips.

Lu Ran watched this tender scene, feeling somewhat moved.

Speaking of which, every time Lu Ran felt truly happy, this cruel world seemed poised to strike him down.

Lu Ran turned towards the distant forest.

What form would the next blow take?

The upcoming fifteenth night of the twelfth lunar month?

Or the Divine Ruins that would be opened after the fifteenth of the first lunar month?

Hmm...those thoughts seemed incorrect.

The blows raining down on humanity occurred daily, irrelevant to personal happiness.

In this harsh world, suffering is the dominant theme.

So,

Steal half a day's leisure when you can, and enjoy it openly.

Don't borrow trouble and sorrow ahead of time.

"Lu Ran, Lu Ran? Young Master!"

"Hmm?" Lu Ran came back to reality.

Maid Si, looking at the clouds, rolled her eyes again, "Won't respond unless called Young Master, huh?"

Lu Ran laughed, "What's up?"

Maid Si's eyes shone with excitement, "Ruyi and I were just talking, in this 'Heavenly Pride' exam, if you score 134 points, you'll be the true Number One Heavenly Pride of Da Xia!"

Lu Ran nodded.

He was leading the second-ranked by 17 points!

In theory, if he scored another 134 points this time, all would be well.

But, Lu Ran didn't think the second place could score a perfect 150 points.

So, the score Lu Ran needed could be slightly lower.

Maid Si playfully asked, "You feeling confident?"

Lu Ran, "It depends on the battlefield, on what challenges the Evil Demon presents."

Maid Si unconvinced, "Even without any special incidents, with your speed, patrolling the city all night, you could surely hack your way to 134 points, right?"

Lu Ran shook his head, "The scoring standards in River Realm are different from those in River Realm."

Maid Si, growing curious, "Aren't you usually very boastful? How come you're being modest now?"

"You will be the Number One Heavenly Pride of Da Xia."

Suddenly, Jiang Ruyi spoke softly yet firmly.

Lu Ran raised an eyebrow slightly.

Jiang Ruyi did not speak further but merely watched him quietly, her eyes filled with pride.

He always had been.

Always.

Chapter 379: North Wind Correspondence

Lunar January 13, Beijing International Airport.

Lu Ran had just exited the arrival gate when he was engulfed in a full embrace by a graceful figure.

"Whoa!"

He took a step back and looked down at the young girl in his arms.

Qiao Yuansi wore a mask and a white knitted hat suitable for winter, adorned with a cute pompom.

After all, she had once appeared on "Heavenly Pride."

And because she was Lu Ran's younger sister, she became extremely popular online.

"Bro~"

The young girl looked up with a smile, her eyes curving into beautiful crescents.

Lu Ran smiled too, lightly pinching the pompom on her hat, "How come the bigger you get, the more clingy you become?"

Qiao Yuansi wrinkled her little nose in feigned annoyance, "Hmph!"

Damn you!

If you promised me you wouldn't challenge the Divine Ruins, if you didn't leave me...

I could ignore you for a whole year!

Well, maybe just one month.

A whole year is such a long time.

Qiao Yuansi thought to herself but did not voice her thoughts.

Raised by Qiao Wanju, Qiao Yuansi had learned from a young age that:

Some things can be gained with the right amount of coquettishness.

But for some matters,

no amount of crying or fussing would help.

If she overdid it, punishment and apologies awaited her; any sadness had to be dealt with by herself.

"Where are they?" Lu Ran spoke softly, suddenly feeling that Little Yuanxi's arms had tightened around him.

"They're waiting in the car for you. The four of us standing together is too conspicuous," Qiao Yuansi whispered.

Lu Ran was puzzled, unsure why his sister's mood had suddenly dropped.

In the pick-up area, countless pairs of eyes stole glances at the two.

Though both siblings had disguised themselves, the features of a heroic young man and a delicate maiden could be seen between their brows.

"Let's go," said Lu Ran, patting Little Yuanxi's back.

Without realizing it, his voice became much gentler.

"Um," Qiao Yuansi responded, grasping Lu Ran's clothing without moving.

"Shall we go?"

"Carry me."

"There are so many people around, don't make a fuss."

"I don't care~," Qiao Yuanxi uncharacteristically protested.

Lu Ran was somewhat helpless and thought of a compromise, "How about I give you a piggyback ride?"

Qiao Yuansi shook her head, "No, I want you to carry me."

Lu Ran: "..."

He lowered his head, but saw Little Yuanxi looking up with a stubborn expression, not avoiding his gaze.

Lu Ran felt as if he had realized something.

He wanted to say, "I'll come back," he wanted to say, "I won't die."

But even Lu Ran himself didn't believe these comforting words.

"Alright," Lu Ran said, bending down and sliding one arm behind her back and the other under her knees.

"Hehe~," Qiao Yuansi giggled happily.

It was her favorite princess carry.

Indeed, those who are favored always act without fear.

Qiao Yuansi nestled her face in Lu Ran's embrace, rubbing it like a little cat.

Lu Ran spoke with annoyance, "All this effort to wear a hat and mask to avoid attention, and now look, everyone's watching us."

Qiao Yuansi muttered, "Who cares about other people."

Lu Ran: "Heh, not worried about attracting attention now?"

"Shh!" Qiao Yuansi butted her head, tapping Lu Ran's face with the pompom on her hat, "Don't talk."

Let me savor this moment and fill up my memories.

When Lu Ran, guided by Qiao Yuansi, arrived in front of the big G, Wang Ling and the others were quite taken aback.

"Ran bro!"

"What's the matter, Ran bro? Did Yuanxi sprain her ankle?"

Listening to their concerned questions, Lu Ran snorted: "No sprain, just whimsy."

Guan Yiren: "..."

Niu Zhengzheng scratched his head.

Wang Ling reacted, then laughed heartily, "Being whimsical only works if someone indulges you, haha!"

"Shut it, skeleton," Qiao Yuansi complained, slightly embarrassed.

Still grinning, Wang Ling opened the car door for Qiao family's darling daughter.

Lu Ran leaned into the car and placed Little Yuanxi in the center of the back seat, teasing, "Satisfied now?"

"Hmph," Qiao Yuansi fluttered her little hand, "Stand down."

Lu Ran: "..."

On the other side, Guan Yiren had just gotten in the car and couldn't help but suppress a chuckle at the sight of Lu Ran being rebuffed.

Lu Ran put the weapons in the trunk and they quickly got into the car, driving away from the airport, heading toward Rain Alley City.

Qiao Yuansi looked gloomy, leaning against Guan Yiren.

Until they hit the highway, Wang Ling spoke, "Ran bro."

"What is it?"

"On the 15th day of the twelfth lunar month, Rain Alley City might not be very peaceful."

"Did you consult someone?" Lu Ran looked out at the snowy scene from the car window, feeling a bit chill in his heart.

Wang Ling: "Someone from my family asked. Plus, Yiren's family sent a message too—her family's news is always very accurate."

Lu Ran nodded silently.

Niu Zhengzheng suddenly said, "Let's look on the bright side, Ran bro can score high! Compete for the position of the first Heavenly Pride!"

Guan Yiren's brow furrowed slightly, casting a stealthy glance at Lu Ran.

Although Lu Ran showed no reaction, she still spoke gently,

"Got to make the best of a bad situation."

Suddenly, Lu Ran asked, "You knew in advance and still jumped into the fire?"

Wang Ling smiled carelessly: "Always been Peng Bei Sea, Feng Chao Yang.

Rain Alley City isn't a deathtrap.

It is the battlefield for people like us!"

"Good!!" Niu Zhengzheng nodded vigorously, "Your broad-mindedness...

Sooner or later you'll advance to River Realm!"

Lu Ran found it reasonable and nodded, "Choosing the time is not as good as crashing into it, let's do it tonight."

Qiao Yuansi finally chimed in, "Right, right, right! Let's prepare and ascend tonight!"

Wang Ling laughed heartily, "I'll hold you to that!"

The atmosphere in the car improved a lot, but before they could engage in much conversation, a phone call interrupted them.

Lu Ran took out his buzzing phone and glanced at the screen, his expression darkening.

No need for others to read his expression.

The extreme emotions of a Jiang Realm Great Power, like dark clouds, instantly overshadowed everyone's hearts.

After a moment of silence, Lu Ran still answered it, "Sister."

From the other end of the call, a hoarse voice came through:

"Third day of the first lunar month, North Wind City."

Lu Ran ignored the message and asked with concern, "What's wrong with your throat, didn't you rest well?"

Deng Yuxiang's voice was very soft, almost hoarse, "Are you coming?"

Lu Ran responded solemnly, "I will be there."

"Beep...beep...beep..."

Listening to the busy tone on the phone, Lu Ran silently put down the phone.

Qiao Yuansi left Guan Yiren's embrace and cautiously approached, "Bro, what's wrong?"

After a moment of silence, Lu Ran spoke softly, "You know my place in Heavenly Pride was yielded by a sister."

Qiao Yuansi nodded, "I know, you've mentioned her before. She ascended to River Realm?"

"Mm, she's always been in North Wind City..."

Lu Ran briefly explained Deng Yuxiang's situation, and as his words trailed off, a hush fell in the car.

Regarding the competition for the Divine Weapon Domain, no one could offer any words of comfort.

It was like that moment at the airport when facing Little Yuanxi, where he neither had the power nor the right to assure her that he would definitely return.

That he definitely wouldn't die.

After a while, Qiao Yuansi spoke softly, "I'll go with you."

"Okay," Lu Ran responded quietly.

Wang Ling asked, "Can I come along?"

Guan Yiren spoke softly, "I'd like to see North Wind City too, I've never been there."

Qiao Yuansi declined, "No need! Your families are so big. During New Year's, you're too busy to even pay respects to all the elders."

"That's right, Yuanxi, come spend the New Year with me at Luoxian Mountain."

"Luoxian Mountain? Great, Sister Ruyi will be there, right?"

"Mm."

Listening to the siblings' conversation, Guan Yiren turned her head to look out the window, her eyes shadowed with darkness.

...

At dusk, snowflakes drifted through Rain Alley.

The small town was wrapped in silver, looking very clean and quiet.

Amid the cold wind, an SUV stopped in front of an old residential building.

The siblings retrieved their luggage and, after bidding farewell to their teammates, entered their familiar home.

"Bro, shall we make a snowman later?" Qiao Yuansi was full of anticipation.

As he unlaced her shoes, Lu Ran replied, "Sure, after we eat.

You go tidy up first and sort out the luggage."

Speaking of luggage, Qiao Yuansi remembered something, "Oh, I brought you a gift!"

"A gift?"

"Yep." Qiao Yuansi slipped into her slippers, opened her suitcase right there, and pulled out a knife sheath.

It was a wooden knife sheath, all black with gold ornamentation.

Overall, it was strikingly similar to the two sheaths their mother had given.

At the end of the sheath, below the gold pattern, was a golden square character—Desolate.

The Desolate of Eight Desolate Annihilation?

"Do you like it?" Qiao Yuansi offered it with both hands as if presenting a treasure.

"Is it from your squad?"

"Of course it's from me!" Qiao Yuansi replied discontentedly, "Your blade sheath for Eight Desolate Annihilation looks so shabby.

I'm thoughtful enough to give you this, and you're crediting others."

"Thank you, I really like it," Lu Ran took the sheath, smiling.

"Hmph, I take it back."

"It's in my hands now, you think you can take it back?"

"You... robber!" Qiao Yuansi retorted, but seeing Lu Ran's fondness for the sheath, a smile crept onto her lips.

"Go tidy up your belongings," Lu Ran urged and headed to the small bedroom with the sheath in hand.

He took down the three knives from his back and placed each one on the wooden rack on the wall.

When it came to the Eight Desolate Blade, he fitted it with the new sheath before putting it in place.

Lu Ran stepped back to view the three identical knives and sheaths, seeing it as a positive sign.

Hopefully, the Eight Desolate Annihilation would follow in the steps of Rosy Clouds and Silent Night, quickly forming its own blade spirit.

After standing there for a while, Lu Ran closed the room door, then came before a small shrine with his hands clasped together:

"Lord Immortal Goat, when I was at Luoxian Mountain, there were others present, and I haven't been able to communicate with you."

"Since the advancement of Vermilion Paper Evil Sculpture to the River Realm level, during the past two months of training, I have been attempting to combine the Vermilion Paper Evil Technique·Paper Mache with our Divine Technique·Body of Sin."

"But..."

"You must have noticed, I have never succeeded."

Lu Ran fell silent for a moment, then asked softly, "Can these two techniques truly be combined?"

Inside the shrine, the Immortal Sheep Jade Carving remained silent and motionless.

In the ensuing silence, Lu Ran's thoughts churned.

This matter could be trivial or significant.

As a minor issue,

it could be that Lu Ran lacked ability and insight.

Or that Jiang Pin's Divine Technique and Evil Technique were still insufficient to support the fusion, lacking the necessary conditions.

On a larger scale, the situation could be quite revolutionary.

If the two techniques fundamentally couldn't be combined, it would mean that the philosophy of Lord Immortal Goat was mistaken.

Could a deity...

also have moments of unclear cognition and erroneous theory?

Is that possible?

A low and hoarse voice quietly entered his mind:

"Are you questioning me?"

After a moment of silence, Lu Ran spoke softly again, "Perhaps the disciple's understanding and application of the techniques are not profound enough.

I will continue to strive to comprehend them."

"Heh," Lord Immortal Goat scoffed coldly.

And then all fell silent again.

Chapter 380: The Last Battle

The fifteenth day of the twelfth lunar month arrived as scheduled.

Early in the morning, snowflakes drifted through the sky as streets and alleys were blanketed in white snow.

What should have been a desolate and bleak Rain Alley City suddenly transformed, resembling a serene fairy tale town.

The Lu siblings didn't ask Wang Ling to come pick them up.

They set out from home, walking toward Hedong Central Square.

"Attention! Salute!"

A solemn voice rang out abruptly.

Four Moon Gazers patrolling the streets stood straight and solemn, saluting the young man approaching them.

Lu Ran cupped his fist in his other hand and politely returned the salute.

He somewhat regretted choosing to walk.

Along the way, every patrol team and stationed Moon Gazer uniformly expressed their high reverence toward him.

All of this had nothing to do with the reputation of "Heavenly Pride."

In terms of status:

From the moment Lu Ran ascended to the River Realm and entered the top level of Wu Lie Building, he was no longer just an ordinary Guardian.

He was now a Human Clan Great Power, guarding the entire city!

From the perspective of Lu Ran's achievements, he had saved countless lives and families night after night on the fifteenth.

The salutes from the Moon Gazers were not just a matter of protocol, but truly from the heart.

"Hehe~"

Qiao Yuanxi was very happy, her eyes sparkling.

Every time she saw such scenes, her heart felt sweet.

She walked down the center of the road, deliberately choosing paths not yet trodden, leaving footprints in the smooth, white snow.

Lu Ran followed a few meters behind her, walking over the places she had passed.

Using his slightly larger footprints to cover her small ones.

He seemed to be enjoying himself.

In the past, when Lu Ran walked on pedestrian paths, he would deliberately step within each paving stone, never on the cracks.

He didn't know why.

It was like how sometimes, while walking, he would suddenly shoot a basketball.

For no apparent reason.

"Sis~"

"Mhm?"

"There's a team of Moon Gazers ahead, get ready to cup your fist in greeting!" Qiao Yuanxi walked backward, her hands clasped behind her, smiling sweetly as she looked at Lu Ran.

Lu Ran: "..."

Today, little Yuanxi wore a white down jacket, jeans, and Martin boots.

She still had on a white knit hat, its pom-pom bobbing.

She looked every inch the cute and charming girl; where was the demeanor of a powerful River Realm·Fifth Rank martial artist?

Indeed, on the tenth day, Qiao Yuanxi also advanced to River Realm Fifth Stage.

It was said that after her squad returned to school and submitted their mission, the school awarded the squad a Breakthrough Pill.

This pill was concocted from a variety of special plants found in a particular Demon Cave, combined and refined together.

As the name implies, it helps cultivators break through bottlenecks.

For Guan, Niu, and Wang, all being River Realm·Fifth Rank, further advancement only required insight, and taking such a pill was somewhat meaningless.

Naturally, the Breakthrough Pill fell into the hands of Qiao Yuanxi.

And then she ascended.

Beijing University really was terrifyingly rich in resources to spare even such rare medicines.

In this world, though combat pills exist, they are extremely niche.

More than 99% of Believers probably will never consume a single pill in their lifetimes.

Within Da Xia's pantheon, only one deity delves into this path.

Disciples of this faction, once they become River Realm Great Powers, can concoct various pills with their unique secret techniques.

One can only imagine just how rare these are.

Just considering the Breakthrough Pill's effect, people would rather collect a large amount of Demon Crystals to aid in their breakthroughs than to go through connections and spend a great deal of money to buy it.

That Qiao Yuanxi's squad received this Breakthrough Pill was not a reward for the monthly assessment but rather an end-of-term reward for the entire semester.

"Attention, salute!"

"Thank you for your hard work." Lu Ran cupped his fist in his hand, his attitude humble.

After the siblings passed the buildings, Qiao Yuanxi kept walking backward, winking at Lu Ran.

"Just enjoy the spectacle, have you thought about your path to advancement?" Lu Ran spoke up.

"Hmph." Qiao Yuanxi immediately turned around and walked forward, "I've thought about it long ago."

"What is it?" Lu Ran asked.

Qiao Yuanxi, with her hands behind her back and bobbing her head, the pom-pom on her knit hat bobbing along, looked adorably cunning:

"Indescribable, indescribable~"

She got this phrase from a novel she listened to, thinking it sounded mysterious and very cool.

Saying it out loud felt doubly thrilling~

Lu Ran: "..."

As Qiao Yuanxi stepped forward, she happily jumped.

Just like how Lu Ran would sometimes inexplicably shoot a basketball.

Lu Ran hesitated for a moment before saying, "Calm down and contemplate seriously.

Your body is ready, and you may ascend to the River Realm at any time. This is also your chance to surpass your teammates."

Guan, Niu, and Wang, all being first and second-class divine Believers, had higher talent than Qiao Yuanxi and had already ascended to River Realm·Fifth Stage earlier.

They had been stuck at River Realm·Fifth Stage for a while, which put the four members back at the same starting line.

At least, that's how it seems on the surface.

Should Qiao Yuanxi manage a stroke of genius or an epiphany, it will undoubtedly solidify her place on the team.

"Ey, don't talk about me!" Qiao Yuanxi protested, then added, "And when you put on the camera later, you're not allowed to talk about me either!"

"If you properly contemplate, I won't say anything."

Lu Ran certainly had no intention of publicly criticizing his own sister.

In fact, once he donned the miniature camera, he was also very restrained in his speech toward Guan, Niu, and Wang.

However, Lu Ran was Da Xia's Genius.

His various performances had already spoiled the viewers.

As brave and competent as the Beijing squad was in battle, in the viewers' eyes, they still had plenty of flaws.

Since their last appearance on "Heavenly Pride," the Beijing squad's reputation had been mixed, and the pressure was indeed not small.

But their fame had indeed been established.

Whether it was from the school, their family, or various social sectors, there was increased attention on the individuals.

As the siblings continued onward, with Lu Ran thanking everyone along the way, they finally arrived at Wu Lie Building.

By then, Guan, Niu, and Wang had already donned their equipment and were waiting at the building entrance.

"Brother Ran!"

"Morning!" Everyone greeted one another.

As the Lu siblings appeared on camera, Lu Ran's channel was immediately flooded with a deluge of comments.

"Emperor Ran has arrived~~~ Present your matters, or retreat if there's none~~~"

"I'm telling you, the one he princess-carried at the airport the other day was them! The hat matches!"

"So sweet? I want Ranbao to princess-carry me too~~"

"With blade in hand, follow my lead! Fight for Ruyi, slaughter Ran Dog!"

"It's the last battle; I hate to see it end, feeling sad [cry.jpg]."

"Lu Ran Lu Ran, when will you be number one among Heavenly Prides?"

"It's today! Today!!"

Lu Ran's image didn't stay in the camera for long.

After greeting his teammates, he entered the building and, guided by a Moon Gazer, headed straight for the top floor.

When the elevator reached the sixty-eighth floor, and the doors opened at that moment, he saw several figures waiting for a long time.

Leading them was an imposing and dignified middle-aged woman.

She wore a coat similar to a police uniform, exuding a strong presence, her hair tied back in a simple bun at the nape of her neck.

Yet, there was a kind smile on her face.

When Lu Ran's gaze intersected with hers, her expression even held a hint of affection.

"Aunt Liu, Captain Ge." Lu Ran stepped out of the elevator.

He only knew these two people out of the several leaders waiting here and nodded to each in turn.

Liu Yunlan smiled and got straight to the point: "Do you have the confidence to maintain a 17-point lead?"

Lu Ran: "I will do my humanly best, and leave the rest to fate."

Ge Bin suggested, "You could adjust your tactics appropriately and enter the state from the beginning.

With the movement speed of your Immortal Hoof Divine Technique, your guarding range can cover quite a sizable district."

Lu Ran nodded his head: "Okay."

Since it's the last battle, he indeed should give it his all.

Liu Yunlan patted Lu Ran's shoulder, leading him to one side.

Sometime during this, the great command center grew quiet.

The soldiers turned their gaze towards the youth beside Commissioner Liu.

Everyone knew what position this Rain Alley youth was in.

After tonight,

Lu Ran could very likely stand atop all of Da Xia!

Or perhaps, in the hearts of the tens of thousands of people, Lu Ran was already supreme in Da Xia.

The welcoming staff quietly dispersed.

Liu Yunlan took Lu Ran to Deng Yuxiang's favored floor-to-ceiling window again.

Outside the window, snowflakes fluttered, and the city was clad in silver.

Side by side, Liu Yunlan and Lu Ran looked out at the vast white expanse of the town, finding Rain Alley more beautiful than ever.

She whispered, "We've received word that tonight, the Evil Demon is likely to be restless."

Lu Ran: "Is there a foreign power stationed here?"

Liu Yunlan said softly, "There is one."

Lu Ran's heart sank: "What strength and realm?"

If there were no foreign powers, it signified that Liu Yunlan and Ge Bin were quite likely to protect Rain Alley.

Of course, this was just a likelihood.

After all, the Paper Kite Clan's Night of Ghosts remained vivid in Lu Ran's memory.

If not for Lu Ran wielding the Dawn Blade and activating the Divine Weapon Domain·Blessed Cloud that night, Rain Alley would have suffered immense losses.

If foreign powers were rushing over...

Then the situation would be even more terrifying.

And by knowing the strength and stage of the reinforcements, Lu Ran could also gauge the power realm of the incoming enemy from the side.

Of course, such judgment was not accurate, serving only as a reference.

"I do not know." Liu Yunlan shook her head gently.

"Ah?" Lu Ran was somewhat surprised, "I'm not asking about minor ranks, but the major realms."

Liu Yunlan sighed softly: "It's unclear. We just received a notice from higher up, we haven't even seen the person.

To this moment, we do not know where this Mr. Guan is."

"Mr. Guan?"

"Guan Xiao, Xiao as in 'hero.'"

Lu Ran noted the name, nodding silently.

Liu Yunlan suddenly turned to smile at Lu Ran: "Compared to outside assistance, just having you here is enough to put my mind at ease."

Lu Ran quickly waved his hand: "I cannot shoulder such a burden."

Liu Yunlan straightened the coat on her body, once again looking down at the city:

"Why belittle yourself?

Over this past year and more, you have guarded Rain Alley well.

Through countless nights of Ghost encounters and the descent of Demon Lords.

My trust in you and the worship from the people of Rain Alley was earned with each strike of your blade, not manufactured."

Lu Ran: "..."

Speaking of the people of Rain Alley's adoration made Lu Ran a bit uncomfortable.

He was still reluctant to accept people kneeling and offering worship, but such was the custom of venerating deities in this world.

And indeed, Lu Ran had time and again saved people's lives and their families.

Liu Yunlan chuckled lightly: "Enough about that.

I've already given the order that tonight, wherever you go, every Moon Gazer you encounter will comply with your commands unconditionally, working with you against the enemy."

"Isn't that inappropriate?" Lu Ran was uncertain.

Although in actual combat, the Moon Gazers were very willing to follow Lu Ran's suggestions.

But there's a difference between following suggestions and obeying orders.

Such words should not come from the mouth of a Divine People Bureau commissioner.

Liu Yunlan did not respond to Lu Ran's doubts.

She smiled gracefully, extending her hand toward Lu Ran: "Auntie wishes you in advance to become the true number one of Da Xia's Heavenly Prides."

Lu Ran shook her hand lightly, Liu Yunlan turned and left, leaving him alone.

He silently looked out the window.

But as he watched, his gaze adjusted, and he saw his own face reflected on the floor-to-ceiling window.

"Do you have a pen?" After a while, Lu Ran suddenly spoke.

"Yes." Not far away, a Moon Gazer, visibly excited, quickly came over with a pen.

Lu Ran took the pen and left a small mark on the vast floor-to-ceiling window...