

## Old Gods 481

Chapter 481: Evil Moon Evil Shadow

The number one seclusion room is located at the core area of the mountain body of Cloud Sea Cliff.

The stone room isn't large, about thirty to forty square meters, and it is completely empty except for a young man sitting cross-legged in the center.

"Is everyone present?"

Lu Ran toyed with the exquisite Blazing Phoenix Patterned Gourd, sending a message in his mind.

"Everything is ready," came the voice of Deng Yuxiang in his mind.

"Alright, I'll start then...won't you wish me success?"

"Focus on advancing." The voice of Big Nightmare was cold.

Lu Ran pouted, picked up the Magic Artifact Gourd, and said, "Little Blazing Phoenix, I'm counting on you."

"Buzz~" The Blazing Phoenix Patterned Gourd trembled slightly.

Immediately, the pitch-black stone room was illuminated, and a delicate small phoenix flew out.

It was woven from golden flame lines, dreamlike and illusory.

Lu Ran cupped the gourd in both hands, "Help me break through the bottleneck and assist me in opening the advancement mode! When the energy of heaven and earth surges, we'll devour it together."

"Whoosh~whoosh~" The small Blazing Phoenix flapped its wings joyfully.

It flew up and down happily, circling around Lu Ran constantly.

"Gulp, gulp..."

Lu Ran didn't hesitate anymore, lifted the gourd, and drank deeply.

In fact, he didn't need to drink, just needed to command the small Blazing Phoenix to release energy from the gourd and blend it into his body.

Just like the Divine Power Pearl on Lu Ran's neck, it could be directly absorbed without being in the mouth.

But...

Isn't chugging wine exhilarating?

Lu Ran drank heartily, feeling the rich energy pouring into his body, rushing and washing through his meridians.

Attempting to help him break the shackles.

"Open!"

Lu Ran shouted in his heart, and the orderly circulating Divine Power within him surged rapidly.

Not enough, still a bit short.

Lu Ran felt as if he was a balloon about to burst.

Just a bit more, just a bit more!

"Gulp! Gulp..." Lu Ran drank even more vigorously.

Open it for me!

"Buzz!!"

Lu Ran's body stiffened, even his breathing stopped, fearing that the slightest movement would cause his body to explode.

"Whoosh~whoosh~" The small Blazing Phoenix was overjoyed, flapping its beautifully hollow wings around Lu Ran in circles.

The surrounding mist grew thicker.

A slight smile appeared on Lu Ran's face as well.

True to being a powerful Magic Artifact, the small Blazing Phoenix was indeed formidable!

The bottleneck was broken through!

Next came several days of the advancement phase, a period where Lu Ran would reap rewards and be nourished.

He naturally needed to remain focused, leaving everything outside in the hands of the sect members of Ran Sect.

Since entering Holy Spirit Mountain, Lu Ran had traversed the south and north, recruiting talents, continually expanding his power.

Wasn't it all for moments like this?

Lu Ran slowly closed his eyes, absorbing the energy of heaven and earth.

Time passed little by little as he diligently improved.

One day, two days...

Perhaps because Lu Ran was too focused, or perhaps because room number one was deep within the mountain and isolated from the world,

In any case, having deactivated Evil Technique-Evil Recognition, he was not disturbed in the slightest.

Until the third day.

Just as Lu Ran was entering the final stage, feeling that success was imminent, the mountain body trembled suddenly.

"Boom!"

The earth shook and the mountain swayed, quite terrifying.

Lu Ran kept his eyes tightly shut, at this critical moment, he forced himself not to worry about anything outside.

Fortunately, Cloud Sea Cliff only shook for a moment before subsiding with no aftershocks.

Lu Ran maintained his inner composure, unperturbed, expanding his meridians little by little, nourishing his flesh and blood, constantly enhancing his body's strength.

The Blazing Phoenix Patterned Gourd had no disruptive thoughts.

This little glutton was always carefree, nestled in Lu Ran's arms, indulging in a feast as if enjoying supreme luxury.

The various blades Lu Ran carried also, benefiting from their master's fortune, were receiving the heavenly gift, nourished by the energy.

Divine Weapons could naturally profit from this.

The Eight Desolates Annihilation Blade and Cloud Sea Dust Cleansing Blade, though ordinary weapons, were greatly aided in this advancement environment, helping them open their intelligence.

If possible, Lu Ran would love to continue this indefinitely, to keep advancing...

"Whoosh!!"

In the afternoon, a blast of energy suddenly spread from within Lu Ran's body.

Lu Ran snapped open his eyes!

In his pitch-black pupils, a glimmer of light flowed.

Jiang Realm·Third Rank!

Lu Ran felt the surging Divine Power flowing inside him, overwhelming!

He clenched his fists, the sense of power within made him want to throw a punch, crushing the ground fiercely.

"Nightmare."

"Here!" Deng Yuxiang responded instantly.

"I've successfully advanced, what's the situation outside?"

"Congratulations." Deng Yuxiang's voice carried a hint of joy, and he continued, "This morning, a Sea Realm initial stage Flame Flood Dragon came searching for us.

Cong Long and Xun Luo's two generals fought against it, everything went smoothly, and the Flame Flood Dragon was shot dead by the Divine General Luo."

Lu Ran: "..."

Flame Flood Dragon?

No surprises there, it should've come from the sea.

Indeed, the sea area was blocked by nine giant fish, but the airspace above the sea was apparently not so tightly controlled by the Mo Li Clan.

Not to mention that the opponent was a Sea Realm Great Demon.

Speaking of which, Luo Shen is the key!

Such a terrifying turret, truly at the level of world destruction.

Thinking about it, it was probably due to Luo Shen's excessive power, threatening to disrupt the balance of the human world, that he was thrown into Holy Spirit Mountain by the gods.

As a puppet, Luo Ying would become a butcher in this realm, assisting the gods in cleansing particularly powerful humans.

And eventually, Luo Ying would be slain by other butchers.

Ending his life as a slave.

"I have encased the Flame Flood Dragon's Dead Soul in a coin, await your retrieval," Deng Yuxiang messaged again.

"No humans have caused us trouble these days?"

"None."

"Hmm, let Mr. Cong Long arrange the rest, I'll stay in the seclusion room a bit longer."

"Yes."

Lu Ran didn't slack in the slightest, reentering the cultivation state, consolidating his power realm while steadyng his Mental Realm.

When he exited seclusion, it was already deep into the night.

The sky was shrouded in a sea of clouds, making the night as black as can be.

Lu Ran didn't disturb the people inside the cliff, returning to Cloud Sea Residence alone, yet as soon as he flickered there, he sensed someone hidden in the dark!

He didn't see or smell it.

Rather, Lu Ran sensed a faintly violent, vicious aura in the darkness!

"Evil Shadow?" Lu Ran suppressed a shiver, whispering.

"Master." A shadow quietly appeared, kneeling down.

The sudden address stunned Lu Ran.

He quickly corrected, "Sect Leader!"

Yan Shuangzi softly said, "Sect Leader."

Lu Ran helped the woman up, a thought struck him, and an idea sprang up: "You're my sister's good friend, I'll give you a special privilege! When no one is around, you can call me little Lu Ran."

Yan Shuangzi's lips twitched slightly, yet in the end, she said nothing.

Lu Ran naturally noticed this scene, and seeing there was hope, he couldn't help but feel a secret joy.

He wasn't in a rush and changed the subject, "You've been waiting here all this time? Looking for me for something?"

Yan Shuangzi presented the Silent Night Blade, "I have established a connection with the Divine Weapon gifted by the sect leader, now returning the eyes to the sect leader."

Lu Ran was quite surprised, taking the Silent Night Blade, "So fast? You've already communicated with the Cold Moon Blade? What date is it today?"

"April nineteenth," Yan Shuangzi responded softly, adding, "This blade is now called Evil Moon."

April nineteenth it is.

Lu Ran walked to the side, "Come, let's talk while sitting."

In the southeast corner of the courtyard was a stone table and several plump stone stools that looked like big drums.

"Teacher Yan can really do it?" Lu Ran opened with a smile, trying to lighten the atmosphere, "How did you do it?"

Yan Shuangzi sat properly on the stone stool, "The blade has been in a dormant state, and I have been trying to communicate with it.

Until a few days ago, it finally budged a little, questioning why I had such a mindset."

Lu Ran quietly listened, looking at the hollow-eyed woman.

Yan Shuangzi placed the Evil Moon Blade on the stone table, "I told it about my past experiences."

Upon hearing this, Lu Ran sighed heavily in his heart.

Opening old wounds, reliving those dark days, must have been extremely painful.

Yan Shuangzi must have been unwilling with all her heart!

Yet she received orders to subdue and wield this Divine Weapon...

Thinking of this, Lu Ran felt somewhat troubled in his heart.

Yan Shuangzi extended two slender fingers, gently stroking the elegantly curved blade like a crescent moon:

"Evil Moon said that someone like me is worthy of it."

"You are worthy of everything." Lu Ran said solemnly with seriousness.

It was not about her power level, nor about whether she was someone who wielded swords.

Yan Shuangzi possessed a resilient heart and an immensely strong soul.

Yan Shuangzi lifted her head slightly, her hollow eyes facing Lu Ran, "Can I stay by the sect leader's side?"

Lu Ran: "Huh?"

The protectors of Ran Sect all had their unique small courtyards, all surrounding Cloud Sea Residence.

He thought for a moment, then slowly said, "You've just returned to Jiang Realm, your primary task is to steady your Mental Realm and cultivate for improvement."

Yan Shuangzi lowered her head, "The sect leader should know how I returned to Jiang Realm, and what path I've embarked on."

Lu Ran: "..."

He already understood what she wanted to say.

"I earnestly request the sect leader to let me stay by your side."

"You...alright." Lu Ran ultimately nodded.

"Thank you, sect leader, for fulfilling my request!"

With that, the courtyard fell into silence.

The night breeze blew, carrying the salty and wet scent unique to the sea breeze.

After a long while, Lu Ran reminded, "You're now in Jiang Realm, your emotions will affect the surrounding environment. The hostility in your heart is too strong, you must restrain it.

When you act as a scout or carry out assassination missions in the future, only then can you hide it properly."

Yan Shuangzi immediately complied.

Lu Ran whispered softly, "You better change!

Your wishes are fulfilled, but I haven't had a good night's sleep..."

In this dark night, with a menacing figure hiding in the shadows, observing.

Who can withstand this?

Yan Shuangzi's lips moved again, and after a moment, she lowered her head even more.

"Alright, I'm going to rest." Lu Ran got up and walked to his residence, "You...make yourself at home."

"Yes!"

...

### Chapter 482: She, Pilgrimage

Seven days later, the second seclusion room of Cloud Sea Cliff.

In the pitch-black stone chamber, Deng Yuxiang was sitting cross-legged in meditation, but for some reason, she suddenly shivered.

It's here!

Deng Yuxiang wasted no time, decisively choosing to lie sideways on the ground, even curling her slender body.

Damn Lu Ran!

"Hmm..."

Sure enough!

She trembled even more violently, and within a few seconds, she couldn't help herself.

Each time the Night Charm Evil Sculpture advanced, it significantly deepened the fusion process between person and sculpture.

The deeper the fusion, the more Deng Yuxiang's talent and cultivation limit would be enhanced.

Without a doubt, this is a huge benefit!

Deng Yuxiang would continuously inherit the traits of the Night Charm Clan, which allowed her to be extremely sensitive to wind elements without using any skill.

Logically, she should be happy, right?

In fact, Deng Yuxiang indeed looked forward to the sculpture's advancement; the only issue was a certain irritating fellow always mentioned a certain embarrassing event...

So much so that she both loved and hated the sculpture's advancement.

This time, the Evil Sculpture's advancement brought her an impact far beyond the previous ones!

Perhaps it's due to breaking through the Great Realm?

Lu Ran, Yu Changsheng, and Yan Shuangzi set out five days ago.

Their destination this time was the base camp of the Martial Monk Faction—Wuji Peak.

And three days ago, Lu Ran suddenly sent a transmitted message to Deng Yuxiang, telling her to be ready at any moment!

He said, "The Evil Demon Lord plans to be merciful, bestowing a gift..."

"Ugh." Deng Yuxiang gritted her teeth, keeping her eyes closed, while a hateful face occasionally flashed through her mind.

At the same time, at the edge of the Night Charm Base Camp.

In the white snowy forest, golden light burst forth!

Pale gold fish formed a terrifying school, covering the sky and earth, swimming frantically.

"Go go go!" Lu Ran shoved Yu Changsheng, diving headfirst into the landing mirror.

"Boom!"

A giant blade descended rapidly, slicing down just before Lu Ran dispersed the landing mirror, shattering it!

"Crash!"

In a pitch-black cave, the Ancient Bronze Mirror suddenly shattered, its sound extremely sharp.

Before the mirror completely shattered, a gust of wind rushed in!

With a dull thud.

Lu Ran rammed Yu Changsheng, crashing hard against the stone wall.

And Yu Changsheng... well, his whole body fit into the wall.

It was quite like a comic coming to life...

"Oh man." Lu Ran gritted his teeth, quickly retreating.

Yu Changsheng: "..."

"That was too fierce!" Lu Ran said while pulling Yu Changsheng out of the wall.

Lu Ran really thought it might be better to slam into the wall himself!

Yu Changsheng seemed like a human cushion, but in reality, he was covered in a Sea Grade Water Flow Armor.

It was really hard!

"Pop~"

A pale golden fish appeared.

Yu Changsheng waved his hand, sending the Longevity Carp forward: "Is the Sect Leader okay?"

Lu Ran laughed: "Poor Mr. Cong Long, clearly being slammed into the wall, but still worrying about me... oof!"

As the Longevity Carp shattered, Lu Ran felt a surge of rich life force enter his body.

Yu Changsheng glanced at the human-shaped imprint on the wall, not saying a word.

In the vast Yangyang Sea, pain was impossible.

Just a bit embarrassing.

Every time they came to exterminate demons here, they were chased into a sorry escape, always living a life on the run.

And what just happened was the most dangerous moment since they started their mission.

Suddenly, a Sea Realm Night Charm popped up, and it was ferociously brutal!

"Sect Leader?" Yan Shuangzi hurriedly stepped forward.

"No problem, no problem, let's move further away." Lu Ran had no intention of staying, immediately casting a spell.

With past exploration experiences, Lu Ran specifically opened numerous caves for this night charm hunt this time.

He also recorded the spatial coordinates for each.

During this retreat, Lu Ran didn't even walk on the surface, casting three spells and diving into mirrors three times, moving from one cave to another.

Silently and quietly, he escaped without a trace.

"Ugh." Lu Ran entered a dark cave again, now far from the Night Charm Base Camp.

His head buzzed, and his steps staggered.

Lu Ran held onto the cave wall with one hand, finally breathing a sigh of relief: "You two should rest here, it will take me a while to recover."

Night Charm Evil Sculpture's breakthrough into the Great Realm, with the experience of Mo Li Evil Sculpture's breakthrough into the Sea Realm last time, Lu Ran knew his head wouldn't quiet down anytime soon.

Endure a lot again!

Couldn't sleep, and hard to think clearly.

Just had to hold on hard.

However, thinking about Night Charm Evil Sculpture's advancement to the Sea Realm, and being able to create River Realm Night Charm underlings, Lu Ran felt somewhat happier.

He took off the oversized cloak, mentally sending a message: [How are you, Evil God sir? Are you weakened? Received the Evil Demon Lord's gift?]

In his mind, Deng Yuxiang's cold snort could be heard.

[Why so fierce? I'm lying here weakly with you!] Lu Ran complained.

Deng Yuxiang: "..."

[Let me tell you, it was really dangerous just now...] Lu Ran removed his bamboo hat and lay on the ground as well.

Meanwhile, in the human world of Da Xia.

Situated in Yeyu City of Cainan Province, the sky was mostly a beautiful picture of blue sky and white clouds.

But today, thick clouds enveloped the heavens and earth.

Moreover, numerous "Fog Dragon Rolls" descended from the sky, connecting with Luoxian Mountain.

The scene was quite magnificent!

Undoubtedly, someone was breaking through here, and the realm wasn't low!

Outside Luoxian Pavilion, two elder men with white hair waited quietly.

Inside the pavilion, a young woman in a white dress gracefully crossed her legs, sitting on a bench.

Her beautiful eyes couldn't see through the thick fog, but they were steadily focused on the center of the pavilion.

"Hu!!"

Soon, a gust of wind spread, blowing away some of the thick fog.

The figure in the fog finally revealed her true self.

She was equally beautiful, her long curly hair cascading over her shoulders, wearing a white Tai Chi uniform.

The Luoxian Pavilion inside and out was silent.

The woman in the white dress and the two elders waited patiently.

Suddenly, the woman meditating in the center of the pavilion turned her head to the bench.

The two women gazed silently at each other, their expressions impassive.

Three seconds, five seconds, ten seconds...

The atmosphere grew heavier, almost to the point of tension.

The two elders standing outside the pavilion were already prepared secretly.

"Hehe~" At that moment, Si Xianxian suddenly smiled, even playfully winking, "Did I scare you?"

Jiang Ruyi: ???

Si Xianxian got up and sat beside Jiang Ruyi with a smile, teasing: "Were you especially afraid I might fly into a rage?"

Jiang Ruyi's face remained cold as she stood up, preparing to leave.

"Lady!" Si Xianxian hurriedly rose, clinging to Jiang Ruyi's arm, "Lady, kind lady, good lady, I was just joking!"

Jiang Ruyi gave Si Xianxian a cold glance.

She was indeed a bit annoyed.

Anger, because of genuine concern.

After a disciple of Lie Tian advanced to the River Realm, they naturally suffer greater contamination from the Divine-Lie Tian.

Jiang Ruyi was so worried about Si Xianxian, and this is the result she got?

"I was wrong~" Si Xianxian clung tightly to Jiang Ruyi's arm, rubbing her face on her shoulder.

Her skills in acting cute and spoiled had improved significantly.

Jiang Ruyi softly said, "This is not funny."

"I'm sorry!" Si Xianxian pouted, looking at Jiang Ruyi with puppy eyes.

Jiang Ruyi was silent for a while before finally casting a reproachful glance at Si Xianxian.

Seeing Jiang Ruyi's reaction, Si Xianxian knew her cuteness strategy had succeeded!

She released her grip with a smile, stretching comfortably, "Ah~ this is the feeling of the River Realm!"

Jiang Ruyi's voice softened slightly, with a hint of concern:

"How is your mental state? Is your mind still clear?"

"A bit irritable." Si Xianxian gradually restrained her smile, becoming serious, "Inexplicably irritable, not sure why."

Jiang Ruyi softly encouraged her: "You're controlling it well, make sure to keep it up."

"Hmm..." Si Xianxian frowned more deeply, the more she tried to search for the source of her emotions, the more she immersed herself in some specific feeling.

"Sister Xian'er!" Jiang Ruyi called out.

"Why are you shouting... ahem." Si Xianxian angrily started but was suddenly awakened.

Jiang Ruyi felt a pang of sorrow in her heart.

"Sorry, Ruyi." Si Xianxian quickly apologized.

Not even addressing her as 'Lady', for Si Xianxian to use her name, she was truly apologizing.

Jiang Ruyi extended her slender jade hand, cupping Si Xianxian's cheek, a deep worry flashed in her eyes.

Sister Xian'er had been at Luoxian Mountain for such a long time, keeping a stable mood, with her mental state becoming more and more peaceful.

Could it be that advancing to the River Realm caused all their efforts to fail?

Jiang Ruyi thought about this in her mind but spoke comforting words: "It's okay, you've just advanced to the River Realm and it's a bit uncomfortable.

Keep your emotions stable, and you'll slowly get used to it.

Just like when you first came to Luoxian Mountain, this land will help you, and I will help you."

"Mmm." Si Xianxian closed her eyes, letting out a long sigh.

It was as if she was expelling the stuffiness in her heart.

She acted like a small kitten, rubbing her face against Jiang Ruyi's palm.

Jiang Ruyi didn't ask her to consolidate her realm, instead, she suggested, "Shall I go with you to pick some mushrooms?"

"Oh?" Si Xianxian opened her beautiful eyes again, her smile blooming brightly, "Is the sun rising in the west today..."

Before she finished, Si Xianxian's expression changed.

Jiang Ruyi: "What's wrong?"

Si Xianxian seemed not to hear, just her face becoming somber.

"Baa~~~"

Outside Luoxian Pavilion, Cheng Li emitted a weak, long bleat.

Both Jiang Ruyi and Si Xianxian were caught in it.

Naturally, all emotions in their minds were replaced by a wave of compassion.

However, this method only temporarily solved the problem.

Si Xianxian's expression didn't improve for long before becoming somber again.

"Sister Xian'er, what's going on?"

"I received a transmission from the Divine."

"A transmission?" Jiang Ruyi's heart tightened.

In this world, believers who could receive transmissions were extraordinarily few.

Even Cheng Li, who was a Sea Realm Great Power, with such strength and a high status at Luoxian Mountain, had barely heard the Immortal Sheep's voice in his life.

Jiang Ruyi immediately asked, "What did the Divine say?"

Si Xianxian's expression was complicated, speaking softly, "Lord Lie Tian has summoned me to pilgrimage."

"Pilgrimage..."

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### Chapter 483: Lost Lamb

The Martial Monk Faction's stronghold, Wuji Peak, is located in the central region of the Holy Spirit Mountain Realm.

From the mouth of the captured Shi Yali, Wuji Peak is described as the most central place on this continent, a location that can be used as a geographical coordinate.

Where is Night Charm Lake?

To the north of Wuji Peak, keep heading north, deep into the snow plains.

What about Sword Mountain Peak?

Also to the north of Wuji Peak, but slightly to the west. The distance is about a thousand kilometers, specific details are unclear.

The vastness of the Holy Spirit Mountain Realm makes one lose the sense of distance.

Most of the locations Lu Ran asked from the captive were described starting from Wuji Peak and then indicating approximate directions.

When Lu Ran finally saw Wuji Peak, he was visually shocked!

Such a majestic mountain indeed qualifies as a coordinate!

The towering peak stands out among the endless mountain ranges.

The surrounding relatively shorter peaks are still tall enough that clouds only swirl around halfway up.

The mountains and the towering peak that pierces the clouds together form the concept of "Wuji Peak."

"It really has to be a great sect, huh?"

Amidst the lush mountains, Lu Ran looked up from afar, clicking his tongue in admiration.

Yu Changsheng gazed west of the highest peak, observing the dense mist filled between the sky's cloud sea and the towering peaks.

He suggested, "Sect Leader, there must be someone advancing within Wuji Peak. Should we wait a few more days before visiting?"

Lu Ran thought for a moment, "It should be fine."

The Holy Spirit Mountain Realm does have its set of rules.

If you approach someone rashly during their advancement, it's akin to harboring malicious intents, intending to take advantage!

Even if you're genuinely not malicious, you can't explain it clearly.

However, this is the stronghold of the Martial Monk Faction, not some remote wilderness.

Lu Ran merely intended to inquire, not to intrude directly, so it should be okay?

Yu Changsheng advised, "Sect Leader, think twice."

This trip, the Ran Sect was here to recruit talents, not to provoke any conflict with any force.

Lu Ran, however, said, "No worries, I just plan to find the Martial Monk Faction's guards at the mountain's base and ask a few questions."

Seeing the Sect Leader's determination, Yu Changsheng couldn't persuade any further.

Actually, what Lu Ran really thought was, if He Qifeng wasn't doing well within Wuji Peak, they could take advantage of the thick mist, muddy the waters and fish for advantage.

Since visiting Sword Ridge Peak, Lu Ran had gained a deeper understanding of the evil in human nature within this realm.

Lu Ran had great confidence in his capability to gather intelligence!

When he inquired about He Qifeng's information, any subtle change in expression from the counterpart, Lu Ran felt confident enough to notice and analyze.

"Joining a sect is indeed necessary." Lu Ran moved forward, sighing again.

Now, a particular Martial Monk Believer is situating himself atop the most central mountain of the Holy Spirit Continent, clearly declaring to everyone, "I am advancing here."

Who dares to kill me?

Arrogance comes with having enough capital!

Having the entire sect's brothers as backup.

Think back to when Deng Yuxiang was advancing, Lu Ran had to take her to hide everywhere, painstakingly seeking a night's peace...

The result was they still ended up getting found by those women of the Sword One One Sect.

Chuh, truly heartbreaking!

The three members of the Ran Sect reached the mountaintop, only to witness a peculiar sight.

At the base of Wuji Peak, the forest had been completely cleared!

Like a peculiar perimeter barrier?

Anyone wishing to approach Wuji Peak would have to expose themselves.

Perhaps only top-level scouts like those from the Witch Crow Sect could silently sneak into the mountain?

"Cong Long, Evil Shadow, you two wait here." Lu Ran commanded.

"Sect Leader!" Yan Shuangzi immediately interjected.

"Follow the order." Lu Ran waved his hand, his figure flickering away.

Yan Shuangzi: "..."

Yu Changsheng looking at the silent woman, kindly offered comfort, "The Martial Monk Faction's skills are open and broad, no sinister moves, they can't harm the Sect Leader."

Yan Shuangzi remained silent, hiding the top half of her face under the bamboo hat's brim, ignoring Yu Changsheng.

Yu Changsheng, feeling unappreciated, shook his head.

At the base of the mountain, Lu Ran wore a green cassock and bamboo hat, his attire though concealing, was rather mysterious in style.

Yet his manner was righteous, striding openly out of the forest.

Lu Ran did not cross the wide "barrier," but stopped in the open area without tree cover, cupping his hands from a distance towards the mountain.

His intent to pay respects was very evident.

Within a dozen seconds, two Martial Monk Believers emerged from the opposite mountain forest.

They both wore bamboo hats woven from gray-yellow grass leaves, donned in golden-brown monk robes, holding wooden staffs in their hands.

The monk robes appeared quite worn, seemingly having been worn for a long time.

After a few more battles, probably they'd have to resort to grass garments and shoes.

"Young friend, your aura is indeed uncommon, but I fear you are not a disciple of our Martial Monk Faction." The elder of the two men spoke first.

"Baa~" Lu Ran bleated, introducing himself.

Immortal Sheep Divine Technique·Voice of Compassion.

And Lu Ran's bleat left the two across completely baffled!

"What the..." the younger man of the two blurted out.

Wha... What sound?

A sheep's bleat?

What in the world!!

The young Martial Monk disciple lifted the brim of his bamboo hat, revealing a face of bewilderment.

Little sheep... How did you end up in the Holy Spirit Mountain?

Lost your way?

"I am an Immortal Sheep Believer." Lu Ran looked at the young man, feeling reassured.

The other had a round face, appearing around twenty-seven or twenty-eight, unlike the calm older man beside him.

Thus, Lu Ran could better observe the other's expressions and gather information.

Although the elder maintained a calm façade, he also remained silent for quite a while.

Probably feeling turbulent within...

After some time, the elder asked, "What brings young friend to Wuji Peak?"

Oh?

Still willing for a peaceful dialogue?

Lu Ran looked at them, friendly, "Have you two ever heard of He Qifeng?"

"Hall Master He?" The younger round-faced man spoke again, scrutinizing Lu Ran.

This time, it was Lu Ran who was astonished.

Hall Master?

He Qifeng, impressive!

Having not been here long, and already securing a post within such a large sect?

Truly surprising.

Lu Ran further confirmed, "The He Qifeng I'm referring to is a woman, and should be your sect's only female disciple."

The elder asked, "You know our Hall Master He?"

"Yes!" Lu Ran nodded repeatedly, "Back in the Human World, I was acquainted with Hall Master He, we are on pretty good terms."

Lu Ran half-truthfully spoke, feeling relieved inwardly.

It appeared He Qifeng was doing quite well.

Compared to Yan Shuangzi!

It's simply worlds apart.

"Acquainted." The elder tasted the two words, then said, "Young friend, sadly, Hall Master He is on a mission."

"Oh... Where did she go? When will she return?"

The elder didn't specify where He Qifeng went, answered, "She should be returning soon."

Lu Ran discreetly swept his gaze over the young man's face, confirming he wasn't lying.

Seeing no anomalies, Lu Ran sighed, "Alright, I'll come back in a few days to visit."

The elder nodded, not intending to invite him to stay.

Seeing this, Lu Ran cupped his fists and turned to leave.

Just after taking a few steps, a voice came from behind, "Hey! Little Sheep!"

Lu Ran's heart sank!

He thought Wuji Peak wasn't like those scoundrels of Sword Ridge Peak, letting him leave safely.

Turns out it was all a façade.

They still intend to detain him?

Lu Ran managed his expression, turning back with a smile, "What is it?"

The round-faced young man loudly said, "If you're really on good terms with our Hall Master He, wanting to seek refuge, don't wander around aimlessly, you might end up dead outside.

Stay in the nearby mountains for a few days, wait diligently for her return."

Lu Ran: "..."

You might not believe it, but I didn't come to seek refuge with her.

I intend for her to seek refuge with me...

Unfortunately, in this world where strength rules, the identity of an Immortal Sheep Believer is synonymous with weakness.

Including earlier when Lu Ran exhibited the Divine Technique·Voice of Compassion, the two Martial Monk Believers noticeably relaxed.

A little lamb, what threat could it pose?

Lu Ran's straightforward bleating was also considered his unique way of signaling submission.

"Thank you, brother." Lu Ran looked at the round-faced young man, gratefully, "You're a good person."

"Damn, what misfortune!" The young man with the round face was displeased, muttering, "What are you saying?"

Lu Ran: "..."

Indeed, in this realm, the fate of good people tends to be miserable.

And death comes swiftly.

"Let me rephrase!" Lu Ran cupped his fists, loudly, "Brother! You're a bad person!"

The round-faced young man: ???

"Until we meet again!" Lu Ran turned and left.

"Ha ha." As Lu Ran departed, the elder looked at their fellow junior brother, "What, got caught in the little sheep's ploy?"

The Divine Technique·Voice of Compassion, indeed had some effect.

The young man with the round face shook his head, "If the little lamb was genuinely on good terms with Hall Master He, coming all the way here and not even meeting face to face, dies, we can't explain ourselves."

"What good terms." The elder snorted coldly, "We as Martial Monk Believers, how could we be on good terms with cowards from the Immortal Sheep Sect?"

The world already looked down on Immortal Sheep Believers, let alone the martial-focused Martial Monk Believers.

The younger, round-faced man felt a bit embarrassed, countering, "I think the little lamb has quite the aura.

Anyway, he was cast into the mountains by the Immortal Sheep."

The elder still dismissed it with disdain, "I reckon, like those two Biwu believers before, he came for Hall Master He's title of Da Xia's genius.

Plastering gold on his face, hoping to get a meeting.

Upon meeting, it'll be cries and kowtowing, all to acknowledge a master, seeking protection.

Hall Master He doesn't even know those two!"

"Genius." The round-faced young man, unwilling to argue with his senior brother, changed the topic, "At least Hall Master He brought glory to the sect by getting second place.

If I were still back home, I bet I could have made it too."

"What, you could've won first?" The elder teased.

"Who knows, ha-ha!" The round-faced young man laughed, then puzzlingly mused, "Wonder who came first?

Why wouldn't Hall Master He say?"

"Since it's not from our Martial Monk Faction, it must be a disciple of Sword One Qiang Xiu the Martial Artist, can't be any other believer..."

...

## Chapter 484: Old Friend Comes

"Sect Leader." Yu Changsheng saw Lu Ran return and immediately asked, "How was it?"

Lu Ran said, "Surprisingly, the guards' attitude was fine. Knowing I'm a disciple of the Immortal Sheep, they didn't trouble me."

"Any news of He Qifeng?"

"They said she went out on a mission and might return soon." As he spoke, a strange look appeared on Lu Ran's face, "He Qifeng even became an official, a Hall Master within Wuji Peak."

"Oh?" Yu Changsheng was quite surprised as well.

This indicates that this woman's abilities are quite outstanding, aren't they?

As a First-class God, the Martial Monk naturally recruits disciples who are all exceptionally gifted.

There must be experts as numerous as clouds on Wuji Peak!

To stand out in such a powerful force and become a Hall Master, battle strength alone is not enough!

Moreover, considering He Qifeng is still young and hasn't been at the mountain for long, her achievements are remarkable...

Wisdom and tactics are indispensable.

Thinking of this, Yu Changsheng looked forward to He Qifeng's joining even more.

"Let's come back in a few days to see." Lu Ran suggested.

"Alright." Yu Changsheng asked, "Shall we open a cave and cultivate quietly for a few days?"

Lu Ran turned and looked southward: "The captive said, several hundred kilometers south of Wuji Peak, there's a withered forest."

Yu Changsheng felt a slight movement in his heart and probed, "Sect Leader wants to infiltrate the Tree Face Demon's ranks?"

The Evil Demon·Tree Face Demon is a kind of Evil Demon resembling a withered tree, named for the terrifying human face on its trunk.

This clan is also the mortal enemy of the Bi Wu faction.

"Just want to see it for myself." Lu Ran neither affirmed nor denied.

Currently, he only had two statue activation slots left, and to increase those, he had to wait until the Sea Realm.

Now Lu Ran was only at the Jiang Realm·Third Rank, and he had to wait for some time to be promoted to the Sea Realm.

He still planned to activate some statues that could fill his own shortcomings first.

For example, Yan Qing faction, or its mortal enemy, the Evil Demon·Sea Merfolk Clan.

Both can let Lu Ran disregard water form skills and even hide in water, which sounds very tempting!

However, the Tree Face Demon clan could also be considered.

After all, this clan is a natural tower defense elite!

More accurately, the Tree Face Demon is the "tower" itself.

Similar to the Bi Wu faction, the Tree Face Demon is an auxiliary type, with decent output and impressive control and defensive abilities!

Its body is quite large, and once its dry branches spread out, the coverage area is vast.

If a Tree Face Demon were planted on the Cloud Sea Cliff, the defensive level of the Ran Sect base camp should be able to take another step up?

Hmm...there are advantages and disadvantages.

After all, the Evil Demon·Tree Face Demon's size is too large, its defensive power is indeed extraordinary, but it also attracts enemies easily.

"Let's go!" Lu Ran ordered.

Whether or not to activate, first capture some souls just in case.

Having been a Believer for so long, Lu Ran had always stayed in a small place like Rain Alley City for fifteen years, not having seen the full variety of Evil Demons, and never having confronted a Tree Face Demon directly.

First fight for a few days and nights, gather some resources, then rest for a few days before returning to visit Wuji Peak.

Wouldn't that be wonderful?

Thus, the three-person team of the Ran Sect headed south.

Only five or six hundred kilometers, the trio walked and stopped, occasionally activating the Transmission Mirror.

Soon, Lu Ran and the others saw the so-called withered forest.

It was really easy to find because the withered forest area was vast!

"Whoa~~~"

On a mountaintop, Lu Ran gazed southward and couldn't help but exclaim.

Prisoner Shi Yali once said: Within a five hundred mile withered forest, there is no vitality, nor sunlight.

These words ring true!

In the Holy Spirit Mountain realm, two things are abundant: mountains and trees.

The trees in the mountains are mostly lush and green, full of vigorous vitality.

Lu Ran had never seen such a lifeless, withered forest!

And its scale was so large, one couldn't see the end?

Lu Ran used Extreme Eye Power to observe. All he saw were giant withered trees emerging from the ground on the distant mountains, with dry branches spreading outward, intertwining with each other.

It's not hard to imagine, the forest within must be pitch black, unseen to sunlight.

"If someone first entering the Holy Spirit Mountain is directly transported into the withered forest, that would be too unfortunate." Lu Ran murmured.

Yu Changsheng nodded in agreement.

"Whew~" After observing for a while, Lu Ran summoned an Ancient Bronze Mirror.

Yu Changsheng immediately reminded, "Sect Leader, the Tree Face Demon's attack range is extensive; the dry branches can extend several hundred meters."

"Mm." Lu Ran responded casually. The oval-term-ancient bronze mirror in his hand transformed into a full-length mirror.

He stepped into the mirror with one foot and then his eyes narrowed!

At the edge of the withered forest several hundred meters away, a Tree Face Demon stood.

It was in a withered tree state, not very tall but quite bulky, and its dry branches were numerous.

On the bark at the middle of the trunk, a cracked human face appeared!

It was expressionless, with deep eye sockets holding a pair of dark yellow eyes, strange and shocking.

Just looking at it gave a person the chills!

Evil Demon Clan·Tree Face Demon!

Each Tree Face Demon has its own territory.

And within tens of meters around this Tree Face Demon, the ground was cracked in large swathes, without any sign of life.

Ordinary trees appeared half-dead, all tightly wrapped by the dry branches of the Tree Face Demon.

The root cause of this situation is that this clan possesses a cruel healing skill!

Evil Technique·Corrupt Wood Spring!

The Tree Face Demon can absorb the life force of other beings to replenish itself.

Lu Ran had once seen some online pictures, where unfortunate Human Clans died in particularly miserable states, mummified by the Tree Face Demon!

"Mr. Cong Long."

"Sect Leader?"

Lu Ran gestured toward the distant withered forest: "Why not knock over a small boat there and let me have a feast?"

Yu Changsheng: "..."

You call an eight hundred-meter Dragon Carp Heavenly Boat a small boat?

Lu Ran chuckled, "My Mo Li Submarine is a Defense Skill, too slow, and not enough momentum."

Yu Changsheng thought for a moment and said, "Sect Leader, since the withered forest has been here for so long, it means that this clan is extremely powerful overall!"

There are probably many Sea Realm Great Demons in the forest, only then can they protect their base camp thoroughly."

Lu Ran nodded lightly, "What Mr. said makes sense."

Yu Changsheng continued to persuade, "If we merely skirmish, we might manage to kill for a while.

But if we escalate the fight too quickly, the enemy might deploy Great Demons."

"Makes sense!" Lu Ran acknowledged immediately.

The suffering he encountered at the Night Charm Base Camp a few days ago was still fresh in his memory.

"Then let me handle this." Lu Ran casually summoned a small paper figure.

Yu Changsheng raised his eyebrows slightly.

It's rare to see Lu Ran use the Evil Technique of the Yan Zhi Clan.

Lu Ran gazed towards the most distant, solitary Tree Face Demon and cast his spell.

In the mysterious unknown, the small paper man in his palm connected with the giant tree.

"Crack! Crack! Crack..."

As Lu Ran slowly clenched the small paper man, the distant withered wood seemed to be gripped by an invisible giant hand.

The thick trunk was being crushed little by little, and the cracked face on the tree kept twisting.

The terrifying human face on the tree indeed had a "mouth" organ, but that was just for show; the Tree Face Demon clan itself couldn't make any sounds.

"Crack..."

The River Realm·Tree Face Demon had no ability to resist, its intricate dry branches were immobile, ultimately crushed.

Yu Changsheng couldn't help but feel a chill in his heart.

Was the Tree Face Demon's Evil Technique sinister and cruel enough?

Enough!

But the Sect Leader's methods were far more ruthless than the Evil Demons!

"Killing them one by one, how long will it take to finish?" Lu Ran was displeased.

Since the Tree Face Demon is withered wood, naturally it's weak to fire.

Lu Ran really wanted to take out the Lie Tian Hammer and smash it in a grand style...

However, doing so would create quite a commotion, wouldn't it?

No choice, the situation here was too unique; the withered forest was the base camp of the Tree Face Demon Clan and must be handled with utmost caution.

It must be noted that the Tree Face Demon Clan are neither the kind to stand still!

On the contrary, they have flexible dry branches, all capable of uprooting themselves and "springing forward" directly...

"Got it!" Lu Ran's eyes lit up.

He extended his left hand, and from within his wide cloak, a Dawn Blade shot out.

Divine Weapon Domain·Blessed Cloud!

"Open!"

Lu Ran had grown fond of this word for some time.

His whole body was teeming with Divine Power, and the Dawn Blade vibrated, slowly releasing a halo of light.

But it was just one halo.

Yu Changsheng was slightly puzzled, "Sect Leader, this is the Divine Weapon Domain; isn't the combat intensity high?"

Lu Ran was fully confident, "Fast kills and small commotion! Just watch, sir!"

Yu Changsheng: "..."

The golden-red halo drifted forward like a gentle and light gauze along the ground.

"Swoosh!" At the edge of the withered forest, another withered tree sensed the anomaly and immediately extended numerous dry branches.

"Whoosh~"

The dry branches were incinerated instantly.

Lu Ran's aura swirled around him, his hair flowing, eyes shimmering with luster, displaying his full divinity!

The halo suddenly accelerated toward the Tree Face Demon's root.

The Tree Face Demon had no effective means of resistance!

Even if it manipulated dry branches to form a thick shield, it couldn't block the halo from penetrating and burning through the trunk.

Two big words – Nature's Nemesis!

"Let's go, we'll find the stragglers and circle around the forest edges~"

Lu Ran held the blade with both hands in front of his body, stepping forward steadily.

Let's feast on them first!

[Sect Leader, someone is approaching from the northwest direction!] Suddenly, Yan Shuangzi's voice came into Lu Ran's mind.

Lu Ran frowned slightly and looked back to the right: [You hide first.]

[Understood.]

"Halo! Dawn Blade?!" A voice called out from afar, approaching quickly.

From the sound, it was clear the person was moving very fast.

Lu Ran was baffled.

Who could accurately identify the Dawn Blade's name...oh my?

Lu Ran blinked and saw a few figures dashing from the lush northern mountains.

At the forefront was a young woman with a tall and straight posture, exuding heroic spirit.

She was dressed in a gold-brown martial monk attire, sleek and breezy, with her short black hair fluttering.

"Oh my?" Lu Ran was quite surprised, smiling, "Isn't this someone? Isn't this the famous Da Xia's second Heavenly Pride?"

He Qifeng was equally surprised and delighted!

The two of them indeed had little interaction before.

Only during the awards ceremony before the New Year did the two shake hands and exchange a few words backstage.

Lu Ran had dismissed her challenge very straightforwardly, which did not leave her very pleased.

And now, being able to meet Lu Ran within the Holy Spirit Mountain, He Qifeng felt nothing but an immense sense of familiarity!

"Ha ha!" He Qifeng laughed heartily, "You little rascal, you haven't changed a bit! Still as irritating as before!"

Good!

Looks like even the Holy Spirit Mountain couldn't do anything about you, huh? Ha ha!"

...

Chapter 485: is just so-so~

As the old saying goes: Tiger's back, bee's waist, mantis' legs.

He Qifeng has it all, naturally born to practice martial arts!

She has wide shoulders and a slim waist, a pair of long legs that are swift and powerful, running as if she's on wind-fire wheels...

It's no wonder, she was chosen through layers of selection in Da Xia to participate in "Heavenly Pride".

She was also exceptionally accepted by the divine Martial Monks, becoming the only female disciple of the Martial Monk Faction in nearly forty years!

He Qifeng's talent is undoubtedly one of the top in the world.

However, her looks are somewhat inferior, barely above average.

Nowhere near comparable to Big Nightmare.

But in this world, strength speaks, and when it comes to vast rivers and yangyang seas of such terrifying levels, it's the demeanor and aura that matter!

What worth is appearance, if it can't be eaten?

"Eh? Eh?" Lu Ran suddenly sensed something was wrong!

Such a large Martial Monk lady is rushing towards him, yet there are no signs of slowing down?

Lu Ran's body tensed, almost unable to resist taking action, ready to slash!

"You stop... oh!" He ultimately didn't take action and was tightly embraced instead.

The massive momentum pushed him back several steps, just barely stabilizing his footing.

"Pa! Pa!"

He Qifeng's short hair fluttered as she excitedly patted Lu Ran's back, her laughter hearty: "Haha, long time no see!"

Beside them, Yu Changsheng quietly observed this joyous embrace.

His gaze was distant, fixed on Lu Ran's face.

Is this what you meant by not being familiar?

"Yeah, yeah, long time no see." Lu Ran grimaced, his basted clothing covered with a thin layer of Water Flow Armor, buzzing from He Qifeng's pats.

The three Martial Monk believers in the forest also halted.

Two of them were over forty, while the other Martial Monk believer looked very young, possibly around twenty-five or six?

At this moment, the young one was also watching the embrace from afar, feeling a twinge of jealousy.

But he merely watched from a distance, not daring to say anything.

"Lu Ran! It's really, really Lu Ran!"

"Lu Ran..." The excited voice once again echoed, though deliberately lowered in volume.

Behind the three Martial Monk believers, two more men approached, both wearing straw clothes and shoes, their demeanor unlike that of Martial Monk believers.

They seemed like twins, their looks about eighty to ninety percent similar.

"What are you two saying?" The jealous young Martial Monk disciple eyed the two Biwu believers.

Regarding the Zhu Hua and Zhu Huai brothers, those from the Martial Monk Faction generally didn't have a good impression.

On one hand, they looked down upon them, and on the other, felt deceived thoroughly...

"Reporting, sir! The young man whom Hall Master He is embracing is named Lu Ran, and he is also one of Da Xia's geniuses!"

"Sir! Don't be fooled by Lu Ran's young age, but among the geniuses of Da Xia, he is unmatched, renowned across the world..."

The Zhu brothers intertwined their words, their voices low but their excitement causing trembles in their speech.

"Oh, so he's also a Heavenly Pride." The Martial Monk young man said, though his heart grew more jealous.

He snorted coldly within, asking, "You two speak so highly of him, so where does this Lu boy rank on the Heavenly Pride list?"

Zhu Hua and Zhu Huai exchanged glances, naturally perceiving the young Martial Monk's displeased tone.

"We... we entered Holy Spirit Mountain in early August last year, at that time, Lu Ran had only participated in two 'Heavenly Pride'..."

"Spit it out! What rank was he? At that time?"

"First."

"What did you say?" The Martial Monk young man was shocked, turning to the Zhu brothers.

Upon hearing the word "first," even the two older Martial Monk believers looked surprised.

Zhu Hua quickly smiled apologetically, "Sir, we wouldn't dare lie to you!"

Zhu Huai also quickly agreed, "Truly, he was first!"

"First?" The Martial Monk young man scrutinized Lu Ran.

In fact, when He Qifeng mentioned the "Heavenly Pride" program, most disciples of Wuji Peak sneered at it.

Without exaggeration, the strong in the Holy Spirit Mountain realm generally disregard the so-called strong of the Human World.

This is a higher-dimensional world!

Compared to the Human World, Holy Spirit Mountain is a "High Martial World".

Da Xia's genius?

So what?

Just a bunch of kids playing house in a greenhouse.

Entering our Holy Spirit Mountain, what do you amount to?

Young man, set aside your worthless honors, lower your proud head.

In this realm, you must learn to be in awe!

However, He Qifeng, with pure hard strength, informed the Martial Monk disciples...

What! Called TM! Da Xia's genius!

Since ancient times, there is no first place in literature, no second in martial arts!

Stop talking nonsense, just fight it out...

Facts proved: He Qifeng is a genius in the Human World, still a Heaven's Chosen in this Holy Spirit Mountain realm!

Even He Qifeng could only rank second, then what kind of divine being is that legendary "The Pride of Da Xia"?

How could those present not secretly glance to the side?

The young Martial Monk corrected his mindset a lot, his expression also becoming more serious, and he asked the Zhu brothers: "This young man, of which god is he a believer?"

The Zhu brothers exchanged another look.

Both feeling a bit uneasy.

They naturally wanted to tell the truth, yet worried the truth would sound too unreal...

Would they be punished?

"Answer!" The Martial Monk young man was displeased, gazing at the two.

Zhu Hua stammered, "Sir, Lu Ran is... uh, Lu Tianjiao is, is..."

"Stuttering, is it really that mysterious? Can't even say it?"

Zhu Huai gritted his teeth and stomped his foot, saying solemnly, "Lu Tianjiao is an Immortal Sheep believer!"

Martial Monk young man: ???

The other two Martial Monk disciples also showed rather colorful expressions.

The Martial Monk young man was unsettled, grabbing Zhu Huai's collar:

"You! Say! What?"

"What's all the yelling?" He Qifeng's stern voice came from afar.

The Martial Monk young man quickly released Zhu Huai, bowing his head to express his apology to He Qifeng.

Lu Ran eyed the differently dressed twins, tentatively asking, "Are these two your servants?"

"You little brat!" He Qifeng lightly scolded, "Still talking like you're asking for a beating!"

"Hehe~"

"They count as my subordinates." He Qifeng said, hands behind her back, gazing into the distance at the others.

An unintentional aura of superiority exuded from her, very authoritative, causing Lu Ran to click his tongue in admiration.

Yet when she looked at Lu Ran, her face softened with a smile: "These two brothers have sharp minds.

Previously, during a fight with a group, they recognized me.

Later on, when the brothers were hunted down, having nowhere else to turn, they thought of me and fled to our Wuji Peak."

Lu Ran raised an eyebrow, quietly listening.

He Qifeng smiled warmly, "To seek protection, in desperation, they claimed to be my good friends, bluffing their way in, and the guards just brought them up the mountain.

When I saw them, I was stunned, thinking I didn't even know them!

In the end, those two cried rivers, claiming they recognized me from watching TV, on 'Heavenly Pride', and apologized to me profusely..."

From her account, Lu Ran understood what had transpired.

The Martial Monk disciples in the guards were truly infuriated when they realized they were deceived!

However, He Qifeng was magnanimous and, after thoroughly investigating the brothers, chose not to expel them but kept them as subordinates.

At least they were two Initial Stage River Realm Bi Wu believers, with reliable healing abilities.

According to He Qifeng: "It's all about survival!"

Using one's brain is naturally normal.

Through this incident, Lu Ran realized a problem!

Bear in mind, Human Clan believers were continuously thrown into the Holy Spirit Mountain by All Gods.

And the people tossed in after 2019 should all recognize Lu Ran, this group of Da Xia's geniuses?

The title of Heavenly Pride should possess some degree of rallying power!

The two brothers were the best example.

They truly had no other options, but recklessly entering Wuji Peak was also like sheep entering a tiger's den!

It showed: the brothers completely gambled their lives on the title "The Pride of Da Xia."

Lu Ran couldn't help but nod silently.

If He Qifeng could attract followers, then so could he!

This is the advantage of being Da Xia's genius!

If he could win over He Qifeng, the influence and rally power of the Ran Sect would certainly rise to the next level!

"When did you come to Holy Spirit Mountain?" He Qifeng changed the topic, "Was it on the nineteenth day of the first month?"

"How did you know?" Lu Ran looked puzzled.

"On the nineteenth, a Divine Ruin on Luoxian Mountain opened, it's known worldwide." He Qifeng smiled, "Who among the believers of the Immortal Sheep could shatter Divine Ruins? I guessed it was you!"

"Oh..."

"Since I came here, I've been looking for you." He Qifeng's eyes were bright, staring straight into Lu Ran's eyes. "I really didn't expect to meet you here! Such a coincidence!"

Her smile was brilliant: "Thanks to my sharp eyes, I saw the glow! Otherwise, we could have missed each other."

"We wouldn't have missed." Lu Ran smiled, "I came just to find you."

"Hmm?" He Qifeng was a bit surprised, "You specifically came to find me?"

"Yes."

"How did you know I was on Holy Spirit Mountain?"

"It told me." Lu Ran took a bead out of his pocket.

"This is..." He Qifeng's eyes narrowed!

Lu Ran held the Treasure Bead in his palm and extended it forward: "I recognized this Wind Barrier Treasure Pearl, then I knew you were here too."

He Qifeng didn't take the Treasure Bead but looked at Lu Ran incredulously:

"Where did you get this bead from?"

Lu Ran chuckled at the Martial Monk lady: "Don't you know who snatched your Treasure Bead?"

He Qifeng's face stiffened: "Did you encounter that group? How did you... what about them..."

She instinctively wanted to ask how Lu Ran was, but with Lu Ran standing fine in front of her, the answer was clear.

So...

Lu Ran grinned: "They dared to snatch the Treasure Bead of a Heavenly Pride, did you think I'd let them off?"

He Qifeng stared blankly at Lu Ran.

Lu Ran returned a classic expression—a slight smile.

Gradually, He Qifeng's expression became complex, her eyes locking onto Lu Ran's: "A High Rank River Realm Witch Crow believer, a River Realm Peak Fierce Heavenly believer, and a Sea Realm High Rank Sky Phoenix believer."

Lu Ran shrugged: "What Sky Phoenix, Fierce Heavenly, River or Sea..."

When fighting, it's just that simple."

He Qifeng: "You... did you wipe them all out?"

Lu Ran didn't speak further, just shrugged again.

He Qifeng's eyes widened slightly: !!!

...

Chapter 486: come with me.

"Take it." Lu Ran handed over the pearl.

He Qifeng looked complicated, still not making any move, just staring into Lu Ran's eyes, "You're giving it to me?"

"What do you mean by giving it to you? Isn't it just returning it to its rightful owner?"

"Haha." He Qifeng suddenly laughed.

"What's the matter?" Lu Ran looked puzzled.

He Qifeng finally picked up the Wind Barrier Treasure Pearl, examining the magic artifact returned to her, and sighed softly, "I didn't expect to hear such words here."

Returning to its rightful owner?

In the Human World, perhaps it's possible.

But on Holy Spirit Mountain?

Nothing is meant to belong to you!

Or rather, nothing belongs to you at all.

From divine weapons to clothing and shoes, even your life, your whole self, don't belong to you.

In this cruel world, the strong have dominion over everything.

"You should hurry up and build a good relationship with the Artifact Spirit." Lu Ran said smoothly, "I thought you had already connected spiritually with the Wind Barrier Treasure Pearl, planning to use it to find your whereabouts.

But it turns out, the Wind Barrier Treasure Pearl hasn't acknowledged you yet?"

"Has your Blazing Phoenix Pattern Gourd acknowledged you?" The competitive He Qifeng couldn't bring herself to speak softly.

Even though Lu Ran just returned the magic artifact to her.

Lu Ran directly raised his hand.

The large straw raincoat wiggled, and soon after, the exquisite Blazing Phoenix Pattern Gourd landed in his palm.

The golden phoenix pattern shimmered, bright and dazzling.

Lu Ran looked at the martial monk sister and showed a slight, pursed smile.

He Qifeng: "..."

She pouted, annoyed, looked at the obedient Blazing Phoenix Pattern Gourd for a while, and finding no flaw, she simply glared at Lu Ran.

Despite being a majestic martial monk sister, she showed such a defeated expression...

Lu Ran found it quite amusing.

He Qifeng bowed her head, toying with the crystalline pearl, remaining silent for a long time before softly saying,

"Thank you."

Seeing her awkward expression, Lu Ran couldn't help but feel playful.

"Ah? What did you say?" He leaned in, pretending not to have heard.

He Qifeng chuckled, playfully tapped her finger on the brim of Lu Ran's bamboo hat, "You brat, do you really need a beating?"

Lu Ran rolled his eyes.

Since they met, this girl couldn't go three sentences without mentioning "need a beating."

As if you could even beat me!

He Qifeng collected her emotions, her face turning serious, and looked at Lu Ran earnestly, "You certainly deserve to be the first pride, I acknowledge you."

"Oh?" Lu Ran expressed surprise.

A female martial monk admitting defeat? That's novel.

He Qifeng seemed to have overcome a hurdle in her heart and slowly smiled.

Her smile became more and more radiant and infectious, "It's great that Holy Spirit Mountain hasn't corrupted you."

The Wind Barrier Treasure Pearl is a valuable magic artifact, not spiritually connected to anyone, effectively ownerless.

It's Lu Ran's spoils, he could easily claim it.

Why go through the trouble of returning it to its owner?

"And what about you?" Lu Ran suddenly said.

"Me?"

"Have you collaborated with the people or forces here?" Lu Ran asked jokingly.

He Qifeng pretended to think, shrugged her shoulders like Lu Ran, "Not really~"

The young martial monk believer in the distance, seeing the two talking and laughing, was nearly fuming with rage...

Lu Ran frowned slightly, turning his head to look over.

Being keen, he had already noticed something was off.

The two older martial monk believers looked somewhat curious, with observant gazes, which was normal.

The Zhu brothers were visibly excited, eyes full of admiration, which was also normal.

Only the young martial monk believer's gaze was odd...

"Who is he?" Lu Ran inquired.

"Yin Tianlong." The smile on He Qifeng's face disappeared, her voice cold.

"Hall Master!" The young martial monk believer immediately stood up straight, even more upright.

He Qifeng didn't spare any kindness, commanding, "Go stand guard somewhere else."

"Yes." Yin Tianlong lowered his head and slunk off into the woods.

Lu Ran watched this scene, murmuring softly, "Hall Master He is very strict."

He Qifeng wore a look of both disappointment and frustration, "The name sounds grand, Yin Tianlong, but his head is filled with thoughts of romance, always thinking about useless things!"

Lu Ran: "..."

He Qifeng snorted coldly, "Doesn't he even see where he is, what situation he's in, and yet still has a mind for romance, how foolish."

Lu Ran understood what was going on and laughed, "Young people, seeking love is normal."

"Haha~" He Qifeng turned to look at Lu Ran, her face breaking into a smile again, "Almost forgot, you're also a romantic."

Lu Ran: ???

What kind of talk is this!

He Qifeng's grin grew wider, "What, did I say something wrong?"

Lu Ran's face darkened, "I'm just deeply affectionate, okay!"

"Yeah, yeah, deeply affectionate." He Qifeng nodded with a smile, "The whole world knows you're deeply affectionate! On the first day of school, you went to war for a beauty!

Beat our martial monk believers till they were crawling all over the place."

Lu Ran's darkened face flushed red, "That guy insisted on sending my fiancée home. With his strong skills, he kept pestering her, how could I let him be?"

"Right, right! Brother Lu did the right thing!" He Qifeng played along, nodding like coaxing a child.

Lu Ran gritted his teeth in anger, feeling like pulling out his blade and stabbing her hard in the ribs!

"Hahahahaha~" He Qifeng watched Lu Ran's expression and couldn't help but burst into laughter.

Bold and bright, full of spirit.

Someone loving this kind of spirited woman, like that Tianlong fellow, wasn't wrong at all!

"Let's go!" He Qifeng energetically threw her arm around Lu Ran's shoulder, "Meeting an old acquaintance in a foreign land, come back with me to Wuji Peak, let's have a good chat!"

Lu Ran stayed put, "I've seen many sects; they're not always friendly."

He Qifeng immediately assured, "Don't worry! As long as I'm around, no one dares to touch you."

Lu Ran still didn't move, thinking about how to extend the invitation.

Seeing this, He Qifeng pondered for a moment, then said, "Some things I intended to tell you after we got back, but it's fine to say it now.

You heard earlier, I'm a Hall Master."

"Mm." Lu Ran nodded.

"My experience at Wuji Peak is limited, and I'm so young, only at the Fourth Rank of the River Realm," He Qifeng looked at Lu Ran, "By rights, the Hall Master position shouldn't be mine.

Do you know why I'm able to be a Hall Master here?"

"Why?"

"Because of the title of Heavenly Pride." He Qifeng stated bluntly.

"Oh?" Lu Ran raised an eyebrow slightly.

He Qifeng turned and looked at the Zhu brothers in the distance, "Their presence reminded me."

Lu Ran's mind stirred, guessing what she was about to say.

He Qifeng explained on her own, "In the Holy Spirit Mountain, people are naturally hostile and lack any trust.

But as a pride of Da Xia, I have a significant advantage.

Later human clan believers entering the Holy Spirit Mountain might have heard of my name to some extent."

Lu Ran silently thought that was indeed the case.

He Qifeng placed both hands on Lu Ran's shoulders, turning his body to face her directly, looking straight into his eyes, "You and I are the heroes established by Da Xia, we are a golden brand!

This immeasurable influence can build a foundational relationship to some extent.

It's the most scarce thing inside the Holy Spirit Mountain!"

Lu Ran softly said, "Trust."

"Exactly!" He Qifeng nodded emphatically, her eyes grew fiercer, "Brother Lu, we can use our influence to make a great endeavor!

Perhaps, we can change the landscape inside this realm that has persisted for decades.

At the very least, we can reduce the slaughter among our people!"

Before Lu Ran could speak, He Qifeng continued, "Brother Lu, you came here earlier than I did, you must have witnessed this realm's harshness!

You are Da Xia's first pride, your influence far exceeds mine!

Come with me, let's make something of this together, how about it?"

When He Qifeng said this, she was practically glowing!

Her words were powerful and resonant.

Her gaze was burning with ambition and heroism.

Lu Ran was deeply moved!

But also felt numb.

He Qifeng, oh, He Qifeng...

You're saying all the lines I planned!

I traveled thousands of miles to recruit you, and now you want to rope me in?

I guess that's why you dismiss a romantic, eh!

Turned out, you're a career-oriented woman...

Seeing Lu Ran not speaking, He Qifeng pondered for a moment, then turned to the others, commanding, "Spread out and keep guard, stay far away."

"Yes!"

"Yes." The two martial monk believers and two Biwu believers responded promptly, scattering in all directions.

Only Yu Changsheng stayed put.

He Qifeng glanced at him but said nothing.

She looked back at Lu Ran, "What I'm about to say might be a bit rebellious, but you should also have seen the true nature of the relationship between the gods and demons and our human clan."

Lu Ran abruptly changed the subject, "Wuji Peak supports your venture, so they gave you a Hall Master position?"

He Qifeng nodded gently.

Lu Ran felt a touch surprised, "I thought Wuji Peak would be like other sects."

He Qifeng candidly explained, "Originally, it was the same.

I heard that two years ago, the previous Peak Master of Wuji Peak ascended to the heavens, and after the new Peak Master took over, there were some changes to the sect's principles.

Nowadays, our Wuji Peak faction tries not to engage in conflicts or harm others actively."

Upon hearing this, Lu Ran recalled his visit to Wuji Peak earlier, remembering the two guards he encountered.

Throughout, they indeed didn't obstruct or trouble him in any way.

He Qifeng's expression grew serious, "Since I divulged the 'Heavenly Pride' matter, Peak Master Tu has valued me highly.

Later, I privately shared some thoughts with Peak Master Tu, leading to my current position as a Hall Master."

Lu Ran hesitated, "I..."

"Clap!"

He Qifeng clapped her hands heavily on Lu Ran's shoulders, grasping tightly as if afraid he'd slip away.

She said gravely, "Originally, after this Wind Barrier Treasure Pearl was snatched, I was furious.

It seems now, it's fate!"

Lu Ran: "..."

He Qifeng's eyes, dark and filled with intense hope, "Even the heavens can't stand the gods' and demons' atrocities, using this one pearl to send you to me.

Come with me, Lu Ran!"

...

Chapter 487: Qifeng

He Qifeng's eyes were blazing.

Her slightly leaning forward body exuded an immense sense of pressure.

This appearance of seeking talent was even more fervent than Lu Ran's.

Seeing this, Yu Changsheng sighed inwardly.

This famous Heavenly Pride was unlikely to be recruited.

She clearly was not a subordinate but a "master."

He Qifeng had the capability, means, and heroic ambition to change the world's order!

More importantly, she had the backing of a prestigious sect like Wuji Peak, and had met a Peak Master equally eager for change.

He Qifeng was already a towering figure, and others should follow her, not the other way around.

Why would she join the Ran Sect?

From another perspective, if He Qifeng were to abandon Wuji Peak's top resources and switch allegiance to the Ran Sect, that would be truly irrational.

If she couldn't be recruited, then cooperation would be the next best thing.

Yu Changsheng quietly pondered.

He Qifeng's identity was rather troublesome, best to find another opportunity later...

Both she and Lu Ran were working for the Human Clan, but their paths differed.

He Qifeng, backed by a giant entity like Wuji Peak, possessed strength apparent to all, allowing her to act openly.

As she said, she aimed to use the influence of the Heavenly Pride to widely recruit Believers across sects to change the overall dynamic within Holy Spirit Mountain.

Lu Ran, on the other hand, had the backing of a deity!

His actions were like stealing firewood from the cauldron, targeting the top-tier rulers.

Lu Ran aimed to solve the problem at its root!

If successful, his change would not only affect Holy Spirit Mountain but alter the fate of the entire Human Clan.

Unlike He Qifeng, Lu Ran could only act in the shadows, requiring utmost caution.

As the saying goes: secrecy leads to success, and leaks to failure!

This also determined that the Ran Sect had to take the "elite" route.

Lu Ran recruited absolutely loyal subordinates, potential individuals capable of slaying gods and demons, not vast numbers of Sect Members.

"A top achiever, a second best," Yu Changsheng murmured to himself.

This pair standing atop Heavenly Pride, regardless of vision, courage, or their breathtaking ambition...

were indeed very similar.

"Heavenly Pride, let me ask you a question," Lu Ran suddenly spoke.

"Call me Qifeng."

"Alright, Qifeng, have you ever considered the consequences if you actually succeeded in changing the structure of Holy Spirit Mountain and if the Human Clan no longer slaughtered each other?"

"The ice of three feet does not form in a single day." He Qifeng replied.

"Hmm?" Lu Ran raised an eyebrow slightly.

He Qifeng slowly lowered her hands, "Holy Spirit Mountain, this hell for the Human Clan, wasn't formed overnight. The structure of this world cannot be changed in just a day."

Lu Ran, feeling her astonishing aura, didn't hold back, "You're avoiding my question."

"Of course I know, the gods want people to die here. Once the Human Clan stops killing each other..."

He Qifeng gazed up at the Cloud Sea in the sky and continued, "What I do will provoke the wrath of the gods."

Lu Ran: "So?"

He Qifeng's eyes were resolute: "The forces within the Holy Spirit Mountain Realm are numerous, and the Believers of the gods are stubborn and extremely loyal, perhaps it will take ten years or even decades to achieve real change.

So, the task must still be done!"

With those words, He Qifeng turned her gaze to Yu Changsheng.

Lu Ran realized something and said, "He is my companion, someone who shares my ideals and is absolutely trustworthy."

He Qifeng remained silent.

Lu Ran thought for a moment and still nodded towards Yu Changsheng.

Yu Changsheng: "..."

With the Sect Leader's order, he had no choice but to obey and walked into the distance.

Seeing this scene, He Qifeng calculated internally.

She had obviously sensed that the exceptionally handsome young man possessed a very high-level Realm of power!

It must be that Lu Ran was able to reclaim the Wind Barrier Treasure Pearl, owing much to this man's help.

And judging by their interaction, even though Lu Ran was in the River Realm, he seemed to hold the dominant position?

Unexpected, yet reasonable.

After all, this was Lu Ran...

He Qifeng thought quietly, returning to the previous topic: "So, the task must still be done. For the benefit of the Human Clan, and to accumulate power!"

Lu Ran: "Accumulate power?"

"Accumulate power." He Qifeng raised her head, looking towards the swirling Cloud Sea, and declared word by word, "To ascend to the skies."

She didn't say it blatantly, but the meaning was clear.

Lu Ran also understood why she asked Yu Changsheng to leave.

He Qifeng no longer looked at the swirling Cloud Sea but gazed intently at Lu Ran, "I firmly believe, on my path forward, I will meet one 'you' after another!"

"Oh?" Lu Ran raised an eyebrow slightly.

Once again, He Qifeng laid her hand on Lu Ran's shoulder, "On our road striving for our cause, we will undoubtedly meet many 'us'!"

Her hand gradually gripped tightly, word by word: "Perhaps I will fail, perhaps we'll shatter into dust.

Just like this Holy Spirit Mountain, it can't be changed overnight. And what I'm truly trying to accomplish might not be reached in one generation, or even two generations.

But it's okay!

I, we, many of us, will forge a spirit!"

Lu Ran stared blankly at He Qifeng.

With every bit of interaction, as she gradually exposed her heart and soul, Lu Ran realized the height of thought in this female Martial Monk...

was quite astonishing?!

He Qifeng spoke in a low voice, "This spirit will pass on.

Our next generation, and every generation thereafter... one after another, will inherit this spirit and complete the unfinished task!

Lu Ran, it's been forty years since the God Demon descended, and forty years since the Human Clan was enslaved. It's time for change.

Why not let you and me be the ones to raise the flag?

Shake off the chains of thought on all beings, and pave a way for our descendants with a banner?"

Lu Ran appeared expressionless, yet emotions surged within.

What an ambitious Heavenly Pride!

She wasn't looking for instant success; she was even prepared for sacrifice.

From He Qifeng's viewpoint, such a grand vision indeed couldn't be achieved in just one or two generations.

Each generation naturally has its own mission.

And He Qifeng saw herself as the one to sound the horn!

"Lu Ran." He Qifeng's tone suddenly softened, "I can't accomplish these things alone."

She released her grip and the straw leaf on Lu Ran's shoulder was slightly deformed by her grasp.

The remarkably imposing He Qifeng's movements unexpectedly became gentle as she tidied the straw leaves on his shoulder and smoothed his clothes, "I need you."

At this moment, what was called leadership charisma and personal magnetism were embodied in Lu Ran's eyes.

This girl... truly had a knack.

"What a coincidence." Lu Ran composed himself and spoke, "What I wish to accomplish can't be done alone either."

He Qifeng's eyes lit up!

Lu Ran smiled a little, "To be honest, this time I came here to recruit you."

He Qifeng was taken aback.

Listening to Lu Ran's speech just now, she thought he was going to follow her, but now this...

"Mr. Cong Long." Lu Ran waved to the distance.

Yu Changsheng came immediately, respectfully saying, "Sect Leader, may I have a word?"

"Mm." Lu Ran first nodded to He Qifeng, then turned and walked over.

Sect Leader?

He Qifeng remained silent, her mind racing.

It seemed her guess was correct.

What an impressive Lu Ran!

Such a terrifying High Rank expert from the Sea Realm showing such deference...

To know, there was no base from the Immortal Sheep faction here, and Lu Ran had no backing!

Thinking of this, He Qifeng looked at Lu Ran with complex emotions.

"Sect Leader, we can ally with her, but recruitment should not be rushed now," Yu Changsheng whispered.

Lu Ran pondered for a moment and said, "After you left, she said this..."

As Lu Ran detailed the conversation, Yu Changsheng nodded quietly.

However, he maintained his stance, "I still think this is not the right time for recruitment."

"Please enlighten me, sir."

"If this young lady finds her ambitions unfulfilled or encounters difficulties, we should naturally win her over."

Yu Changsheng paused and continued, "But she has an excellent position! With Wuji Peak behind her and the support of the Peak Master, she has ambitions and immense self-belief, how can she settle for being below others at this stage?"

Lu Ran agreed and nodded.

Yu Changsheng's expression was solemn, "And what the Sect Leader is doing absolutely allows no room for error! Those aware of your secrets must be either absolutely loyal to you or firmly under your control."

Lu Ran nodded again.

Yu Changsheng: "Currently, Heavenly Pride's actions strongly depend on Wuji Peak, inevitably deeply connected with the sect.

The Sect Leader's cards are not suitable to reveal to her at this time."

"Indeed." Lu Ran lightly sighed, "Then let's cooperate first, it's a good chance for deeper assessment."

Yu Changsheng immediately said, "What the Sect Leader says is entirely correct! If her words come from the heart, she will eventually belong to the Ran Sect!"

After all, the goal she hopes takes generations or even tens of generations to achieve, for us...

...is the goal we should accomplish in our generation!"

Lu Ran agreed greatly.

In this world, only he could grant He Qifeng a "Divine Position," infinitely raising her potential limit!

From this perspective, He Qifeng would sooner or later join the Ran Sect.

Yu Changsheng continued, "As for the current stage, the Ran Sect can cooperate with her, to survive and develop within Holy Spirit Mountain Realm."

"Good." Lu Ran nodded slightly and turned to walk toward He Qifeng.

Meanwhile, He Qifeng, with her hands behind her back, smiled lightly at Lu Ran.

As he approached, she chuckled, "Did you establish your own force?"

"Yes."

"What's the name?"

"Ran Sect," Lu Ran answered truthfully.

"Haha," He Qifeng laughed, "What vanity."

Lu Ran: "..."

He Qifeng turned and walked toward the mountain peak.

Lu Ran naturally noticed, her attitude had subtly changed.

When they reached the heights, He Qifeng, gazing out at the distant mountains, softly asked, "How has the Ran Sect developed?"

"It's alright, a few Sea Realms, several River Realms," Lu Ran casually said.

"Ah..." He Qifeng sighed deeply, feeling lost.

"Why sigh?" Lu Ran questioned.

"Sighing that you've moved away from me..." He Qifeng's gaze was distant, somewhat dreamy.

Lu Ran: "..."

Her thin lips parted slightly, "When you discovered I had become a Hall Master with some authority, you'd feel similarly, wouldn't you?"

Lu Ran looked at her spirited profile and couldn't help but silently praise her.

What an intriguing person.

Since coming back from the talk with Yu Changsheng, he hadn't said anything yet, but she seemed to know everything.

"Woosh~"

The mountain wind blew, gently lifting her short hair surrounding her ears.

He Qifeng retracted her gaze, turned to Lu Ran, and slowly reached out her hand, "Shall we work together?"

Lu Ran looked at her slender and strong hand, hesitating for a moment without moving.

"What, you don't want to?"

"I do." Lu Ran said immediately, "Let's skip the handshake; your suitor might get jealous."

"You brat, is this all you're capable of?" He Qifeng teased, gripping Lu Ran's hand firmly, "Do you think I don't know what you're thinking?"

Still holding on to me pinching you once, aren't you?"

"Uh." Lu Ran grimaced, as expected, his hand bones creaked under her grip.

He Qifeng: "I bet, my hall will definitely develop better than the Ran Sect!"

Lu Ran sneered.

This girl, her competitive spirit flared up again.

"Whoa!" Lu Ran felt a massive force pulling him forward.

He Qifeng leaned in, her lips close to his ear, whispered, "Listen carefully, the gates of Wuji Peak are always open for you.

When you can't make it, come find Sister Qifeng.

Sister will protect you."

Lu Ran: "..."

...

#### Chapter 488: Ran Sect Gale

"You really are fickle!" Lu Ran said faintly, "Just now you wanted me to call you Qifeng, and now you call yourself sis?"

He Qifeng's smile was radiant: "If you don't follow me, of course I have to outshine you."

Lu Ran exerted a little strength and finally managed to free himself from her grasp: "How many people do you have in your hall now?"

"At the moment, my Big Wind Hall has twelve elite soldiers."

"Big Wind Hall?" Lu Ran slightly raised an eyebrow.

"The big wind rises and the clouds fly high!" He Qifeng stood with hands behind her, a proud demeanor, "Big Wind Hall."

Lu Ran chimed in: "The might shakes the land and homeward bound?"

"Homeward." He Qifeng murmured in her heart, gazing at the sky above, the thick clouds rolling tumultuously.

Lu Ran also fell silent.

Home, it can only be said to be a beautiful vision.

After a while, Lu Ran spoke: "What realm are the twelve under your command?"

He Qifeng replied, "Kids shouldn't ask too many questions! You just need to know that all the members of my Big Wind Hall are elite soldiers! Protecting you is more than enough."

Hearing these words, Lu Ran chuckled!

Your mouth is quite stubborn~

Lu Ran tilted his head slightly, smiling at He Qifeng's spirited face: "Oh? Sister Qifeng's Big Wind Hall doesn't have a Sea Realm member?"

He Qifeng's face immediately darkened!

She wanted to say that there was one Sea Realm in charge, but saying that, compared to Ran Sect, seemed inadequate?

He Qifeng gritted her teeth, glaring at the mischievous face in front: "I really want to pinch you to death."

Lu Ran laughed heartily: "Then we should think of a way to keep in touch. If you have difficulty, I can help you in time."

"Ha." He Qifeng laughed in anger, grabbing Lu Ran's collar, "Did you just say, how many Sea Realm in Ran Sect?"

"Yes," Lu Ran nodded decisively.

"Which believers, what realm?" He Qifeng squeezed out through gritted teeth.

Tsk~

Such a strong will to win.

Lu Ran leaned back as far as he could: "Disciples of Ash, Yan Qing, and Dragon Carp, all high ranks in the Sea Realm, just barely passable."

He Qifeng almost bit through her teeth!

Just barely passable?

Disciples of Second-class God Ash, ultimate output artillery platform!

Disciples of Third-class God Yan Qing, absolute rulers of water warfare!

Disciples of Third-class God Dragon Carp, precious and rare medical support...

Barely? Passable?

No wonder this kid could take back the Wind Barrier Treasure Pearl.

Three full-fledged Sea Realm powers, with a well-balanced configuration, an all-round attack and defense, no weaknesses!

"Let go." Lu Ran said as he pried her fingers off his collar.

When Lu Ran looked up again, he saw the Martial Monk lady's extremely complex gaze.

He Qifeng: "They come from different sects and factions, with different temperaments, yet they are all Sea Realm powers. Why do they serve you as the sect leader?"

Her face seemed to say: How on earth did you do it?

Lu Ran mimicked her earlier stance, standing with hands behind, a proud posture: "Personal charisma, who can say clearly?

I might have a bit of it on me."

He Qifeng: ???

Lu Ran finally felt relieved~

After so long, He Qifeng had been the one doing the talking, this had really stifled me!

It is very necessary to show off my skills appropriately.

No matter how He Qifeng positioned herself, in Lu Ran's mind, she will be a member of Ran Sect in the future.

He should display his exceptional traits.

Lu Ran was contemplating this when he suddenly felt an intensely hot gaze.

He was very familiar with this kind of look—desire.

Extreme desire!

Lu Ran often saw it with Yan Zhiren.

Even though what He Qifeng and Yan Zhiren wanted from Lu Ran was different, their emotions were similar.

Lu Ran: "..."

He still wanted to recruit He Qifeng, but now it seemed, He Qifeng, this "lord," was even more eager to find talent?

"Honestly, we need to find a way to establish contact." Lu Ran quickly said.

"Sect Leader." Yu Changsheng's voice came from behind.

"Mr. Cong Long?"

"I can leave this Misty Rain Fan with Miss He Tianjiao." Yu Changsheng picked up the folding fan in his hand.

He Qifeng naturally realized, this paper fan was a divine weapon!

And this Sea Realm power was willing to offer up a divine weapon, just to ease Lu Ran's concerns...

He Qifeng's feelings were extraordinarily complicated.

Both admiration and silent sighing.

Lu Ran already had a strong team, and his subordinates were so loyal.

With his ability, the future developments would be better, right?

Her hope of recruiting Lu Ran seemed increasingly slim.

Both the man and woman harbored their own thoughts.

"No need, sir." Lu Ran raised his hand, and the Silent Night Blade flew out with its sheath.

This was a great opportunity to win her over!

If he wanted to recruit He Qifeng, then storing a divine weapon should certainly be handled by him, the sect leader.

In the future, every time He Qifeng used this blade, she would be grateful to the Master of Ran Sect!

"Here!" Lu Ran stuffed the Silent Night Blade into He Qifeng's arms, "Take it. We can assist each other and communicate in real-time in the future."

Yu Changsheng nodded silently, pleased with the sect leader's perceptiveness.

It was evident at a glance.

He Qifeng: "I..."

Lu Ran interrupted decisively: "Don't be too quick to refuse. If I'm in trouble, I'll also seek your help through the Silent Night Blade."

He Qifeng was silent, slowly drawing the blade from its scabbard.

Of course, she recognized the Silent Night Blade.

She had studied Lu Ran's "Heavenly Pride" recordings countless times.

She never imagined that one day, this divine weapon, the Silent Night Blade, would be stored in her hands.

"Agreed?" Lu Ran asked.

He Qifeng stretched out two fingers, lightly tracing the blade, feeling quite reluctant to part with it.

The Martial Monk Faction seemed to wield sticks, but in reality, they were masters of weapons, proficient in many arms.

This was because the faction had a skill called—Angry Eye Three Bodies!

Which means, Martial Monk believers had been preparing for Three Heads and Six Arms since they joined.

Previously in "Heavenly Pride," when He Qifeng activated Three Heads and Six Arms, one of these bodies used a pair of sword and blade.

"Clap!"

He Qifeng sheathed the blade, looking at Lu Ran: "When I cultivate another divine weapon, I'll leave it with you!"

"Great, straightforward!" Lu Ran nodded immediately.

He Qifeng held the Silent Night Blade with both hands, not hiding her love and care for the precious blade, sighing: "It's a pity my Zen stick was lost; it was very close to being a divine weapon."

Lu Ran paused for a moment, then said: "That golden Zen staff is yours?"

He Qifeng was also taken aback: "The Nine-ring Golden Zen Staff, also in your possession?"

Lu Ran: "..."

Poor Martial Monk girl, you were used as a boss fight by the Shi siblings, huh?

You were quite generous, what a grand drop!

You dropped a Magical Artifact·Wind Barrier Treasure Pearl and a Divine Weapon Seed·Nine-ring Gold Zen Staff...

Lu Ran asked curiously: "In 'Heavenly Pride,' weren't you using dual blades, a staff, and a spear?"

Because of this, Lu Ran instinctively thought, that the Zen staff belonged to the Fierce Heavenly believers. During prisoner interrogation, he also did not inquire in detail.

He Qifeng: "That Zen staff was given to me by my elders before I went to Mount Song to pay homage and challenge the Divine Ruins."

"Ah, that's fine." Lu Ran nodded immediately, "I'll return the Zen staff to you later."

"Hmm." He Qifeng lowered her head a bit, her face actually blushing!

She had always wanted to recruit Lu Ran, but since they met, she had been the one getting sought after.

Receiving kindness from others, it's hard to stay tough.

It's so embarrassing...

Lu Ran looked at her expression, he could probably guess her mental state, and he was certainly happy to see this scene.

Yes! That's so right!

He Qifeng, the future He General of Ran Sect, just keep feeling indebted to me.

You will have to pay me back!

Hehe~

[Silent Night, please bear with this.] Lu Ran communicated with the Silent Night Blade mentally, [She is the future general of Ran Sect, eventually to be my own. Please serve as the bridge.]

A divine weapon, once recognizing a master, remains fiercely loyal and naturally looks out for its master.

The Silent Night Blade had listened to the entire conversation and naturally knew if the master encountered danger, it could call for reinforcements through itself.

It had no objections, only responding: [Tell her, I like silence.]

[Okay!] Lu Ran replied in his mind, then carefully explained it all to He Qifeng.

Once everything was settled, Yu Changsheng congratulated: "Congratulations sect leader, we are no longer solitary.

In future adventures here at the Holy Spirit Mountain Realm, we now have an ally."

He Qifeng not only has the Big Wind Hall, she also has the backing of Wuji Peak!

"Mm." Lu Ran nodded repeatedly.

He Qifeng finally regained some face, her impression of Yu Changsheng also improved significantly.

She continued to find face, reminding: "Lu Ran, developing a force is important, but you mustn't neglect your own cultivation."

Lu Ran: "..."

Such words should have been said by me to you, right?

How did you manage to say it first again?

He Qifeng took a step forward and stood shoulder to shoulder with Lu Ran: "Our ultimate goal of amassing enough strength is, after all, to ascend to the heavens!"

Lu Ran said: "Mr. Yu calls it 'ascension'."

"Ascend to the heavens, ascend, no matter what it's called," He Qifeng's expression was serious, "one step higher, we are closer to the gods."

Lu Ran nodded heavily.

He Qifeng then turned her words with great confidence: "Previously, you ranked first in 'Heavenly Pride,' but here, I won't let you stay ahead.

I will definitely lead the elite soldiers and ascend to the Upper Realm ahead of you!"

Lu Ran suddenly said: "Are you planning to run off with my Silent Night Blade?"

He Qifeng: ???

"We need to act together." Lu Ran said seriously, "Remember, our goals are aligned."

He Qifeng immediately spoke, seizing the opportunity to invite, "Since that's the case, why not join Big Wind Hall, Brother Lu, and we can join forces to achieve great things?"

Lu Ran gently nodded: "Why not join the Ran Sect, Qifeng? Together we can grow stronger and create a brilliant future?"

He Qifeng: "..."

Lu Ran: "..."

The two gazed at each other for a few seconds and then burst into laughter simultaneously.

He Qifeng tactfully dropped the topic and changed the subject: "I plan to clear the Withered Wood Forest; these Tree Face Demons keep spreading north, getting closer and closer to our Wuji Peak."

"Great, I'll go with you." Lu Ran's eyes lit up, "Let's kill a lot!"

Isn't this free labor?

You guys do the killing, and I'll handle the feasting!

Chapter 489: Eat recklessly and voraciously

In the following period, Lu Ran continuously executed missions with He Qifeng.

At first, he was quite happy.

After all, having free labor to do the hard work while he reaped the rewards was ideal for him.

However, as time went by, He Qifeng's bad habits became apparent.

He had to compete over everything!

This gave Lu Ran a big headache.

He Qifeng was extremely stubborn, competitive to a fault, trying to surpass Lu Ran in everything!

Lu Ran suffered in silence, but he endured.

After all... Dead Souls were quite delicious.

These Martial Monk Believers had an explosive output!

With a single kick, they could unleash a golden dragon, and with a wave, they could call down a giant golden palm from the sky...

Carrying a momentum of unmatched destruction, they crazily destroyed the withered grove.

The Sea Realm Great Demons stationed in the forest naturally wouldn't allow the Human Clan to act so recklessly and occasionally appeared to fight.

Big Wind Hall was fearless!

The Evil Demon Clan didn't have Water Flow Armor, granting the Human Clan the possibility of surpassing their level in killing.

Even though the Evil Technique-Tree Face Demon Clan's defensive power was strong, the output of the Martial Monk Faction was even more explosive!

Don't underestimate He Qifeng for only bringing 5 deputies, among whom only 3 were Martial Monk Believers.

Yet, their momentum was astonishing!

Their chants of "Big Wind! Big Wind!" made Lu Ran's blood boil.

The members of Big Wind Hall were even more enthusiastic, under He Qifeng's leadership, engaging passionately with the Great Demons of the Sea Realm...

When necessary, Lu Ran and Yu Changsheng would also join the battle.

The strength of the Sea Realm·Tree Face Demons was indeed a bit over the top!

And Lu Ran and his Dawn Blade became the anchoring force for them.

No matter what skill the Sea Realm Great Demons used, whether whipping or piercing with branches, or stacking layers to create a defensive system, all the Tree Face Demons' skills were based on dry branches!

Lu Ran's Dawn Blade Domain·Blessed Cloud perfectly countered the withered branches!

With just a light touch of the radiant light on the Tree Face Demon, the branches would turn to dust.

Of course, everyone didn't act too recklessly.

He Qifeng was valiant and strong, not foolish.

If they encountered more than two Great Demons of the Sea Realm, she would decisively order a swift retreat.

In the days of fighting and fleeing together, the relationship between Ran Sect and Big Wind Hall quickly warmed up.

Lu Ran was also getting his fill of food.

He was certain, once he activated the Evil Sculpture·Tree Face Demon, it would upgrade fiercely, directly reaching the Sea Realm!

Lu Ran had tasted the sweetness and was reluctant to leave.

He Qifeng was equally unwilling for Lu Ran to leave!

She fully showcased her leadership charisma and command talents, gaining inner satisfaction through her comparisons with Lu Ran.

Thus, the two heavenly prides led their teams, engaging in battle for over half a month.

They had circled the edges of the "Five Hundred Miles of Withered Wood Forest" several times...

Until one night in mid-May, while both parties were resting in a cave, Lu Ran sensed someone calling him from the void.

No need to guess, it was naturally Deng Yuxiang!

Lu Ran had always kept the Evil Technique·Evil Recognition active, which meant he was continually mentally linked to the Evil Dog Evil Sculpture.

In other words, Yan Shuangzi and Lu Ran were always "connected by a microphone".

For Deng Yuxiang to communicate with Lu Ran, she needed to initiate a video chat or a voice call...

[What's wrong?] Lu Ran remained calm on the surface, but his voice transmission was impatient.

Could it be something happened?

This mission had indeed dragged on for quite some time.

[Xun Yifei just found me, saying he might advance soon.] Deng Yuxiang responded.

[Oh?] Lu Ran was overjoyed!

Out of the three in Ran Sect at the Sea Realm, Xun Yifei's realm was the lowest, currently at Sea Realm·Second Rank.

Yu Changsheng and Luo Ying were both at Sea Realm·Fourth Rank.

Honestly, Lu Ran had a pessimistic view on whether Xun Yifei could still grow.

The other was already at Sea Realm·Second Rank, possibly having reached his innate ceiling, unable to make further progress in his lifetime.

To elevate the potential ceiling, Lu Ran knew of two methods.

One was a Divine Blessing.

The other was for Lu Ran to sign a contract with him, transforming Xun Yifei from a Human Clan member into a Divine Sculpture/Evil Sculpture.

Just like Deng Yuxiang, Yan Shuangzi!

The more they fused with the Evil Sculpture, the higher their cultivation potential and talent ceiling would be.

It seemed now that he had underestimated Xun Shenjiang.

Come to think of it, for those thrown into Holy Spirit Mountain, how could any be weak?

Each was hand-picked by the divine selection!

Most were powerful and extraordinarily gifted believers, potentially affecting the balance of the Human World, only then would they be thrown into this slaughterhouse.

[Yes, Xun Yifei asked me to inform you, and also suggested advancing at Mohaibay.]

[Hmm?]

[He said there are nine Mo Li guarding the waters, along with a Divine Weapon as protection, it should be fine and may prevent Cloud Sea Cliff from being attacked.]

After pondering for a moment, Lu Ran responded: [Have him first practice in the seclusion room to prepare, wait for my return before proceeding.]

[Yes!]

"What are you thinking?" Beside the campfire, came a female voice.

Then, a hand extended in front of Lu Ran, with several small tree fruits in the palm.

They looked like blueberries, but far less palatable.

"You eat it, it's too sour." Lu Ran waved his hand repeatedly.

Just thinking about the sour and astringent taste made Lu Ran's stomach churn.

"The renowned Master of Ran Sect, the famed Pride of Da Xia, can't handle a little sourness?" He Qifeng said with a teasing smile.

She stuffed all the small tree fruits into her mouth right in front of Lu Ran.

While chewing the sour fruits, He Qifeng looked at Lu Ran with amusement.

Lu Ran: "..."

Does everything have to be a competition?

"Hehe~" He Qifeng laughed even more brilliantly, running her slender fingers through the hair above her forehead.

To the uninformed, it might seem He Qifeng was tidying her hair or displaying charm.

But everyone in the cave knew she was just showing her at-ease expression, making sure Lu Ran could see her face.

Feeling smug~

Lu Ran rolled his eyes: "I'm a man, you wouldn't understand."

He Qifeng asked curiously: "Wouldn't understand what?"

Lu Ran smirked: "I can endure much bitterness, but a hint of sourness is intolerable."

"Haha!" He Qifeng burst into laughter, "A 19-year-old kid, claiming to be a man."

"Who cares about my age, I just naturally dislike it!" Lu Ran turned to look aside, "Right, Tianlong?"

Yin Tianlong: "..."

Over half a month, seeing the interactions between He Qifeng and Lu Ran, although feeling a bit sour, Yin Tianlong didn't harbor as much animosity towards Lu Ran.

Because Lu Ran had once chatted with him alone.

Lu Ran's exact words were: "I have a fiancée, I love her very much. Your Hall Master He is a career woman, indifferent to things like love and affection."

Rest assured, there's no chance between her and me!"

After Lu Ran's frankness, it made Yin Tianlong blush.

Besides the bitterness, Yin Tianlong felt a deeper sense of helplessness.

He also knew his hopes with Hall Master He were dim.

He Qifeng never had in mind romance, opening her eyes each day with a single focus on career...

"Hehe."

Beside them, two forty-something Martial Monk Believers also smiled pleasantly.

Their impression of Lu Ran was extremely favorable!

First, Lu Ran was tolerant, humble, and gentle, able to endure the stubbornly competitive Hall Master He.

He's simply a model Immortal Sheep Believer!

Second, Lu Ran was exceedingly strong, capable of backing up the team at crucial times.

Hmm... that wasn't very typical of an Immortal Sheep Believer, though.

Overall, where could such an excellent partner be found?

No wonder he was the Pride of Da Xia!

Such magnanimity, such grace...

After more than half a month, the two Martial Monk Believers seemed somewhat smitten.

Lu Ran had built a good rapport with these Jiang Realm·Fifth Rank masters.

They had no inkling that Lu Ran had been gorging himself behind them!

If not for the deliciousness of the Dead Souls, Lu Ran would've long started a squabble with He Qifeng...

"By the way, what were you just thinking?" He Qifeng again turned to Lu Ran.

"Thinking that I've been out too long, I should head back." Lu Ran poked the campfire in front of him with a stick.

"Head back?" He Qifeng's reaction was big, her pitch rising noticeably.

Lu Ran acted helplessly: "You're here completing a mission, I've got a family business lying around."

Actually, he had considered a matter just now: whether to bring Xun Yifei over for an upgrade at Wuji Peak?

No one with a sense would dare cause trouble at the Martial Monk Faction's main base.

Yet, after mulling it over, Lu Ran refrained from acting rashly.

Despite He Qifeng having some say within Wuji Peak, she was still in an early development stage, possibly with variables.

"I suggest you move Ran Sect over." He Qifeng shifted her position to sit beside Lu Ran.

She bumped Lu Ran's shoulder with hers: "I'll pick a mountain next to Wuji Peak for you."

Once again, Lu Ran noticed the familiar look, the same as that of the paper man's gaze.

Fiery, full of longing.

Honestly, it was no wonder Yin Tianlong misunderstood...

Lu Ran glanced disdainfully at He Qifeng: "With your current state? Still want to protect me?"

He had figured out He Qifeng's temperament, knowing how to stimulate her fighting spirit.

Expecting a retort from He Qifeng, unexpectedly, she silently watched Lu Ran with pursed lips.

After a moment, without uttering a word, she clenched her hands and turned her head towards the campfire.

Lu Ran was initially stunned, then inwardly thought: Not good.

Oh no!

Did he speak too harshly, injuring her pride?

Lu Ran's voice softened slightly: "I habitually go against you; your development is impressive."

He Qifeng stared at the flickering flames, her pitch-black eyes reflecting an unusual luster in the fire.

"I will be capable of protecting you.

One day, I will provide you with enough security."

Lu Ran: "..."

Do you hear what you're saying?

Is this right?

Suddenly, He Qifeng turned to gaze directly at Lu Ran: "I'll make you willingly come to me."

Lu Ran pondered but still advised: "Haste leads to failure! If you wish to recruit believers from the Human Clan, you must be thorough in selection; there aren't many good people in Holy Spirit Mountain."

He Qifeng picked up a twig and poked the fire: "Then come assist me, help with the selection."

Lu Ran got up directly.

He Qifeng looked up at him, puzzled.

Lu Ran: "I'm heading back."

"Don't be silly." He Qifeng's expression turned grim, "If you dislike it, I won't say such things, but it's unsafe at this late hour."

"No worries." Lu Ran stepped over the small campfire, "Night is the best time for travel!"

He Qifeng: ???

"Cong Long, we're leaving."

Amidst the surprised gazes, Yu Changsheng stood up immediately, showing not a hint of doubt.

He Qifeng internally cursed herself for being impatient and impulsive, apologetically saying: "Lu Ran, I won't continue, please don't be upset."

"I'm not upset, the moonless and windy night is perfect for our journey!"

He Qifeng felt both anxious and frustrated: "Do you even make sense?"

Lu Ran gave a mysterious smile, stepping backward out of the cave: "A ghost must speak ghost talk~"

All this time, he kept his secrets well, people always thought Lu Ran was a "pure-blooded" Immortal Sheep Believer.

Little did they know, Lu Ran was rather complex.

Neither fully human nor fully ghost.

Sometimes divine, sometimes demonic.

"Lu Ran?" He Qifeng quickly reached the cave entrance.

"In a few days, I'll bring the Zen Stick to you." Lu Ran, without looking back, waved languidly as he walked out.

The elegant figure gradually blended into the dark night.

"He's really got style." Yin Tianlong, watching eagerly from the cave, thought sourly.

...

Chapter 490: Prepare for battle!

After a month, Lu Ran finally returned to Cloud Sea Cliff.

He had no time to rest and immediately gathered everyone in the Council Hall.

The ascension of Xun Yifei from Sea Realm was of utmost importance to the Ran Sect and required full attention!

As everyone took their seats, Lu Ran briefly inquired about the recent situation at Cloud Sea Cliff, then lent the Blazing Phoenix Pattern Gourd to Xun Yifei.

Lu Ran specifically instructed that Xun Yifei simply place the Magic Artifact on the ground and not to move it.

If necessary, the Blazing Phoenix Pattern Gourd would automatically release Divine Power.

Of course, Lu Ran's Magic Artifact could only be directly used by him~

What? Deng Yuxiang directly drank from it once?

Well... it won't happen again!

Lu Ran lent out the Blazing Phoenix Pattern Gourd, firstly to increase the success rate of Xun Yifei's breakthrough, and secondly for the sake of his own Magic Artifact.

Once the Divine General starts the ascension mode, attracting dense energies from between heaven and earth, the little Blazing Phoenix would naturally feast on them!

This would be greatly beneficial to the Magic Artifact!

As for Xun Yifei's suggestion to ascend at the seabed, Lu Ran rejected it.

This was the conclusion after discussions with Yu Changsheng.

The two knew that the Divine General didn't want to trouble Cloud Sea Cliff, but Xun Yifei was a major general of the Ran Sect, and the issue of ascending couldn't afford any mistakes!

Compared to the ocean, it was safer on land.

"Whatever happens outside is none of your concern. Your only task is to ascend!" Lu Ran said with a serious expression to Xun Yifei, "Go prepare, and in three days, I'll await good news from you."

"Yes!" Xun Yifei respectfully replied, standing up to leave.

The Blazing Phoenix Pattern Gourd floated behind the Divine General, following along, seemingly quite happy with its left and right movements.

The little Blazing Phoenix naturally knew it would feast again!

"The ascension in the Sea Realm won't be short, and we've got a tough battle ahead!" Lu Ran swept his gaze over the people in the Council Hall, "Everyone should take the time to rest well."

The small rank ascension in the River Realm takes about 2 to 3 days.

The small rank ascension in the Sea Realm takes anywhere from 5 to 10 days, relatively longer.

"Alright, let's disperse." Lu Ran gestured for everyone to leave, then added, "Luo, stay for a moment."

Luo Ying had just stood up from her seat, looking puzzled, standing there.

As Lu Ran waited for everyone to leave the Council Hall, he suddenly remembered something: "Oh yes, sister... Nightmare."

Deng Yuxiang paused, turned around, and looked with slightly smiling eyes.

Lu Ran: "Bring in the Night Charm guard unit."

"Yes!" Deng Yuxiang turned swiftly and left quickly.

Once everyone departed, Lu Ran finally looked at the young mother: "The Divine General's ascension will take at least five days and at most ten days. Here, I can't do without you for a moment.

Are your two children at home going to be alright?"

Seeing Lu Ran's earnest expression, warmth filled Luo Ying's heart.

This young Sect Leader was genuinely concerned about her two children.

Moreover, he was very respectful, not stepping into their residence after the initial encounter and subsequent stalking.

Even until now, Lu Ran had not formally met the two children.

Yet he always kept them in mind.

"They are very well-behaved and strong and can take care of themselves," Luo Ying replied softly.

Lu Ran pondered and said, "Luo, if you need, I can assign Jing Hong to help look after the children."

"Thank you for your kindness, Sect Leader, but that's unnecessary," Luo Ying instinctively refused.

Lu Ran then said, "We've all worked together for a long time, and you've developed some understanding of Jing Hong. Additionally, she is also a mother of two, experienced in this regard.

Don't rush to refuse; consider it in detail. Give me an answer within two days."

Luo Ying, filled with gratitude, bowed her head slightly: "Yes."

"Go ahead." Lu Ran nodded in acknowledgment, watching the young mother turn to leave, and he couldn't help but sigh inwardly.

She takes care of both her husband and her children.

Luo God,

it's truly a great feat.

Lu Ran turned his head, glancing at the date on the wooden board—2020, May 19.

This month had passed so quickly.

That said, the gains were also rewarding.

Firstly, he had established a link with the future Ran Sect Divine General, He Qifeng.

He Qifeng currently relied on Wuji Peak and could certainly provide significant assistance to the Ran Sect when necessary.

Secondly, the Night Charm Evil Sculpture ascended to the Sea Realm, allowing Lu Ran to upgrade the evil demon guard unit at Cloud Sea Cliff.

Moreover, the Tree Face Demon Evil Sculpture was also in a state awaiting activation. However, for this particular ascension by Xun Yifei, it probably wouldn't be of use.

During a Human Clan's ascension, dense fog is invariably attracted, and by then, the Tree Face Demon clan would turn blind.

How could they protect Cloud Sea Cliff, and they'd be lucky if the dried-out trees didn't cause trouble!

Truly...

Why does a perfectly good "Defense Tower" have to grow a face?

Having a face might be acceptable, but why a pair of eyes too!

If only the Tree Face Demon clan had no eyes, wouldn't they observe the world like the Black Light clan, or like the Divine Weapon and Magic Artifact, in a way beyond ordinary comprehension?

In that situation, regardless of how dark the night or how thick the fog, could the Tree Face Demon still operate normally, serving well as a Defense Tower?

"Sect Leader."

"Hmm?" Lu Ran came back to his senses, turned to look.

He saw Deng Yuxiang enter with eighteen Night Charms.

Each had a graceful posture with stunning curves.

What a pity...

Lu Ran rued inwardly, looking at Deng Yuxiang: "I want to summon the Jiang Realm Night Charm."

Deng Yuxiang understood tacitly, raised her hand, gripping the knife handle on her shoulder, and with a probing eyebrow raise.

Lu Ran gently nodded.

"Slish!" Deng Yuxiang instantly drew the broken blade, lifting the mysterious black veil of the Night Charm beside her, slicing the blade across its neck.

The bloodline spurted!

In an instant, the bodies of the remaining seventeen Night Charms tensed, the room filled with murderous intent.

"Don't move!" Lu Ran commanded timely.

The Night Charms all stood in place, motionless.

Deng Yuxiang acted without hesitation, lifting the mysterious black veil again, and the blood-stained broken blade plunged into another Night Charm's neck.

"Slish!"

"Slish..."

Before long, corpses lay in all directions in the Council Hall, and the flowing blood dyed Deng Yuxiang's straw shoes red.

Since Ran Sect stopped wandering and settled at Cloud Sea Cliff, Deng Yuxiang had acquired her own residence, storing some tattered black battle outfits and black leather boots at home.

In Holy Spirit Mountain, clothing and shoes were consumables!

Deng Yuxiang was reluctant to wear them.

She always believed that one day, Ran Sect would return to the Human World.

By then, Deng Yuxiang wanted to dress respectably.

Nowadays, all Ran Sect's members, including Lu Ran, wore uniform attire—green raincoat, blue cap, straw clothes, and straw shoes.

"Phew~"

Each Night Charm's Dead Soul flew toward Lu Ran, embracing the Evil Demon Lord.

"Poof~ poof~"

Each tragically dead body transformed into energy, and the blood on the ground turned into mist, gradually vanishing from the world.

Lu Ran had already extended his hand to begin creating brand new evil demon minions.

Currently, the Night Charm Evil Sculpture in the Sculpture Garden is Sea Realm·First Rank, guaranteed to enable Lu Ran to create 10 Jiang Realm·Fifth Rank Night Charms.

In the future, every time the Night Charm Evil Sculpture ascends a small rank, Lu Ran can create 2 more Jiang Realm Peak Night Charm minions.

"Divine Power shapes its body, Source Energy molds its soul..."

Lu Ran recited the incantation, a Night Charm gradually forming in front of his hands.

Deng Yuxiang approached the long table, leaning on the table's edge, quietly watching Lu Ran cast the spell.

Suddenly, she reached forward with one hand, using the broken blade to lift the Night Charm's black veil.

A ghastly pale yet beautiful visage met her eyes, the demonic purple pupils captivating.

Deng Yuxiang observed carefully, feeling somewhat disappointed.

Long ago, she had proposed a theory, wondering if the Night Charm minions would gradually resemble her.

At this moment, the Night Charm hadn't changed.

Apparently, only when she and the Evil Sculpture fully merged, with Deng Yuxiang herself completely replacing the position of the Night Charm Evil Sculpture, would the minion thoroughly transform.

"What's wrong?" Lu Ran asked casually while preparing the next Night Charm.

Deng Yuxiang didn't answer and instead said, "I feel I'm also close to hitting a cultivation bottleneck."

"Oh?" Lu Ran was quite delighted.

The last time Deng Yuxiang ascended was shortly after entering Holy Spirit Mountain, around the end of January.

Today is May 19, counting the time, it's been nearly four months.

"It'll still take some time," Deng Yuxiang said softly with a slight smile in her eyes.

Having not seen him for a month, she missed him a bit, and now seeing him return safely eased her worries.

As for the previous anger, Deng Yuxiang had long since discarded it.

She enjoyed seeing Lu Ran surprised.

Deng Yuxiang also understood that it was due to her bonding with the Night Charm Evil Sculpture and further merging with Lu Ran's help that her cultivation journey had been so smooth.

Previously, such growth speed was unimaginable.

"That's great news!" Lu Ran's eyes shone brightly, "Take advantage of Xun's ascension to gain even more benefits."

"Hmm." Deng Yuxiang nodded gently.

"Also, if you do hit a bottleneck, don't rush to break through," Lu Ran advised, "Our Ran Sect's current strength isn't enough.

Wait until Xun Yifei successfully ascends, then proceed with your breakthrough."

With no one else in the hall, Deng Yuxiang had no need to be overly cautious.

Looking at Lu Ran's excited appearance, she playfully glared at him: "I already said it'll take a while!

Just letting you know that merging with the sculpture has significantly helped me."

"Of course," Lu Ran continued casting the spell, another Night Charm forming under his hand.

You are my future Evil God, after all...

Deng Yuxiang then said, "Maybe we can find the Evil Dog Clan's lair."

It was only then Lu Ran understood; the Big Nightmare was considering it for her best friend.

Along the journey, Ran Sect had captured many villains, but these individuals couldn't provide the Evil Dog Clan's location.

Regarding the Evil Dog Clan, Lu Ran had his suspicions: do these low-intelligence dogs that randomly teleport really have a base?

Additionally, there had been no intelligence on the Evil Mirror Demon Clan, which Lu Ran had long been searching for.

Dealing with demons capable of teleporting and transporting, they seemed always elusive, with no gathering place found.

"Sure, let's look," Lu Ran answered casually.

Seeing this, Deng Yuxiang shifted the conversation: "You found He Qifeng; what did she say?"

"It's quite a long story," Lu Ran sighed, recounting the events to Deng Yuxiang.

Deng Yuxiang was quite amazed, nodding secretly as she listened, and finally praised softly: "The woman is ambitious, capable, and well-connected; she might become someone significant in the future."

Lu Ran whispered, "She will eventually belong to my Ran Sect."

As he spoke, another Jiang Realm-Fifth Rank Night Charm quietly formed, then knelt on one knee, bowing in subservience to the Evil Demon Lord.

Deng Yuxiang witnessed this scene, a slight curve curling at her lips.

Unnoticed, both of them had been at Holy Spirit Mountain for four months already.

Lu Ran's growth was not insignificant.

Power nurtures people, and status nurtures even more.

A person's character is hard to change, but the inadvertent aura Lu Ran exuded, along with his rapidly growing leadership quality, was what Deng Yuxiang was willing to see.

Ambition, who doesn't have it?

Deng Yuxiang quietly gazed at Lu Ran.

Witnessing firsthand his rise and continuous ascent...

This feeling is wonderful.