

Old Gods 541

Chapter 541: Luoxian Pavilion

Jiang Ruyi raised her head and gazed at the heavens, where the thick clouds churned incessantly, leaving an oppressive atmosphere.

In front of her, the two Shanwei believers kneeling and pleading fell silent for fear of disrupting their young leader.

In just one battle, the two had changed masters yet again.

And this ruthless, cold-natured girl in the white dress seemed no easier to serve than the West Desolation believers...

Jiang Ruyi suddenly asked, "What exactly exists up there in the heavens to cause such commotion?"

Immediately, the Jade Talisman believers raised their ears.

The two Shanwei disciples glanced at each other nervously before one of them stammered, "W-we don't know, it could... perhaps be..."

"Only gods and demons could create such a ruckus," a voice echoed from afar.

Jiang Ruyi turned her head and saw the upright, confident West Desolation female disciple.

Jiang Ruyi nodded thoughtfully; over time, she had discerned certain patterns.

Whenever the heavens erupted in commotion, within half a day, Holy Spirit Energy would drift into the Mountain Realm.

This so-called Holy Spirit Energy was a power surpassing Divine Power!

Human believers could neither cultivate nor control it, forced only to let their physical bodies absorb the energy as it fused into them automatically.

Her previous deductions seemed correct.

Above, gods and demons were engaged in battle!

With every clash, energy from the very essence of gods and demons would scatter, while human believers dutifully gathered it like obedient servants for the divine.

But how exactly did the gods retrieve this energy from humans?

Jiang Ruyi furrowed her brows.

Either way, humans fighting amongst themselves was already an inevitable reality in this realm!

Every great human power, intended to guard Da Xia and protect its people,

was instead chosen by the gods and thrown relentlessly into Holy Spirit Mountain.

To perish on Holy Spirit Mountain.

Is this... right?

Shouldn't gods have as many believers as possible?

After all, greater numbers of believers would yield more Power of Faith, with purer energy provided by believers of higher realms!

But in truth, gods seemed intent on sending their believers to die instead.

As she mulled over this thought, Jiang Ruyi's face grew colder.

With her sharp mind, she had realized something!

Gods and demons... colluding together?

Gods feed on human faith.

Demons feed on human negative emotions.

Generation after generation, humans matured, only for the strongest among them to be selected by the gods and ripped from the human world, tossed into the slaughterhouse that was Holy Spirit Mountain.

This stable arrangement kept humanity's structure intact.

Evil Gods could feast endlessly.

Gods, in turn, could remain relied upon and worshipped by humans, perpetuating their faithful offering—generation after generation, era after era...

"Lady Luo Xian." Xue Fengchen clutched his Divine Weapon Axe as he approached Jiang Ruyi.

But Jiang Ruyi showed no reaction.

At that moment, her entire world was crashing down!

Now that she had unraveled certain truths, she felt as though she was living within a colossal lie—a world controlled by gods and demons.

Indeed, most human believers resigned themselves to their fate, acknowledging their role as servants of the gods.

But Jiang Ruyi now saw things on a deeper level.

Humans weren't even worthy of the term "servants."

They were livestock cruelly herded by gods and demons—forever exploited, butchered, and denied freedom without end.

"Lady Luo Xian?" Xue Fengchen's body tensed.

The girl before him, though several years younger and slightly weaker in realm,

exuded an aura far exceeding that of anyone nearby!

Gao Yunyan quickly stepped forward upon seeing this scene.

"Lady?" Song Yu came to stand behind Jiang Ruyi, gently reminding her.

"Hmm." Finally, Jiang Ruyi returned to herself.

Though her lower face was covered by a veil, it was obvious to everyone that her expression was grim!

Jiang Ruyi suppressed the emotions churning inside her. Certain thoughts must remain unsaid.

At least until she possessed absolute control, she could never voice them aloud!

After all, every single person under her command was a believer in the gods...

"I lost track of my thoughts," Jiang Ruyi said softly, apologetically nodding at Xue Fengchen.

Xue Fengchen knew better than to probe further. Following proper etiquette, he presented the Divine Weapon Axe to his leader.

Gao Yunyan stood silently behind him, her vigilance heightened.

As the saying goes, "Companion to a ruler is as companion to a tiger."

No matter how young the girl in the white dress might be, she was a revered sect lady and, more importantly, the absolute leader of their team!

Their experiences at Tianhuang Mountain had taught Gao Yunyan and Xue Fengchen well:

Such a figure must be served with utmost caution!

"You two prefer axes; you should keep it," Jiang Ruyi said softly.

Upon hearing this, Gao Yunyan looked at Lady Luo Xian with newfound respect.

This was no ordinary weapon—it was a Divine Weapon!

In the human world, Divine Weapons and Magic Artifacts were priceless treasures, let alone in this perilous realm of Holy Spirit Mountain.

"Thank you, Lady," Xue Fengchen expressed his gratitude earnestly.

He turned to Gao Yunyan and held out the large axe: "I already have a weapon, but Sister Yun doesn't have anything suitable."

The Tianhuang Mountain faction had stockpiles of weaponry, owing to their enslaving numerous humans.

But most of their arsenal consisted of swords, spears, and daggers; axes were relatively uncommon.

After Gao Yunyan's battle axe shattered several months ago, she had been fighting barehanded.

"Hmm." Gao Yunyan reached out and accepted the Divine Weapon Axe, humming with vibrations.

Her gaze carried meaningful undertones as she looked at Xue Fengchen.

Not bad—you deserve my care~

Jiang Ruyi composed herself and said gently, "Earlier in the battle, I must thank you two for your assistance."

Her demeanor now was vastly different from the relentless questioning she had displayed before the fight.

Both Gao Yunyan and Xue Fengchen clasped their hands in salute, saying nothing further.

Jiang Ruyi understood their sentiments and changed the topic: "You're both high-level River Realm cultivators?"

Xue Fengchen answered truthfully: "Peak! Both of us are Fifth Rank in the River Realm!"

Jiang Ruyi nodded lightly.

Xue Fengchen was ranked low, just eighty-seventh among Da Xia's Heavenly Prides.

But his combat prowess and realm were far from weak!

It was precisely because Xue Fengchen had advanced in cultivation earlier that the evaluators of the "Heavenly Pride" rankings gave him lower marks.

Poor thing.

For most, weak performance garners sympathy; Xue Fengchen suffered because he was too skillful.

Even by the end of the yearlong rankings, Xue Fengchen still hovered in the lower tiers...

"Today, you two severed ties with such filth completely!" Jiang Ruyi expressed admiration, "Your mental realm and future paths have already undergone significant transformation.

Perhaps this will be an opportunity for you to transcend realms."

Such insightful words revealed her exceptional judgment.

Both Xue Fengchen and Gao Yunyan clasped their hands again:

"Thank you, Lady!"

"We appreciate Lady Luo Xian's auspicious words!"

The Divine Weapon Axe still buzzed restlessly in Gao Yunyan's hands, attempting to shake free.

But as a West Desolation disciple, blessed by the Divine Technique and Desolate Power, Gao Yunyan, being a River Realm Peak cultivator, would never let a First-rank Divine Soldier escape her grasp.

Nonetheless, Jiang Ruyi offered a gentle reminder.

Gao Yunyan nodded repeatedly, promising to tame the weapon soon.

"Boom—rumble!!"

Once again, deafening sounds erupted above the Cloud Sea.

When the noise subsided, Xue Fengchen tactfully reminded her, "Lady, we cannot linger here! Tianhuang Mountain has captured eight Shanwei believers, and there are six more in the mountains.

They'll soon discover their team is missing and come this way."

Jiang Ruyi nodded lightly: "Which direction is Tianhuang Mountain, and what's their strength?"

Xue Fengchen quickly explained in detail.

Jiang Ruyi's expression grew increasingly serious.

Tianhuang Mountain's faction included countless River Realm cultivators, as well as over a dozen Sea Realm elites?

Such powerful figures, if stationed in Human World Da Xia, could guard untold cities and shield innumerable civilians!

And yet... the gods forbade it!

This further validated Jiang Ruyi's previous theories.

After a moment, she asked, "Do you know the direction of the sea?"

This question left Gao Yunyan and Xue Fengchen perplexed.

Since entering Holy Spirit Mountain, they had been struggling to survive in the Ten Thousand Blade Mountain area, having neither seen nor heard anything of the sea.

"Clear the battlefield and gather everyone. We must leave quickly," Jiang Ruyi instructed gently.

Behind her, Song Yu responded solemnly, "Understood!"

A few minutes later, Jiang Ruyi led a group of four Jade Talisman disciples, two West Desolation disciples, and twelve Shanwei disciples, as they resumed their journey eastward in search of the sea.

Above them, terrifying sounds continued to ripple through the sky, gnawing at everyone's nerves.

Song Yu flew to stand just behind Jiang Ruyi and sought permission to speak: "Lady."

"What is it?"

"Our forces are growing stronger and larger each day. Should we adopt a name like Tianhuang Mountain or Rift Mountain Gang?"

"Hmm..." Jiang Ruyi pondered briefly.

Choosing a name was trivial; organizing and clarifying internal roles was far more important.

Song Yu's suggestion likely stemmed from his desire to formally receive an official title and secure his authority.

A group should indeed have a name—to enhance management, to instill collective pride, and to foster a sense of belonging.

After some thought, Jiang Ruyi remembered the words "Fallen Immortal."

As the proverb goes, "A bird's cry is its lingering echo."

Traveling through the Holy Spirit Mountain Realm with her growing team, the name of their faction would inevitably spread.

If, someday, somewhere, the words "Fallen Immortal" reached Lu Ran's ears...

He would understand everything!

Considering this, Jiang Ruyi said, "Fallen Immortal."

Strangely, Jade Talisman disciples adopting the name of a sect within the Immortal Sheep faction...

An Xian, standing beside her, couldn't help but mutter inwardly, though she dared not voice dissent.

She hesitated for a while before cautiously asking, "Fallen Immortal... sect? gang? palace?"

Jiang Ruyi turned to look at An Xian's petite and charming expression, her mood lifting slightly.

She couldn't help but think back to Xiao Tiantian from her memories, always by her side.

Jiang Ruyi reached out to gently ruffle An Xian's hair: "What about pavilion—Fallen Immortal Pavilion?"

Unlike Tiantian, An Xian had a lively personality and was even a little feisty.

Despite being six years older than both Tiantian and Jiang Ruyi,

she behaved like a meek little sister in front of Jiang Ruyi, nodding repeatedly: "Uh-huh, it sounds lovely!"

Fallen Immortal Pavilion!

Far more melodious than sects or gangs!

Secretly, An Xian thought to herself that from now on, Lady Luo Xian would be Pavilion Master.

Lu Tianjiao would be... Pavilion Master's husband? Pavilion Lord's consort?

"Boom—rumble!!"

Sky-shaking cacophony sounded again.

"You bastards! Why don't you just kill me with this racket!"

In the plateau region of Holy Spirit Mountain, at a junction of green grasslands and arid deserts,

the voice of a young man cursed.

"Neighhhh~"

"Neighhhh!!"

His curses were drowned out by chaotic hoofbeats and relentless neighing of horses.

Chapter 542: Road to Heaven?

"You damn thing..."

Lu Ran gripped the Azure Dragon Crescent Blade tightly, muttering under his breath. Even though he had already shut down the Evil Technique·Evil Recognition, he was still startled by the jarring sounds.

Even more troublesome was that the Black Fire Colts had been frightened by the noise.

Their hooves stomped chaotically, walls of fire rose high, and rings of flames spread outward.

Chaos reigned supreme!

"Swish~"

Lu Ran's figure flickered, retreating to a small hill several hundred meters away.

Here, four figures stood tall.

Deng Yuxiang looked at Lu Ran's indignant expression, the corner of her lips curling slightly: [Ran General, failed again?]

Whenever others were present, she was perpetually respectful and submissive to Lu Ran and always helped Sect Master make a show of authority.

But that didn't stop her from teasing someone privately via transmitted voice...

"Heh." Lu Ran snorted with displeasure.

With a casual wave, the Azure Dragon Crescent Blade (Ghost General's Blade) quietly shattered, dispersing into specks of energy.

It was said that Black Fire Colts are loyal to the Ghost General Clan, cooperating unconditionally for their work or battles.

Yet, as the master of the Evil Demon-Ghost General, Lu Ran couldn't tame these Black Fire Colts.

It was infuriating~

Infuriating enough that Lu Ran wanted to make a Ghost General on the spot just to toss him into the herd...

And ride them one by one!

Unfortunately, the quota for creating Ghost Generals was already full; the Ghost Generals were busy guarding Cloud Sea Cliff.

If he transmitted a request to the Mad Immortal Xian'er to butcher a Ghost General for him, then summon one anew... well, it didn't seem worth it.

You need to rely on your own strength to forge ahead.

Lu Ran still wanted to become a Ghost General himself — majestic and awe-inspiring atop a grand warhorse.

"Sigh..." He let out a long sigh, his disguise plan had utterly collapsed!

This group of high-spirited horses had truly fiery temperaments.

Forget riding them, they wouldn't even let him touch them.

Uh-huh, just as fierce as that Big Nightmare~

Yu Changsheng's eyes held a hint of mischief as he chuckled, "If Sect Master brought along the Magical Artifact·Wind Barrier Treasure Pearl, it would've been perfect.

No matter how ferocious the flames among the herd grew, Sect Master could remain unscathed and continue taming them."

Lu Ran: "..."

He turned his head, casting a plaintive glance at Yu Changsheng.

"Heh~" Yu Changsheng caught sight of Lu Ran's look and couldn't stifle his laughter.

Lu Ran was utterly exasperated!

Cong Long! And Deng the big tease... This lord has truly spoiled you too much!

The matter of rejecting the Magical Artifact·Wind Barrier Treasure Pearl was undeniably a major blunder for Lu Ran.

Because of this, Yu Changsheng had already mocked him twice along this journey.

How could he explain it clearly...

It was all because He Qifeng, Miss Martial Monk, had been so earnest, with such caring and sincere eyes, that Lu Ran had been incredibly moved.

He'd carelessly accepted the Wind Barrier Treasure Pearl and even promised the young Miss Monk that, upon returning from the Northwest, he'd share the details of what lay in that vast realm.

However, the moment Lu Ran took hold of the Wind Barrier Treasure Pearl, Deng Yuxiang's transmitted request had arrived.

The Big Nightmare had spoken one sentence: [Evil Demon Lord, not planning on hiding anymore?]

Embarrassment overwhelmed Lu Ran!

If he carried the Wind Barrier Treasure Pearl, all of his secrets would be exposed to the artifact's owner—none other than He Qifeng.

So, mere miles outside the Forbidden City after bidding farewell to He Qifeng, Lu Ran had Yu Changsheng return the Magical Artifact·Wind Barrier Treasure Pearl.

As for why he hadn't returned it in person...

Lu Ran chickened out.

The young Martial Monk had just ascended to the Sea Realm, far too intimidating. Lu Ran feared he'd be crushed to death by He Qifeng's bare hand.

He could already envision He Qifeng's furious expression!

To betray the trust of a fair maiden, a crime truly deserving of death.

Luckily, the Silent Night Blade was a cold and aloof god-tier weapon!

Otherwise, He Qifeng might've used its messaging ability to demand an explanation from Lu Ran.

"Reverse the Heavenly Gang Star!" Lu Ran commanded the protectors Nightmare and Cong Long, "You two! Go slaughter these Black Fire Colts for me!"

Yu Changsheng laughed and asked, "You're giving up on riding them?"

"Since I can't ride, what else can I do?" Lu Ran waved dismissively. "Go on, hurry up and kill, they're making me jealous."

"Yes!"

"Yes!" The two protectors immediately charged forward.

Lu Ran sighed inwardly, a gaze fixed on the battlefield in the distance.

These fiery warhorses attracted far too much envy.

Alas, no matter how much he wielded the Ghost General's Blade or carried the Ghost General Flag, it was futile.

"Neigh~~~"

"Whoa!" Lu Ran gasped in amazement.

A Black Fire Colt raised its head and neighed, its flaming body exploded, its four hooves trod the air, climbing skyward step by step!

With every strike of its hooves, it left behind a blazing flame in the air!

Like a gorgeous fiery flower blooming.

Evil Technique-Fire Treading Arts!

And those rings of flames that spread out rapidly, trying to drive away everything nearby.

In his vision, one of the flaming warhorses turned into dense fire mist, swiftly wafting away into the distance.

Even its escape was so flamboyant...

Can you even handle this?

Unfortunately for the Black Fire Colt, it ran into Deng Yuxiang.

She casually raised her hand, and a gale blew over, directly dispersing the fire mist.

If a Black Fire Colt died normally, it would leave behind a corpse, and a Demon Crystal would remain in its brain.

But in its fire mist state, a Black Fire Colt would vanish into thin air, completely obliterated.

Well... at least it left something behind.

Dead Souls!

"Sect Master."

"Hmm?" Lu Ran responded absentmindedly.

Jing Hong inquired, "Since you like the Black Fire Colt Clan so much, why not steal their powers?"

As the Hall Master of the Demon Control Hall, Jing Hong also wished to equip her Ghost Generals with fiery warhorses.

Nearby, Luo Ying perked up her ears to listen.

Lu Ran didn't elaborate but simply said, "I'm currently only at the River Realm, my body's endurance is limited."

With just one remaining active slot, there was no way he'd waste it on vanity.

"Swish~" Lu Ran activated the Pupil of the Dead World, targeting a series of Dead Souls, and his figure flickered away.

A total of over thirty Dead Souls rushed into his pupil, leaving Lu Ran immensely satisfied.

Lu Ran summoned wind and waves beneath his feet, gazing westward, catching faint glimpses of Black Fire Colts in the distance: "Let's go, continue!"

Someday, when this Evil Sculpture is activated, I hope to advance straight to the Sea Realm!

By then, I'll be riding the River Realm Demon Lord-Black Fire Colt, drinking leisurely from the Fiery Phoenix Patterned Gourd.

Ah~ That's the life!

"Forward!" Lu Ran commanded, leading the group towards the west.

The upcoming battle saw the group leaving the grasslands behind entirely, entering a desolate wasteland.

Lu Ran and his companions lacked the awareness to tread cautiously in a dangerous environment.

With the confidence of Two Rivers and Three Seas, they boldly pushed into the unknown territory.

Protector Divine Generals slaughtered relentlessly, while Sect Master devoured joyfully.

Occasionally, when Lu Ran couldn't locate Evil Demons, he'd activate a Transmission Mirror.

The Ran Sect advanced westward, leaving barren devastation in their wake.

Day and night alternated, the cycles continuing.

Until, one afternoon, an antiquated copper mirror silently appeared atop a sand dune.

A slender leg stepped out from within the standing mirror.

The woman emerged clad in green cloak and broad-brimmed hat, her tall figure tense, vigilantly surveying her surroundings.

Suddenly, she froze!

"Huh?" Lu Ran stepped forward, bumping into Deng Yuxiang's back. "What is it?"

"North." Deng Yuxiang casually snagged Lu Ran, pulling him forward.

Lu Ran turned his head to look and instantly widened his eyes, "Ten Thousand Blade Mountain?"

Could it be Ten Thousand Blade Mountain?

How could it be so simple to have found it?

Lu Ran felt as though he were dreaming or witnessing a mirage...

In his field of vision lay an endless desert, undulating sand dunes of various sizes reminiscent of fixed sea waves, tracing the passage of the wind.

And within this magnificent desert scenery, those towering stone pillars stood out prominently!

Stone pillars they seemed, though they were thicker at the base, tapering upward to sharp points near the clouds!

"Ten Thousand Blade Mountain..." Yu Changsheng also emerged, gazing northward.

That day, the sky churned with billowing cloud seas, and those stone pillars stabbed skyward, each seemingly capable of puncturing holes in the heavens!

"Let's go, let's take a look!"

Lu Ran was ecstatic, having journeyed through monotonous desert landscapes for far too long.

As awe-inspiring as "The River Sets Beneath the Round Sun" might be, he'd grown tired of it.

"Whew~"

The ancient bronze mirror silently transformed into a standing mirror, and the group of five filed inside.

"Wow!" Lu Ran's eyes gleamed with admiration.

From afar, it seemed unimpressive.

Up close, these sky-piercing peaks were shockingly enormous!

Lu Ran's eyes narrowed as he noticed some peaks piercing into the cloud sea.

He felt a thrill in his heart: "Mr. Conglong!"

"Sect Master?"

Lu Ran licked his lips excitedly: "We use the cloud sea to delineate the Heavenly Realm from the Mountain Realm, right?"

The Heavenly Realm, of course, is the unknown place strong individuals go upon "ascension."

The Mountain Realm is the world they're all imprisoned in—Holy Spirit Mountain.

Yu Changsheng faintly deduced Lu Ran's thoughts but responded cautiously nonetheless: "Yes, so long as we avoid nearing the cloud sea, we're safe."

"Sir!" Lu Ran pointed upward eagerly, "Look closely—it's poking in!"

Yu Changsheng: "..."

What kind of phrasing is this!

Your 'sir' here is a respectable man!

"Look at the peak tips piercing into the clouds; it doesn't seem like they're shattered?" Lu Ran's eyes shone brightly. "If we carefully climb up along the peaks..."

Yu Changsheng pondered aloud, "Given this opportunity, why not have Sect Master create an Evil Demon to test it out?"

"Great!" Lu Ran agreed instantly, then fell into thought.

Such a task was perfectly suited for the Night Charm Clan.

Yet, the Night Charm slots were all filled, deployed at Cloud Sea Cliff.

Deliberating this and that, Lu Ran finally selected an elegant and regal Evil Sculpture from the Sculpture Garden—the Evil Spear Emperor!

Unfortunately, the Evil Spear Emperor's sculpture was only River Realm·First Rank, meaning Lu Ran could only craft demons at the River Realm rank.

No matter, as long as they could fly and had high intelligence!

"Whew~"

Lu Ran extended his hand.

Gradually, a figure brimming with majesty and elegance took form—the Evil Spear Emperor!

Jing Hong's almond-shaped eyes shone brighter and brighter!

If this caliber of existence could be recruited into the Demon Control Hall...

"Your Majesty, come, I'll personally teach you!"

Lu Ran instructed the Evil Spear Emperor meticulously on a slew of directives.

Twenty minutes later, the Spear Emperor stepped onto a billowing black cloud, ascending skyward.

The group raised their heads, watching intently.

"Go slower! Take it slow!" Lu Ran kept cautioning, watching the Spear Emperor maneuver closely against the stone pillar until...

With a single movement, the Spear Emperor drifted into the swirling cloud sea and vanished from sight.

Lu Ran's pupils shrank slightly!

A deathly silence enveloped the heavens and earth.

No sound of explosions, just the quiet whistle of the wind sweeping through.

"Gulp." Lu Ran swallowed hard.

Just like that... did he just ascend?

Did the Evil Spear Emperor silently, effortlessly ascend into the Heavenly Realm?!

"Smack!"

Suddenly, a hand clamped down on Lu Ran's shoulder.

"Sis?" Lu Ran blinked dazedly, turning to look.

Perhaps the shock had overwhelmed him; Lu Ran forgot there were others around, slipping into informal speech.

Deng Yuxiang's tone was stern, her eyes sharp and severe: "You're nothing more than a fledgling River Realm cultivator, absolutely not!"

"Smack!"

Another hand pressed onto Lu Ran's opposite shoulder.

Yu Changsheng spoke with equal seriousness, his voice steady: "Even if Sect Master were at the Sea Realm, you mustn't act recklessly.

We can explore cautiously; this intelligence we've gathered is already the best outcome.

Sect Master, heed their words—absolutely no way!"

Lu Ran: "..."

...

Chapter 543: Sand River Doll

Here is the translation of the provided text:

Lu Ran initially thought he was very lucky.

All he did was head west along his journey, and he stumbled upon Ten Thousand Blade Mountain in the desert.

Later, Lu Ran realized how absurdly wrong he was!

He didn't accidentally discover Ten Thousand Blade Mountain; the boundless desert itself was entirely Ten Thousand Blade Mountain!

A dense cluster of towering stone pillars stretched and spread in all directions.

The group could pass through one section of Ten Thousand Blade Mountain only to find another section waiting ahead...

And another after that!

"When will this end..." Lu Ran muttered quietly.

Hovering a hundred meters above the ground, he gazed westward, but the stone pillar terrain extended endlessly out of sight.

Between the tightly packed pillars, visible waves of heat shimmered in the air.

Just one glance was enough to make a person's mouth dry and throat parched; being immersed in this scorching environment was even worse.

Believers whose strength was even the slightest bit lacking would likely die from heatstroke, dehydration, or exhaustion in this terrifying Ten Thousand Blade Mountain.

Deng Yuxiang remained silent, suspending herself in midair beside Lu Ran.

She couldn't shake an uneasy feeling; they had traveled for so long without encountering even a shadow of a living creature.

No signs of Evil Demons, the Human Clan, or any other activity whatsoever.

The entire world was nothing but barren wasteland.

Boundless desolation.

Even though Holy Spirit Mountain didn't have birds or beasts, the regions they had passed through earlier at least had lush green trees.

But here, there wasn't even a hint of life's breath.

This Ten Thousand Blade Mountain standing in the midst of the Great Desert seemed abandoned by the heavens.

"Ah?!"

A hundred meters below, a sudden exclamation from Jing Hong shattered the silence.

In the stillness, her voice was particularly abrupt, setting everyone's nerves on edge.

Lu Ran lowered his gaze and saw that the yellow sand beneath Jing Hong's feet had transformed into a swirling vortex.

This is... Evil Technique·Sand Vortex?

From the Evil Demons of the Sand River Doll clan!

Within the ranks of Evil Demons, there were four types of dolls, and Sand River Dolls were the most notorious!

Their most horrifying and infuriating characteristic was their cruel and playful nature, especially their fondness for defiling corpses.

When a Sand River Doll finds a Human Clan corpse, it will fill the body with sand, replacing the flesh and blood inside the skeletal frame to form a bond with the bones.

Once the technique succeeds, the sand-filled corpse will "resurrect" within a short time.

And serve as a loyal puppet for the Sand River Doll.

These "Sand Corpses" are slow-moving and, being already dead, have no soul, as it's been claimed by the gods and severed from any contracts. Consequently, they lack Divine Techniques and have shockingly low combat strength.

But for ordinary people, this was undoubtedly a nightmare!

Imagine a loved one who had just passed away suddenly having yellow sand pour out of their mouth and eye sockets, standing up again, and groaning as they lunged toward you...

The mere image of this would be enough to drive anyone to the brink!

"Watch out!"

Lu Ran instantly blinked to Jing Hong's side, grasping her arm firmly.

"Zzz—"

A surge of invisible wind surrounded his feet, followed by the rising of Immortal Fog.

Lu Ran, utilizing Night Charm Evil Technique-Night Dance, unleashed the Immortal Sheep Divine Technique-Immortal Hoof!

The scene resembled him performing a "mid-air double jump."

Well... okay, if Lu Ran wanted to, he could even perform "mid-air ten thousand jumps."

"Cong Long, catch!" Lu Ran exerted strength with his arm and hurled Jing Hong diagonally upward.

At the same time, eight Golden Jade Talismans erupted from within him.

The crisp sound of jingling echoed continuously!

Because, from within the sand vortex, sharp spikes of sand suddenly burst out, each spike over four meters long.

Clusters of sandy spikes gathered at their bases, radiating outward like a blooming flower.

Sand River Doll Evil Technique·Sand Spike Flower!

However, several spikes were obstructed and firmly blocked by the autonomous Golden Jade Stone Plates.

The sand spike flower failed to fully bloom.

Lu Ran tilted his head, listening intently. He hadn't blinked away because he wanted to pinpoint the enemy's location.

But in the next second, endless water droplets silently emerged, accompanied by floating miniature Canglong dragons swimming in the air.

Ashar Divine Skill·Azure Dragon Sea Domain!

Within a hundred-meter radius, no enemy could escape Luo Ying's perceptive sight.

Luo Ying suddenly noticed Lu Ran opening his mouth, swallowing a large cluster of water droplets.

Could it be... Sect Leader is thirsty?

Indeed, trekking through this boundless desert under the oppressive heat would parch anyone, even Lu Ran, a River Realm Great Power.

If not for his Water Flow Armor, in such extreme conditions, his lips might have already cracked from dryness.

Fortunately, Lu Ran still had some dignity!

He only couldn't help gulping down the water droplets; he didn't grab any of the tiny Canglong dragons and gnaw on them...

Luo Ying's face showed a peculiar expression, but her actions remained swift as she pulled back her bowstring.

"Thunk!"

The bowstring trembled with a sharp sound as it discharged.

Luo Ying, leveraging the flying capabilities of her Divine Weapon, propelled herself backward at an angle, releasing a Water Mist Arrow at the yellow sand.

Ashar Divine Skill·Water Mist Arrow!

A fundamental Divine Technique of the Ashar school, suitable for First-Rank within the Mist Realm, and its arrow composition didn't even qualify as flowing water—it was mere thin mist.

Additionally, Luo Ying's casting only allowed her to shoot one lonely arrow at a time.

So, the question remains!

Why did the Luoshen General choose this method?

The reason was that Divine Technique·Water Mist Arrow, beyond its offensive ability, had an additional trait—the mist could penetrate the target's body and disrupt the flow of Divine Power!

"Zzz!"

The output of the Sea Realm powerhouse was horrifying beyond imagination!

The Water Mist Arrow flew with terrifying speed and force, instantly burrowing deep into the desert sands, maintaining the same ferocity underground as in mid-air.

In a matter of moments, the arrow pierced through the depths of the earth, striking the insidious, scheming "little sand creature."

As the mist began to spread, the Sand River Doll's sandy body immediately reverted to flesh.

Evil Technique·Body of Sand lost its effect!

From this instant forward, physical attacks from the Human Clan could cause real damage to the Sand River Doll.

Additionally, the Sand River Doll's other Evil Technique·Sand River Travel was rendered useless; it could no longer roam freely through the Sand Sea or dive into the depths of the earth.

The pitiful Sand River Doll lost all its Evil Techniques, essentially burying itself alive...

"Allow me!"

Lu Ran, attacking from another direction, plunged downward, wielding the Eight Desolates Annihilation Blade, merging man and sword as one—a javelin-like strike aimed directly below.

Luo Ying briefly hesitated, her bowstring still taut.

A single string of arrows could solve this; why was the Sect Master diving into the sand?

Though Luo Ying didn't fully understand, she obeyed the command.

"Bang!"

The sandy terrain erupted violently; Lu Ran surrounded himself with Immortal Fog and drove downward.

The Eight Desolate Blade pierced the Sand River Doll's head, and Lu Ran quickly teleported back.

"Buzz!"

The glowing blade of the Eight Desolate Knife drew his attention.

He gripped its handle tightly and murmured to himself, "Yes, keep going, don't stop!"

Earth, sea, and sky forces combined—you're missing something below-ground?

Or perhaps, among skies, oceans, snowy forests, and grassy plains, what you lack is the desert?

Eight Desolates Annihilation—whatever it is, you'll give me...

Damn!

The knife, which had been humming moments ago, gradually fell silent.

The group quietly watched as Lu Ran's hopeful expression turned to disappointment, until the Sect Leader sighed deeply.

It seemed the Eight Desolate Blade still had further to go before becoming a Divine Weapon.

Luo Ying's thoughts stirred; within Azure Dragon Sea Domain, a small Canglong drifted gently to Lu Ran's side.

"Hmm?" Lu Ran turned to his loyal Luoshen General.

"Sect Master, are you thirsty?" Luo Ying asked softly, a flicker of affection flashing in her gaze.

Lu Ran: "..."

His sharp perceptive skills didn't miss her subtle expression.

Lu Ran couldn't help but laugh while feeling slightly guilty.

For such a long time, he had tasked this young mother with missions far away, separating her from her children.

Indeed! As your divine leader, I may be young and momentarily indulged in snatching a few of your Azure Dragon waters...

But can you stop transferring your maternal instincts and treating me like your child?!

"Hmm?" Luo Ying suddenly turned her gaze westward.

The group followed her line of sight.

As Lu Ran glanced away, he secretly took a quick bite of the small Canglong in front of him.

Ah, truly refreshing~

The little Canglong was composed of water flow, though essentially formed of Divine Power, and didn't provide actual hydration to Lu Ran's body.

Still, as a River Realm Great Power, Lu Ran didn't actually need to drink water—he simply sought the sensation of relief.

Is this what heaven-ordained perfection feels like?

"There are quite a few Sand River Dolls," Luo Ying said, bow drawn, scrutinizing the ground below.

The delicate water droplets scattered throughout Azure Dragon Sea Domain had permeated the desert floor, perceiving everything within.

As she spoke, a single Sand River Doll emerged from the sands.

Its frame resembled that of a four- or five-year-old child—small, thin, and crowned with a peculiar hat akin to bird feathers.

Much like an Indian feathered headdress, perhaps?

At this moment, the Sand River Doll was using Evil Technique·Body of Sand, with its entire body composed of grains of sand, which blurred its features save for rough outlines.

"Whish~!"

At the instant the demon surfaced, Luo Ying's Water Mist Arrow was already speeding toward it.

The Sand River Doll instinctively raised its hand—a tiny sand hand—unleashing a horrifying sand wave forward.

Evil Technique·Sand Wave Roaring Sky!

Yet, the massive sand wave couldn't stop the overwhelming power of the Yangyang Sea's arrow.

The Water Mist Arrow swiftly pierced through the wave, retaining its fearsome momentum, and punched through the Sand River Doll's body.

The arrow succeeded in its attack.

And the mist saturated its target, throwing the Sand River Doll's energy flow into disarray.

The roaring sand wave lost its caster's control, crashing heavily onto the ground.

As the dust settled, Lu Ran caught a full glimpse of the Sand River Doll's true form.

Its dry, yellowish skin clung to its bony frame...

This was nothing but a mummified corpse!

"Yeeeeee!!" The Sand River Doll screamed in frustration, its high-pitched voice grating on the ears.

Its main body, still partially buried in the ground, raised emaciated hands, desperately trying to crawl out.

The next moment, Lu Ran appeared behind the demon, driving the Eight Desolate Blade downward to pin this horrifying dried corpse.

"Buzz~"

Once again, the Eight Desolate Knife vibrated strongly.

Lu Ran's heart swelled with excitement!

Eight Desolates... is this truly what you needed?

Alright!

"Kill!!" Lu Ran roared ferociously.

But was the wicked Sand River Doll merely a convenient outlet?

At this point, Lu Ran's skills granted him altitude among the skies and depths in the seas—but true subterranean mastery eluded him...

Chapter 544: A Rainfall

Strong bows, sharp blades, blood staining the yellow sands.

When the battle ended, the dunes within Ten Thousand Blade Mountain piled high, and dried corpses littered the ground.

Lu Ran stood atop a cloud of black mist, with cold, piercing pupils gazing at the procession of slender souls drifting out from underground.

A total of more than forty!

This group of Evil Demons seemed to be an unusually strong bunch.

Is this the true face of Ten Thousand Blade Mountain?

"Buzz~"

Lu Ran raised the incessantly trembling Eight Desolate Blade, sensing its tendency to grow silent again, and laughed helplessly.

Eight Desolates, oh Eight Desolates.

I'm beginning to regret naming you this.

If I had chosen another path of cultivation, and coupled it with all my experiences since entering the mountain, this weapon would likely already have achieved mastery, wouldn't it?

As for the Cloud Sea Clear Blade, that remains an unattainable dream.

Though the Cloud Sea Clear Blade does occasionally quiver, it is evidently far, far from becoming a Divine Weapon...

"Ah!!"

A piercing scream grew closer and closer, stabbing into Lu Ran's eardrums.

Just a few meters away, a gaunt shriveled Dead Soul was shrieking hysterically in rage.

The corpse-like Sand River Doll was nauseating to begin with, but now it appeared even more monstrous!

As the Dead Soul advanced, its tiny hands clawed furiously, long and sharp nails poised as if to gouge out Lu Ran's eyeballs.

Such ugly little things—truly ferocious!

"Puff~ Puff~"

Within the yellow sands, dozens of dried corpses disintegrated sequentially into mist, vanishing without a trace.

Lu Ran descended from the cloud, simultaneously summoning the Divine Power Pearl to absorb energy while using the Pupil of the Dead World to draw in Dead Souls: "Jing Hong."

"Sect Leader?"

"Blow the horn, scout the situation."

"Understood!" Jing Hong gripped the Azure Dragon Crescent Blade in one hand and a translucent horn in the other.

"Ooo~~~"

A deep horn sound echoed far, far away.

In Jing Hong's mind, a faintly discernible map of the terrain quickly took shape.

War Horn Divine Technique·Echo Horn!

"Sect Leader!" Jing Hong stowed away the Echo Horn and turned to Lu Ran, who was absorbing the mist.
"There seems to be a large gathering of creatures in the northwest!"

"Oh?" Lu Ran squeezed the Eight Desolate Blade.

Looks like our battle isn't over yet!

He immediately asked, "What kind of creatures?"

Jing Hong's face showed an apologetic expression: "Forgive me, Sect Leader, I..."

"Enough." Lu Ran interrupted her sentence.

The Echo Horn indeed had an extremely wide scouting range, but its shortcomings were glaring. The sonic feedback Jing Hong received was notably vague.

In fact, if the enemies were few, Jing Hong might not even detect them.

Therefore, when Jing Hong reported a large gathering... the enemy force's scale must be vast!

"Move!" Lu Ran tightened his grip on the blade's hilt. "We advance northwest, deeper into Ten Thousand Blade Mountain!"

"Understood!"

"Understood!" the members of Ran Sect responded promptly.

Lu Ran envisioned the large-scale army Jing Hong had detected as the Evil Dog Clan.

However, reality dealt him a crushing blow.

It wasn't the Evil Dog Clan!

It was the even deadlier, more devastatingly powerful Barbaric Female Demon Clan!

This time, Ran Sect truly found themselves in grave danger...

Even with three Yangyang Sea powerhouses in their ranks, Lu Ran dared not lead his team into direct confrontation. He could only fight while retreating.

Mid-battle, Lu Ran's head began to buzz again.

Within the God Demon Sculpture Garden, a Barbaric Female Demon Evil Sculpture began to quiver, steadily expanding in scope.

Lu Ran felt a mix of excitement and unease, directing his team to advance and retreat, weaving intricate maneuvers.

Finally, after absorbing vast numbers of Dead Souls, he managed to escape the area of Ten Thousand Blade Mountain occupied by the Barbaric Female Demon Clan.

"Hah..."

Twenty kilometers outside Ten Thousand Blade Mountain, behind a sand dune, Lu Ran exhaled deeply, thankful for their escape.

The others beside him were equally shaken.

"It could only be us." Lu Ran sat heavily on the ground, leaning against the slanted sand dune.

"What?" Deng Yuxiang poked half her head out from atop the sand dune, surveying the distant Ten Thousand Blade Mountain.

Behind the group lay a vast, open desert.

Farther west and north, the mountain's terrain was still faintly visible.

"Anyone else would have met their end here," Lu Ran lifted his head, gazing at the woman's profile beside him. "If you and I had descended onto this land when entering the mountain back then..."

"We would survive," Deng Yuxiang responded softly.

She did not deny the brutal, inhospitable environment here, where each Ten Thousand Blade Mountain posed hidden threats and densely populated dangers, inspiring despair.

But she believed that she and he would surely find a way out.

And would undoubtedly find like-minded allies!

There exists a certain kind of person in this world whose spiritual will and determination cannot be quashed by their surroundings.

As long as the will doesn't break, the body will not easily perish.

Rising again is merely a matter of time.

"Boom rumble!!"

Clouds churned in the sky, accompanied by distant thunder.

Lu Ran paused, raising his eyes skyward.

Was this the thunderous noise of a God Demon battle—or real thunder?

Could it be... rain in the desert?

"Plop plop~"

Rain began to fall abruptly, without warning.

Within the stone pillars of Ten Thousand Blade Mountain, a woman in white robes lifted her elegant hand, allowing raindrops to gather on her palm.

Rain?

Jiang Ruyi looked up at the sky.

This was the first time she had sensed thunder and rain since entering the mountain.

Behind Jiang Ruyi, An Xian's delighted eyes widened as she drank the rainwater without hesitation.

The way she acted was akin to the cracked, lifeless earth beneath her feet—finally quenched by a long-awaited downpour.

"Pavilion Master!" A bald man hurried over with urgency etched on his ugly face.

"Speak," Jiang Ruyi said softly while rolling rain beads between her fingers.

"We've tracked signs of activity from creatures in the south; why not shift northward?" Xiong Xiong suggested.

Jiang Ruyi nodded slightly, continuing her westward journey, merely veering slightly to the north.

Centered around the Luoxian Pavilion Master, a circle of Shanwei believers within a hundred-meter radius shifted northward.

The two West Desolation disciples and three Jade Talisman believers who were clearing the path showed some reaction.

Only An Xian followed closely behind the Pavilion Master.

The Pavilion Master's tall and slender silhouette appeared immensely dignified and heroic in An Xian's eyes, providing her an unmatched sense of security!

After pacifying the members of the Split Mountain Gang, Jiang Ruyi had been leading her unit forward for several days now.

Under her prudent command, disciples from various factions executed their duties competently, advancing westward day by day.

They inevitably encountered obstacles along the way, but under Jiang Ruyi's leadership, Luoxian Pavilion navigated through with danger narrowly averted each time.

Particularly, the 12 Shanwei believers within the pavilion carried conflicting emotions of anxiety and thrill each time they set out.

If this steady pace persisted, Jiang Ruyi might truly lead them out of this Ten Thousand Blade Mountain, which had held many captives for years, even decades!

Not to mention the Shanwei believers who had long suffered here—even the two West Desolation disciples and four Jade Talisman disciples felt secretly elated.

Hope surged within their hearts!

The world beyond Ten Thousand Blade Mountain...

What might it be like?

Would there be birdsong and fragrant flowers, green woods, and flowing streams?

Surely, there would also be mighty sects and merciless, ruthless believers...

But those were matters for another time!

First, they had to emerge from these endless Ten Thousand Blade Mountains!

The day before yesterday, the Pavilion Master had announced that she had encountered a bottleneck in her cultivation.

She could transition from Jiang Realm·Fourth Rank to Jiang Realm Peak.

Yet the current environment did not allow her to break through.

Escape!

Search for a safe and secluded resting place, where the Pavilion Master could achieve a stable promotion.

Such a divine, ethereal figure—once she advanced to Jiang Realm·Fifth Rank, she might be able to ascend into the Sea Realm at any moment!

At that point, our Luoxian Pavilion will no longer be a trifling sidenote for others to manipulate.

With Pavilion Master Jiang at its helm, surely the vast Holy Spirit Mountain would contain some corner where we could survive...

"My Lady! My—Pavilion Master!" An ecstatic voice interrupted, reaching from afar.

Jiang Ruyi frowned slightly, gazing ahead.

Shanwei disciple Wang Xuyang came bounding over, a look of overt joy plastered across his face as he reported, "We're about to exit—about to exit this Ten Thousand Blade Mountain!"

As the group pressed forward, scattered Shanwei disciples began detecting changes in the terrain.

Excited murmurs drifted about.

"Silence!" Jiang Ruyi's icy words pierced the sheets of rain, traveling to everyone's ears.

Wang Xuyang froze, his face sinking, as he awkwardly lowered his head.

"Tighten formation." Jiang Ruyi commanded, jade talisman formations materializing around her as she levitated.

The 19-member team quickly regrouped, picking up speed as they neared the stone pillar forest's edge.

A wide expanse opened up once again—a barren wasteland of repetition.

Nonetheless, the sight was invigorating!

After scouting and preparations, Luoxian Pavilion disciples trickled out, hurriedly traversing the rain-streaked terrain.

Upon climbing an arid dune, Jiang Ruyi's brow rose slightly.

The distant terrain had changed!

The cracked, desiccated ground transmuted into desert?

Momentarily, Jiang Ruyi's focus wavered inwardly.

Had her team gone astray?

Her initial expectation was that moving eastward would bring increasing signs of life.

But from the distant east, where solid ground and hardy weeds had vanished, there remained nothing but endless yellow sands... Hm?

Jiang Ruyi's eyes sharpened.

"My lady, look over there!" An Xian urgently pointed northeast.

In the rain-swept haze, a dense cloud of sand churned?

"Pavilion Master, that's not natural sandstorm formation!" Xue Fengchen scrutinized carefully and reported swiftly. "It appears to be the West Desolate Divine Skill·Floating Sand!"

Gao Yunyan's expression darkened. "Judging by the scale of this Floating Sand, it's undoubtedly a Sea Grade Divine Skill!"

"There's a Sea Realm West Desolation believer battling there... Ah?"

"Hiss..." A collective intake of breath hissed through the group.

"That... That thing?"

"Such a terrifying scale? T-T-T..." Mutters and murmurs erupted.

The group certainly had reason to grow anxious!

For amidst the thick sand cloud, an unbelievably colossal sand hand had risen and hovered menacingly overhead.

The sheer enormity made the hand visible not only because of its size but also by how high it reached—appearing poised to hurl its target toward the heavens...

Song Yu spoke in a low voice: "A believer of the Drought Seal! Such an immense sand hand—it's likely a Sea Realm Great Power!"

Jiang Ruyi's expression grew grave.

Two Sea Realm Great Powers, locked in combat at this location?

One was a Second-class God-West Desolation believer, the other a Third-class God-Drought Sea believer.

Of course, it remained possible that they represented opposing factions embroiled in territorial skirmish.

"Pavilion Master, perhaps we should retreat to Ten Thousand Blade Mountain again? We mustn't let them notice us!"

"Indeed, my lady! A Sea Realm powerhouse could crush me with a single hand..."

Chapter 545: Roadblock Dog

"Retreat!"

Jiang Ruyi made a decisive call, leading the members of the Luoxian Pavilion to swiftly fall back, heading straight for the Ten Thousand Blade Mountain from where they had come.

"Move faster!"

"Hurry up!" Song Yu and others urged.

Although everyone was far away from the battlefield, the sheer weight of the term "Sea Realm" was too overwhelming.

Everyone understood deep down that, in the face of a Sea Realm Great Power, their group of River Realm cultivators was no better than ants.

In terms of physical strength, mental fortitude, the grade of Divine Techniques—every aspect—the gap created by realms was an insurmountable chasm!

"Faster, faster, faster!"

"Finally, we're back..." No one had ever imagined they'd one day be relieved to return to the Ten Thousand Blade Mountain.

Jiang Ruyi remained calm and composed, issuing another command: "Don't stop, keep moving!"

In front of disciples from West Desolation and Drought Sea, hiding would get you nowhere.

West Desolation believers possessed the Divine Technique·Floating Sand, and Drought Sea disciples had the Divine Technique·Floating Dust Sand Realm.

Even if you buried yourself deep underground, they could sense you with perfect clarity.

Jiang Ruyi was left with no choice but to exploit the Ten Thousand Blade Mountain's terrain and lead the group in a wide-scale relocation.

The battlefield of the two Sea Realm Great Powers was situated to the northeast of the group, so the direction of their retreat was clear.

However, just as Jiang Ruyi finished speaking, several Shanwei disciples suddenly turned pale:

"Pavilion Master! Something's wrong!"

"To the south, Pavilion Master, to the south there's... Ah!"

The Shanwei disciples began reporting immediately, but one of the female disciples let out a sudden gasp before she could finish her sentence.

Her gaze fixed on a massive stone pillar to the south. Were those Evil Dogs?

The Evil Dog Clan!

Earlier, when the members of Luoxian Pavilion had attempted to leave this area of the Ten Thousand Blade Mountain, the Shanwei believers had already detected signs of activity to the south.

Precisely because of this, the group had deliberately veered northward while advancing eastward.

Who would have thought that the creatures to the south were actually from the Evil Dog Clan?

The perception range of the Shanwei Divine Technique·Mountain's Intent was considerable. At River Grade, it could detect all creatures within a 500-meter radius that were in contact with the ground or buried underground.

Luoxian Pavilion had relocated as fast as they possibly could, but this pack of dogs...

Had they come sniffing out their trail?

"Boom, boom, boom!"

The sound of thunder rumbled, neither too loud nor too soft, yet it seemed to freeze everyone in place.

The thunder also stung the sensitive ears of the Evil Dogs, causing a pitch-black, slender dog over 3.5 meters long to grow violently agitated!

"Woof! Woof, woof!"

The incessant barking made Jiang Ruyi's temples throb with pain!

Usually calm and composed, a surge of irritation ignited within her, and she felt an overwhelming urge to tear that pesky dog apart.

Jiang Ruyi realized she had fallen for their provocation.

She didn't hold back. With a swift motion, she hurled an Electric Shackles Talisman: "Finish this quickly!"

"Swoosh~"

The Evil Dog suddenly shimmered and dodged away.

Almost simultaneously, another Electric Shackles Talisman within the Jade Talisman Formation encircling Jiang Ruyi was triggered!

The River Grade Jade Talisman Formation was composed of 8 White Jade Stones.

In other words, it had two sets of each of the four elemental Jade Talismans!

"Whimper~ Whimper~"

In an instant, the whimpering cries of the Evil Dog could be heard.

These mindlessly simple Evil Demons were indeed easy to predict in their movements!

At this moment, Jiang Ruyi was no longer the weak Believer she had once been in the buffer zone of Evil Dog Village.

A Thunder Ball with a diameter of 50 meters expanded rapidly, with Jiang Ruyi at its center.

Surrounding her, the disciples protected by the Jade Talisman Formation were unharmed by any same-realm believer's Jade Talismans.

The Shanwei disciples and West Desolation disciples, both standing firmly on the ground, were similarly unaffected by the lightning damage!

Thus, a world where only Evil Dogs were hurt came to fruition!

"Die."

Jiang Ruyi's eyes burned with anger as she half-turned, a single word slipping through her tightly clenched teeth.

It was evident that the Evil Dog's provocation had indeed worked.

Following the sound of the Evil Dog's whimpers, she turned and flicked her wrist, sending the Cold Night Sword flying.

"Swish!"

The Cold Night Sword shot through the air at lightning speed. Just as the Shanwei believers realized what was happening, the icy and sharp Black Ice Sword had already pierced through the Evil Dog's skull.

Lightning ensnared its body, while the Divine Weapon claimed its life!

Jiang Ruyi had perfectly demonstrated what it meant to kill in the blink of an eye.

But before everyone could breathe a sigh of relief, more barking came from the south.

"Crunch!"

"Woof! Woof, woof!!" A series of snapping sounds echoed as rows upon rows of sharp canine teeth emerged, clamping down viciously.

The incessant barking grated on their nerves, driving them mad with frustration!

The Evil Dogs were ferocious and mindless. Even though their techniques provoked them to the extreme, they never turned on each other.

Their shared identity as part of the same clan seemed to grant them a hidden trait: their barking was directed exclusively outward.

"Retreat, head west... Hmm..."

Jiang Ruyi shouted her command, her internal fury flaring uncontrollably!

That deep nasal sound at the end, tinged with a terrifying mix of authority and ire, came as her gaze locked onto the flashing figures of the approaching Evil Dogs.

The two factions, Jade Talisman and West Desolation, lacked Spirit Defense Techniques. Their seven-person team had its mental state thrown into complete disarray.

More than twenty Evil Dogs barked in a maddening chorus, quickly reducing the group to slaves of their own emotions.

"Crackle~ Crack!"

White Jade Stones were hurled out one after another, unleashing bursts of lightning and flames.

Song Yu erupted in rage, shouting curses: "Damn it, keep barking! Go on, bark again!!"

It was hard to imagine the level-headed and stoic disciple of the Jade Talisman Formation would lose his composure so quickly.

Song Yu, typically a "silent but deadly" strategist who often advised Jiang Ruyi with a calculated demeanor, now resembled a raving lunatic.

Among those present, only the Shanwei disciples seemed completely unaffected.

Xiong Xiong's expression shifted rapidly. Should he take advantage of the chaos to slip away?

The Evil Dogs were astoundingly fast, and this battle likely wouldn't end anytime soon. The escalating commotion could very well attract a more dangerous enemy!

Abandoning his comrades and escaping seemed like the rational choice, but then...

And then what?

Return to his old life?

Scraping together an existence, hiding in some corner of the world, waiting for the day he's discovered and enslaved by the Strong God believers?

"Wang Xuyang! Take a team and pull them out! The rest of you, follow me and form up! Fight and kill these Evil Dogs quickly!" Xiong Xiong grit his teeth and stomped his foot, shouting commands.

The former leader of the Split Mountain Gang had chosen a dual strategy.

"Whoosh!!"

Yellow sand roared as it surged into towering waves.

Gao Yunyan, seething with rage, clutched the Divine Weapon-Yellow Sand Axe and charged forward through the fearsome Sand Sea, enveloped in a storm of sand and fury.

The commotion indeed grew louder and louder.

The crashing of yellow sand, the gnashing of canine teeth.

Lightning streaked wildly, flames erupted in roaring blasts, and the loyal Golden Jade Talismans clattered endlessly in defense of their masters.

Without a calming technique at their disposal, many had become entirely "entangled" with the Evil Dogs!

"Whoosh!!"

Suddenly, a faint shroud of sand appeared, enveloping the battlefield.

"Boom, boom, boom!"

Within the swirling Cloud Sea, a thunderous roar echoed ominously.

Then came something strange!

Above the battlefield, the Evil Dog Clan froze in unison!

In the blink of an eye, the Shanwei believers, clad in Mountain Stone Armor, were pushed forward by their teammates with incredible force, crashing into and smashing apart the Evil Dogs like cannonballs.

Lightning continued to spread, flames burned with unrelenting ferocity.

The combined onslaught of thunder and fire consumed one immobilized Evil Dog after another.

"You Tianyao!" An aged, thunderous roar burst across the heavens, filled with fury and unyielding determination. "If I don't kill you today, I'll take your surname!!"

The dust thickened, and the roar drew ever closer.

"Damn it!" Xiong Xiong's face turned ashen.

He sensed two individuals entering the perception range of the Divine Technique·Mountain's Intent.

Both moved at terrifying speed!

One trailed below ground, clearly aiming for this chaotic battlefield with deadly precision.

The one above ground was sprinting across the surface, their enraged shouts resounding as they advanced.

An overwhelming pressure bore down on them, intangible yet unmistakably real, grinding over everyone.

A Sea... Sea Realm Great Power?

A Sea Realm Great Power radiating boundless killing intent!

"Swoosh..."

After the thunder faded, the rain fell harder and harder.

Under the judgment of natural weather, the dust clouds that had filled the sky should have grown denser, yet they somehow thinned instead.

After all, the Divine Techniques of West Desolation believers and Drought Sea disciples manifested in the form of dust and sand in the mortal world.

Though the sand had grown lighter and thinner, it was still enough to transmit information to the caster.

"All of you, kneel!"

An old man rapidly approached, his harsh voice cutting through the air.

He wore a dirt-yellow robe, his short white hair framing a deeply lined face. His slightly upturned eyes carried an imposing menace.

Xiong Xiong and the others trembled with fear! Who dared resist in front of a Sea Realm Great Power? They dropped to their knees without hesitation.

Gao Yunyan's expression suddenly shifted!

She snapped out of her haze completely.

On the one hand, the Evil Dogs had been slain and were no longer barking; her pent-up frustration had found some release.

On the other hand, the old man's voice was undeniably familiar!

Wasn't this Elder Peng from Tianhuang Mountain?

"Whoosh~ Whoosh~"

Suddenly, strange phenomena filled the battlefield!

The trembling, kneeling Shanwei disciples abruptly found themselves entangled in soft yet resilient spiked tendrils beneath their feet.

The Drought Land Divine Technique-Sand Brambles!

"Ah! Ahhh!!"

"No, stop! Please, no..." Cries of alarm erupted around them.

Formed from fine sand, the brambles were agile and pliable, wrapping themselves around several Shanwei disciples before violently flinging them backward.

"Get out of my way!"

Elder Peng, wielding a massive axe, charged forward with unstoppable momentum, showing no signs of evasiveness whatsoever.

"Slash!!"

One Shanwei believer, clad in Mountain Stone Armor, narrowly dodged past Elder Peng's flank.

Two other Shanwei believers, however, weren't as fortunate—they were sliced apart by Elder Peng's massive axe!

Their Mountain Stone Armor, Water Flow Armor, and their formidable River Realm bodies—all were cleaved to pieces!

The Sea Grade skill-Shatter the Eight Desolates wasn't known for its reputation alone!

Some were terrified, some were enraged.

And some were utterly despondent...

In the cruel world of the Holy Spirit Mountain, who treated anyone as human?

The Drought Land believer tunneling underground had followed the sounds to this location, likely planning to take advantage of the chaos or flee in the mêlée.

By sheer bad luck, however, after the clap of thunder, the Evil Dog Clan had been eradicated, and the battlefield quickly became clear...

Clear?

That wouldn't do!

From his position underground, the Drought Land believer You Tianyao scowled darkly as he perceived the surface with Floating Dust Sand Realm, while the energies in his hands surged once more.

Suddenly, the earth quaked, and yellow sand erupted everywhere!

The Drought Land Divine Technique-Drought Sea Torrent!

"You Tian... Hmm?" Elder Peng's perception locked onto two towering figures wielding axes. He immediately commanded, "Are you two West Desolation disciples? What are you waiting for?

Summon the West Desolation Divine Axe at once! Strike at full force and..."

Elder Peng's voice suddenly trailed off.

Mid-charge, his eyes caught the silhouette of a woman flitting behind a stone pillar.

Gao Yunyan?!

And in her hands...

Was that Guo Yize's Divine Weapon·Yellow Sand Axe?

Chapter 546: ginger...

Drought Land Divine Technique·Drought Sea Torrent!

An immense surge of yellow sand erupted from beneath the ground, shattering the already cracked surface with overwhelming momentum.

On the surface, the crowd was filled with terror.

"Run!"

"Run!" Shouts and screams filled the air as the Shanwei believers launched themselves like cannonballs, their feet pounding the ground as they fled into the distance.

"Ah! Ah... uh!!"

"Uh!" Piercing screams and muffled groans echoed incessantly.

The overwhelming yellow sand mercilessly devoured the figures of the fleeing crowd.

Before the Sea Realm Great Power, the so-called River Realm Great Power was as worthless as grass.

"Zhu Yuan!" Zhang Zhenghu darted frantically, helplessly watching as his companion, who lagged behind, was engulfed completely by the yellow sand.

Zhu Yuan's screams were drowned out as the Jade Talisman Formation surrounding her shattered into countless fragments.

Lightning, flames, frost, fine sand...

Even the eight Golden Jade Talismans capable of autonomously defending against enemies proved futile and crumbled to dust.

The yellow sand geyser erupting from the ground wasn't just shooting upward!

It carried turbulent flows of agitated sand, threatening to grind all things within it into dust.

The terrifying sand geyser surged and churned, and due to its angled projection, those fleeing in desperation were driven eastward.

That happened to be the direction where Elder Peng was pursuing them.

Under the horrifying Divine Skill, even Elder Peng, who was also a Sea Realm Great Power, had to avoid direct confrontation temporarily.

"You Tianyao!"

Elder Peng gritted his teeth, retreating step by step.

Seizing the moment, he turned his head to the further east: "Gao Yunyan!"

"Elder Peng!" Gao Yunyan saw there was no escape and responded loudly.

"Where is Guo Yize?" Elder Peng demanded.

"Guo Yize and Cao Rongcheng, the two senior brothers, are disciplining the captives, teaching them to understand the rules!" Gao Yunyan quickly thought and replied, "Senior Brother Guo instructed me and Fengchen to escort this batch of captives back to the mountain first!"

To ensure no accidents, and to stay in communication, Senior Brother Guo even specifically lent me the Yellow Sand Axe!"

Listening from afar, Xue Fengchen felt his heart tremble.

Indeed!

The more beautiful the woman, the more deceptive she could be.

Not only did she make up a plausible story effortlessly, but her explanation was remarkably convincing.

Guo Yize's violent temperament, his penchant for tormenting and slaughtering captives for pleasure, made sending the two away while he partnered with Cao Rongcheng to abuse the captives a logical and believable action.

"Stop escorting the captives! Use Floating Sand to locate the underground enemies!" Elder Peng shouted sternly, "Summon the West Desolation Divine Axe and split open the land for me!"

Also, call Guo Yize over to assist me in hunting the enemies!"

Perhaps it was due to the urgency of the battle or the convincing nature of Gao Yunyan's explanation, but Elder Peng seemed unperturbed.

The little incident where Gao Yunyan deliberately avoided direct confrontation earlier also slipped his mind.

In the perilous environment of Holy Spirit Mountain, it was understandable for Gao Yunyan to act evasively.

Those from the River Realm, upon seeing the imposing Sea Realm Great Power arrive, fleeing in sheer panic for their survival was entirely natural.

"Yes!" Gao Yunyan naturally didn't dare openly defy the order.

With no other choice, she had to summon the West Desolation Divine Axe, even if only to put on a show.

But as she initiated the River Realm Technique, she sternly shouted for effect: "You bunch of slaves, crawl over here and kneel properly!"

If anyone dares to flee in the chaos, and I catch them, I'll skin you alive!"

The surviving members of Luoxian Pavilion had already been forced to flee eastward.

To be precise, they were being driven in Elder Peng's direction by the underground enemy.

Now, with Gao Yunyan's declaration, those escaping in desperation instead considered it a faint glimmer of refuge.

Although this refuge was unreliable at best, it was still something.

Yet, the survivors trembled as they cautiously maneuvered around Elder Peng and continued their eastward escape.

Elder Peng ignored the weeping and wailing slaves entirely.

He stepped onto the yellow sand, lunging forth with brutal force to confront the raging Drought Sea Torrent.

Inevitably, this wide-scale assault affected several Shanwei disciples traveling across the surface.

However...

Elder Peng didn't seem to care.

Dead is dead—what does it matter?

"Master, please... uh!"

"Ahhh!" Several Shanwei believers desperately unleashed their Mountain Stone Armor, Mountain Stone Prison, and covered themselves with Stone Armor.

Yet, the defense that the Shanwei Sect prided themselves on was utterly inadequate before the Sea Realm Great Power.

The raging sand overwhelmed them, leaving no trace behind.

"Buzz!!"

The Divine Weapon·Yellow Sand Axe in Gao Yunyan's grasp buzzed frantically, seemingly restless.

Elder Peng had been fooled just like that?

He asked just one question?!

The Yellow Sand Axe struggled to escape the woman's control, but as a First-rank Divine Soldier, it couldn't break free from the hands of the River Realm Peak·West Desolation Believer.

"Huff~"

Suddenly, a phantom energy form extended from the Yellow Sand Axe.

The manifestation of the axe spirit bore a striking resemblance to Guo Yize, nine points identical.

It opened its mouth to shout, staring at Elder Peng's back, yet no sound emerged.

"Get back here! Do you want to be crushed?!" Gao Yunyan hissed through clenched teeth.

The axe spirit had intended to fly toward Elder Peng, but it froze in place upon hearing her threat.

"Hurry up!" Elder Peng shouted sharply. Amid the chaotic battlefield, he still sensed Gao Yunyan's motions pausing because of Floating Sand's assistance.

How could a mere disciple of Tianhuang Mountain—a trivial River Realm practitioner—hesitate to fulfill a command from Elder Peng?

Already enraged, Elder Peng turned his head abruptly, catching sight of Gao Yunyan confronting the axe spirit.

Through the phantom silhouette of the axe spirit, Elder Peng also saw Gao Yunyan's menacing expression.

Incredibly vicious!

This torrential rain truly hindered matters.

If not for the rain, the sandstorm would be dense enough for Elder Peng to perceive the battlefield solely through the dust, his eyes unable to see anything.

But now...

Elder Peng's brows furrowed tightly!

Those who managed to survive in this world were all cunning and astute.

Even if one were inherently dull, Holy Spirit Mountain would force them to grow through relentless lessons.

As for the Shanwei believers, Elder Peng disregarded them automatically.

He harbored no doubts about the Jade Talisman disciples; with Guo Yize's techniques and power, it was reasonable to believe they could be subdued and enslaved.

But assigning Gao Yunyan and Xue Fengchen the task of escorting a few Jade Talisman Believers?

Even with the addition of a Divine Weapon for supervision, something still felt off.

Couple this with Gao Yunyan's hesitant demeanor and her fierce expression toward the axe spirit...

"Gao Yunyan! Toss the Yellow Sand Axe over here—I need to use it!" Elder Peng commanded.

Gao Yunyan's face shifted dramatically!

"Watch out, Elder!" Xue Fengchen suddenly shouted.

Gao Yunyan's West Desolation Divine Axe was never able to properly form due to her distraction, but Xue Fengchen's massive axe was already swinging down.

Meanwhile, far outside Ten Thousand Blade Mountain, toward the distant northeast.

A young man garbed in a green bamboo cloak and bamboo hat, his eyes cold and serpentine, gazed toward the heavens. "Oh? The West Desolation Divine Axe?"

As he spoke, a swarm of dead souls surged into his eyes.

Who was Lu Ran?

Watch as the Soul Eyes open!

When he first noticed the colossal sandy hand reaching skyward, he had already resolved to investigate.

And as he stealthily approached, seeing the souls rising into the air spurred him to quicken his pace!

At this moment, Deng Yuxiang had already imprisoned three dead souls in the Magic Artifact Fragment-Rebirth Money, ready for interrogation at any time.

On this foundation, nearly forty souls still floated across the ground and midair!

That was almost forty lives!

What was happening here? Were two factions in fierce combat?

Yu Changsheng couldn't see the souls, but the chaotic scene surrounding him made his expression grim. Bodies of the Human Clan, half-buried in the sand, were everywhere.

Those trapped beneath the earth were certainly more numerous.

Reasoning through it, the fighting here appeared to have shifted southwest.

Specifically, toward the far reaches of Ten Thousand Blade Mountain, the site of the falling battle axe.

"Don't underestimate—they could be wielding Barbaric Female Demon Clan-Barbaric Evil Axe," Deng Yuxiang remarked, never leaving Lu Ran's side as she also gazed southwest.

"These deaths don't seem caused by Evil Demons—all victims appear to be Human Clan."

As she spoke, Lu Ran raised his hand, summoning a ball of black mist and absorbing the last soul into the Soul Prison.

"You! You all..." The woman's face turned pale with fear.

The shock of witnessing death was already immense for her.

And now these mysterious bamboo-hat-and-cloak figures unleashed one Evil Technique after another!

In a short amount of time, she struggled to make sense of anything.

"Ah! Ahhh!" The woman suddenly screamed.

Lu Ran's dark flames rose within the sphere of the Soul Prison in his palm.

Six or seven seconds elapsed before Lu Ran extinguished the flames, saying coldly, "Answer what I ask—no evasions."

"Yes, my lord, I'll answer! Don't torture me, I beg you... I'll answer!" The woman sobbed and pleaded repeatedly.

"What happened here?"

"Tianhuang Mountain! Tianhuang Mountain sent many people to swallow up our Hanhai Gang!" The woman stammered rapidly.

Deng Yuxiang scoffed coldly. "The negotiations failed, so they fought?"

"Yes! Yes, my lord, that's correct! The people from Tianhuang Mountain didn't know—three days ago, five more joined our gang, including a Sea Realm Great Power!"

The woman babbled incessantly, desperate not to be burned again.

"The Tianhuang Mountain group, led by a Sea Realm elder, came with twenty-something people, thinking they'd easily defeat us."

"As soon as they arrived, they smashed the heads of our guards and demanded we submit!"

As she recounted, the woman broke down into tears.

Deng Yuxiang spoke sternly: "Keep going!"

Choking on sobs, the woman stammered, "We were caught in the crossfire of the two Sea Realm fighters and died without even knowing what killed us!"

You Tianyao paid no mind to our lives and acted directly...

Head heavy with misery, it was clear she resented her faction's own Sea Realm Great Power far more than Tianhuang Mountain's oppressive slave masters.

Lu Ran was about to ask another question when his expression suddenly stiffened!

Continuing to look southwest, his gaze caught sight of numerous Evil Dog souls rising into the air. Just as he reveled at the discovery, he noticed several figures emerging from the perimeter of Ten Thousand Blade Mountain.

Among them was a woman...

Her white dress fluttered, her long hair flowing.

Through layers of cascading rain and faint traces of sandy dust, she appeared as if shrouded in mist—a flower viewed through haze—and her features were indistinct.

Nonetheless, her ethereal presence and graceful movement, along with the Black Ice Sword entwining her flight...

Cold Night Sword?!

Lu Ran's pupils trembled violently with contraction!

His mind blanked entirely.

The world seemed to halt, and all noise ceased.

Even the incessant buzzing of the Barbaric Female Demon Evil Sculpture from the depths of his mind seemed to vanish.

The figure from his memories had suddenly intruded into his vision.

Dreamlike, surreal, catching him utterly unprepared.

Jiang...

Ruyi.

My little Ruyi.

...

Chapter 547: 506 Missing You Sick

"Whoosh~ Whoosh~"

Jiang Ruyi desperately flew upwards at an angle, continually hurling Frost Talismans behind her.

Her other hand was still gripping tightly onto Gao Yunyan's palm.

Gao Yunyan was ultimately exposed, and Elder Peng was furious beyond measure.

Compared to You Tianyao, the West Desolation believer who caused him immense losses, Elder Peng's wrath toward Gao Yunyan and Xue Fengchen had reached its peak!

The two had committed unimaginable crimes—murder and theft, betrayal of Tianhuang Mountain!

Even more audacious, they dared to deceive the elder himself, driving him into a maddened rage!

Holy Spirit Mountain,

A world built on a rigid and unforgiving hierarchy.

And yet mere River Realm ants dare to toy with an elder of the Sea Realm, making a fool of him...

Such impudence was utterly unforgivable!

Elder Peng felt he had suffered an enormous humiliation!

Enraged beyond reason, he even abandoned his pursuit of You Tianyao.

Perhaps, subconsciously, he knew that You Tianyao's "bone" was too tough to chew—someone he could not easily defeat.

Desperate to salvage his dignity, Elder Peng redirected all his fury toward Gao Yunyan and Xue Fengchen.

"Traitors! Heartless scum! I'll tear you limb from limb today!" Elder Peng's eyes were wide with rage as the sand sea under his feet churned violently.

The sight was truly spectacular!

A West Desolation believer meant to dominate the ground had instead ridden towering waves of yellow sand straight towards the sky?

How much Divine Power would that even take?

It seemed the level of his rage was directly proportional to the power he consumed.

"Whoosh~ Whoosh~"

"Whoosh!" Song Yu and An Xian flanked Jiang Ruyi closely.

Zhang Zhenghu, on Jiang Ruyi's orders, carried Xue Fengchen in another direction.

As Jiang Ruyi and her group fled through the skies, she continued flinging Frost Talismans downward at an angle.

As long as Elder Peng remained on the sand, Electric Shackles Talismans would be ineffective. As for Bursting Flame Talismans or Quicksand Talismans, they were thoroughly blocked by the swirling sands Elder Peng controlled.

Only Frost Talismans could penetrate a bit, slightly slowing his pursuit.

"Gao Yunyan!" Elder Peng's eyes bulged with fury as he swung the Battle Axe in his hand. "If I don't kill you today, I'll take your last name as mine!"

Elder Peng howled furiously, yet it came across as the angry roar of someone utterly powerless.

It couldn't be denied—the West Desolation Sect was truly mighty!

Yet, the sect lacked any long-range offensive Skills at all.

While Elder Peng could summon his Shatter Desolation Axe, the spectral battle axe would dissipate once it left his hand, severed from the caster's supply of Divine Power.

By contrast, the Fierce Heavenly Sect had significantly more impressive techniques.

The members of that sect could use Divine Technique: Shattering Sky to hurl blazing hammer shadows, much like an unending wave of explosive barrels!

"Ugh." Gao Yunyan clung tightly to Jiang Ruyi's hand, her expression frozen in stark fear.

The overwhelming pressure of a Sea Realm Great Power loomed over her like a suffocating tide, making her heart race uncontrollably!

Elder Peng was now only sixty to seventy meters below them, rapidly closing the gap.

The truth was clear—Jiang Ruyi was reliable!

She could have left the group to escape alone, yet Jiang Ruyi chose to rescue Gao Yunyan, facing extraordinary peril to do so.

"Scatter!" Jiang Ruyi shouted coldly, her stiff expression laced with trembling tones.

The Yangyang Sea's immense pressure was absolutely suffocating!

"Whoosh~"

Song Yu and An Xian swiftly obeyed, flying apart to either side.

Jiang Ruyi swung her arm forcefully, throwing Gao Yunyan in Song Yu's direction.

Elder Peng's muddled eyes suddenly widened in shock: !!!

And at that critical moment, a Divine Weapon intervened!

The Yellow Sand Axe seized its opportunity for vengeance and forcefully exerted its power, dragging Gao Yunyan toward Elder Peng.

It wasn't greed driving Gao Yunyan to hold onto the Divine Weapon at the expense of her life.

She simply couldn't let go of the Yellow Sand Axe!

Otherwise, the weapon would inevitably fall back into Elder Peng's hands.

Lacking long-range offensive options, West Desolation believers relied on divine weapons to bridge that gap.

But Gao Yunyan had no choice but to release her grip.

The sudden turn of events drastically slowed her flight speed. The Divine Weapon Axe was intent on delivering her directly to Elder Peng!

"Good!" Elder Peng's eyes lit up at once.

"Boom!!!"

Out of nowhere, a White Jade Talisman detonated, unleashing a massive shockwave.

Jiang Ruyi had thrown a Bursting Flame Talisman, sending both the Divine Weapon and Gao Yunyan hurtling through the air.

Elder Peng spun his head toward Jiang Ruyi, veins bulging: "You!!"

The joy of imminent revenge vanished in an instant.

The woman in white robes flying backward with startling speed still wore an icy expression. Freed of the burden of Gao Yunyan, she flew even faster toward the rear.

River Realm ants!

River Realm ants who should have been groveling at Elder Peng's feet, trembling and begging for mercy, had humiliated him yet again.

"Arghhh!!"

Elder Peng's fury surged to the extreme, his eyes seeming on the verge of bursting.

Stepping onto the highest point of the sand sea, his legs tensed tightly before he leapt sharply upward:
"You! Want! To! Die!!"

Elder Peng had gone completely berserk!

He even dared to lift both feet off the sand?!

"Sizzle~ Sizzle~"

"Boom!!" In an instant, Jiang Ruyi detonated no fewer than four White Jade Talismans.

Two Electric Shackles Talismans and one Bursting Flame Talisman came from the Jade Talisman Formation.

She activated an additional Bursting Flame Talisman with her trembling fingertips.

Countless electric arcs, like serpents gone wild, scrawled across Elder Peng's body in mere moments.

The exploding Bursting Flame Talismans unleashed a fearsome shockwave that both blocked Elder Peng and sent Jiang Ruyi careening backward.

Electric currents twisted around Elder Peng's entire frame, paralyzing him, but the explosion's blast wave struck him squarely as well. Even then, his momentum didn't stop, as he hurtled like a cannonball directly toward Jiang Ruyi.

"Huff~" Eight Golden Jade Talismans layered and instantly expanded, which Jiang Ruyi pushed diagonally downward.

Chapter 548: Missing You Sick _2

Meanwhile, Jiang Ruyi plummeted down at high speed, her Cold Night Sword at her waist fiercely driving downward as well, helping its master evade Elder Peng's attack trajectory.

In that instant, her vision blurred!

A towering, mysterious figure appeared before her.

He wore a bamboo hat and bamboo clothes, his body ablaze with roaring flames, and wielded a Fiery Fire Hammer while hovering in the air in front of her.

Jiang Ruyi: !!!

Everyone's expressions turned to shock as they stared at the sudden figure.

Who... who is this?

Elder Peng gripped the Shattered Wilderness Axe, shattering one Jade Talisman after another.

"Boom!!"

At the exact moment the last Jade Talisman crumbled, the hammer's shadow smashed heavily against Elder Peng's axe blade.

A direct hit!

Elder Peng's momentum of rushing upward was abruptly slowed!

Fierce Heavenly Divine Skill-Bursting Sky Vault!

This definitely wasn't River Grade output.

It was the kind of output capable of slaying across realms under the state of Divine Technique-Fiery Fire Sky Leader!

"Ahhh!" Elder Peng's eyes bulged as if they were about to pop out of their sockets.

Another person stepping in my way?

Another...? Wait, what?!

Just as Elder Peng's face emerged from the surging sea of flames, a massive white-scaled python shot directly toward him!

"Roar!!"

This wasn't a typical River Grade Immortal Sky Python either—it was one capable of killing across realms!

The mysterious bamboo clothes figure summoned an illusory python that roared downwards, piercing through Elder Peng's body and launched a frenzied assault on his advance.

Elder Peng... stiffened upright!

First struck by a hammer blow, then rocked by the monstrous python's charge.

Elder Peng, who had surged upward against the tide, was forcibly held upright!

Frozen for a brief moment in the skies.

The Water Flow Armor on his body shattered completely; heavily injured, he finally regained clarity.

Shocked and furious, Elder Peng gazed up at the mysterious figure, only to meet a pair of eerie crimson eyes.

Evil Technique-Silk Pupil!

"Urgh..."

This time, Elder Peng didn't shout in anger but instead let out a muffled groan.

He fell into a deep crimson world, greeted by the terrifying punishment of countless red threads piercing through his heart and soul.

But Elder Peng was a Sea Realm Great Power, after all.

And the amplified output of Fiery Fire Sky Leader did not include psychic attacks.

The Yangyang Sea possessed immensely terrifying spiritual resilience, so Elder Peng's injuries weren't as severe as one might expect.

Not severe?

No problem; it'll be severe in a moment!

"Boom!!"

The fiercely burning hammer's shadow once again slammed downward at an angle.

Elder Peng, suspended mid-air and beginning to fall, was brutally struck again by the fiery hammer shadow.

"Whoosh~"

The mysterious bamboo clothes figure flashed through the air, appearing several hundred meters below at an angle.

Blocking Elder Peng's flight path!

With a low growl, the figure flung the Lie Tian Hammer hard, sending another flaming hammer shadow flying out.

"Wait, wait!" Elder Peng finally regained full clarity.

No longer angrily glaring, his tone turned polite and panicked as he exclaimed, "Esteemed Daoist... Ahhh!"

"Boom!!"

The exploding hammer shadow and surging flames turned Elder Peng's plea into a scream of misery.

Like a kite with a snapped string, he was sent flying skyward.

The bamboo clothes figure flashed again, launching another fiery hammer shadow!

"Daoist, there may have been a misunderstan—Ahhh!!"

"Boom!!"

"Boom!!"

Song Yu, Gao Yunyan, An Xian, and the others stared, dumbfounded, at the aerial scene unfolding above.

Amid layers of rain.

Silhouettes flickered, fire hammers flew!

Each time, the mysterious bamboo clothes figure appeared along Elder Peng's flight path, relentlessly landing hammer strikes.

The once-prideful Elder Peng now showed no trace of arrogance.

He shouted in desperation, resembling nothing more than a punching bag as he was repeatedly hammered through the skies!

"Daoist! Dao... spare—!"

"Stop... misunderstanding! I was blin—"

"I was wrong! I was wrong!! Please... Ahhh!"

The once-ground-stomping, domineering king was now completely subdued in the air.

Though Sea Realm-Water Flow Armor had exceptional self-healing capabilities, and despite the unmatched sturdiness of Divine Technique-Western Wilderness Body, everyone could see that at this rate...

This mighty Yangyang Sea figure,

was going to be controlled to death by the mysterious bamboo clothes figure!

"Gulp."

Buried in the muddy earth, Xiong Xiong cautiously raised his head, staring at the flickering, furiously hammering figure above.

What... what the hell is this?!

"Pavilion Master!" Song Yu dragged Gao Yunyan along, rushing toward her and speaking in a hushed tone, "Quickly, let's leave!"

Regardless of who the mysterious figure was or why they intervened, running was the safest choice.

"Not leaving." Jiang Ruyi spoke calmly.

"What?" Song Yu panicked, "Pavilion Master! Even if they helped us, we still..."

"Never leaving again." Jiang Ruyi's lips parted lightly.

Her eternally cool gaze softened at this moment to an extraordinary degree.

The oversized bamboo hat and bamboo clothes indeed rendered the figure mysterious.

Several Tang Blades, accompanied by a Fiery Phoenix Patterned Gourd, were concealed under the cloak, revealing no clues.

But Jiang Ruyi's Cold Night Sword at her waist, combined with her deep familiarity with this person, told her exactly who he was!

It all felt like a dream.

He had appeared just like that, without warning.

And the sheer strength of his techniques...

At this moment, Jiang Ruyi couldn't bring herself to care about anything else.

Her gentle gaze meticulously observed him, as if her invisible hands repeatedly traced his silhouette.

"I can't die... I don't want to die, I... I was wrong... I'll serve you as a slave—Ahhh..." Elder Peng muttered incoherently, battered into a daze.

Only his lingering will to survive kept him begging, sobbing uncontrollably.

With all defensive measures exhausted, his Water Flow Armor shattered with a loud crack.

His clothes torn, his flesh mangled, copious amounts of fresh blood spilled everywhere...

"Squelch!"

The blade pierced flesh.

This time, there was no hammer shadow, no explosion.

Amid the torrential rain, the mysterious bamboo clothes figure appeared behind Elder Peng, the Eight Desolate Blade driving into the back of his head.

The bloodied blade tip emerged from between Elder Peng's brows, right before his eyes.

"Crack!" A bolt of lightning illuminated the bamboo clothes figure.

Under the brim of his hat, those eyes were chillingly cold.

"Don't worry. Even after your death, you'll leave behind a Dead Soul—we're not done." The bamboo clothes figure murmured, his tone devilish.

With a hand pressed against Elder Peng's head,

he pushed it forward bit by bit.

The corpse grew lifeless, sliding off the blade and plummeting hundreds of meters below.

"Buzz!!"

The Eight Desolates Annihilation Blade vibrated fiercely.

The bamboo clothes figure paid it no mind.

"Plop~"

Far to the West Desolation's Ten Thousand Blade Mountain region, the sound of a fish blowing bubbles suddenly echoed strangely.

A faint golden giant fish materialized, ramming through a terrifying sandstorm and diving furiously underground.

The bamboo clothes figure remained indifferent, merely turning slowly to meet a pair of familiar, beautiful eyes.

No heartbreak, no tears.

Simply the joy of reunion in those gorgeous eyes.

"Whoosh~"

Once again, Jiang Ruyi's vision blurred.

This time, she didn't panic. Instead, she quietly surveyed the young man's face before her.

Her gaze gradually changed.

From joy to longing.

Even though Lu Ran stood right in front of her, she couldn't help but feel as though her yearning only deepened.

Her surging emotions seemed to ripple through the very heavens and earth.

"Crack!"

Another bolt of lightning streaked across the sky as the crowd gazed foolishly at the scene before them.

Some even began to speculate who the mysterious bamboo clothes figure could be.

After all, in this world, there was likely only one person qualified to stand so close to Lady Luo Xian...

"How long have you been at Holy Spirit Mountain?" Lu Ran lifted his hand, cupping her cheek.

Jiang Ruyi closed her beautiful eyes, her face subtly brushing left and right.

That adorable look of indulgence reminded Lu Ran of Little Li Hua.

Seeing her silent, Lu Ran asked, "Was that old scoundrel Golden Jade Talisman who sent you here?"

"Mhm." Jiang Ruyi replied softly, holding onto Lu Ran's hand as though confirming he was truly there.

As for Lu Ran's disrespectful comment about the God, she seemed unaffected.

After a long pause, she finally reopened her eyes: "Immortal Sheep Lord gave me a hint: the sea.

Are you resting near the sea?"

Lu Ran frowned slightly: "Immortal Sheep Lord didn't stop you but encouraged you to enter instead?"

Jiang Ruyi raised her hand, gently smoothing out his frown with her fingertips, her eyes still filled with longing, her voice soft and tender:

"I... missed you."

Lu Ran's heart trembled heavily!

Unable to hold back any longer, he leaned in to press his lips against hers.

"Mmph..." Jiang Ruyi instinctively clenched his clothes.

The rain poured heavily.

But Lu Ran's bamboo hat was wide enough to shelter her.

Gradually, Jiang Ruyi closed her eyes.

Oh, Divine Lord,

I didn't ascend to the Sea Realm; nor did the ocean find me.

But that ocean...

came to me.

...

Chapter 549: Life and Death Apart

"Rumble... Rumble..."

From the distant west came another thunderous sound.

Lu Ran reluctantly let go of Jiang Ruyi's lips, sparing her.

"Mmm."

Jiang Ruyi lowered her eyelids, breathing softly. Her face grew increasingly red, and even her delicate earlobes were tinged with a faint pink.

"Wait for me. The battle's not over." Lu Ran took off his broad bamboo hat and placed it on her head.

"Mm." Jiang Ruyi gently nodded.

Such a gentle and obedient demeanor was in stark contrast to her usual cold and dignified self.

Lu Ran hesitated no longer, turning around and leaving.

The scattered members of the Luoxian Pavilion stood frozen, staring blankly at their Pavilion Master.

At this moment, the realization seemed to dawn on them—Jiang Ruyi was just a 19-year-old girl.

In front of a particular person, she could be a tender young woman instead of the aloof and untouchable celestial maiden.

"Song Yu," Jiang Ruyi, now donning her veil again, called softly.

"Pavilion Master!" Song Yu snapped out of his reverie, looking at the veiled woman in a flowing white dress, now crowned with the bamboo hat.

Her appearance under the hat seemed somewhat mysterious.

And even more graceful.

"Gather the team and count the numbers," Jiang Ruyi instructed.

"Yes!" Song Yu responded solemnly.

Suddenly, a dragon's roar echoed, sending chills through everyone present.

Song Yu quickly turned and gazed toward the distant west.

He saw another figure, wearing a bamboo hat and draped in wide bamboo clothes, floating in the western skies, maintaining a posture of holding a bow.

A massive Canglong dragon, terrifying in scale, descended from the heavens, smashing the rising yellow sand to pieces.

The giant Canglong also shattered, transforming into countless smaller Canglong dragons that burrowed into the ground below.

The sight left everyone dumbfounded!

This group of bamboo hat and bamboo clothes wearers... Such power?

Just moments ago, a Dragon Carp Heavenly Boat had appeared, crashing down with a thunderous boom, even breaking a towering stone pillar in half.

The collapsed pillar still lay across the Ten Thousand Blade Mountain ridge.

Everyone was well aware that the bamboo hat-wearing figure was a Dragon Carp believer.

And unquestionably a Sea Realm Great Power!

As the Ten Thousand Dragons Subduing the Sea Arrow revealed itself, people realized that the bow-wielding bamboo-clad figure was an Ash believer.

Also a formidable presence of the Yangyang Sea!

"Hiss..." Xiong Xiong gasped and smacked his bald head fiercely.

"What the hell kind of organization is this?"

Xiong Xiong had every reason to believe that this group of bamboo-clad figures included more than just two Sea Realm practitioners!

Because earlier, a bamboo hat and bamboo clothes figure wielding a broken blade had dashed across the high skies, leading the charge at the front of the group.

That person must also be a Sea Realm practitioner!

Otherwise, how could he dare to charge headfirst and pursue the Sea Realm Great Power, You Tianyao?

In Xiong Xiong's understanding, whenever people formed factions or forces, they were usually fellow disciples of the same sect.

In the disciple community of the West Desolation, if you spotted someone from an external sect, chances were that individual was a servant.

There might be exceptions like Luoxian Pavilion, where the Pavilion Master shone with humanity, adhering to moral boundaries.

However, Xiong Xiong had only ever seen one person like that.

And that was Jiang Ruyi.

But this mysterious group, with sky-shaking, earth-shattering power, had members from entirely different sects?

How?

What kind of existence could unify such terrifying Sea Realm Great Powers, making them abandon suspicion and come together?

"Is that Lu Ran?"

Under Song Yu's escort, Gao Yunyan landed steadily, standing beside Xue Fengchen.

"Yes! Yes, it is!" Xue Fengchen, visibly excited, nodded repeatedly.

Gao Yunyan gazed skyward, her eyes filled with astonishment. "Didn't you say Lu Ran was the Human World Sect Master of the Immortal Sheep Sect, an Immortal Sheep believer?"

Xue Fengchen immediately replied, "Yes, Sister Yan, I wouldn't lie to you. Lu Ran really is an Immortal Sheep beli..."

His words trailed off.

At this moment, did Lu Ran look like an Immortal Sheep believer?

Xue Fengchen was at a loss, not knowing what to say.

In the Human World,

Ran Shen was never like this!

The recently rescued group felt both exhilaration and fear witnessing the formidable Sea Realm figures from the mysterious organization.

But the numerous Sea Realm practitioners weren't the most shocking aspect.

The bamboo-clad youth who had first appeared and single-handedly stopped Elder Peng of Tianhuang Mountain was the truly astonishing figure.

The Immortal Sky Python of the Jade-faced Snake Clan.

The Fiery Fire Heavenly Leader of the Fierce Heavenly Sect, shattering the fiery sky.

And the Evil Shadow Flash of the Evil Dog Clan...

What sect did this young man belong to?

Or rather, was he truly even a "believer"?

Gao Yunyan gripped her divine weapon tightly.

The Yellow Sand Axe, which had previously been struggling and trembling, now lay still.

As if resigning to its fate.

Since Jiang Ruyi had launched a Bursting Flame Talisman, blasting both Gao Yunyan and her axe backward, the Yellow Sand Axe hadn't found another opportunity to escape.

The axe might have calmed, but Gao Yunyan's heart was pounding wildly.

A few days ago, her repeated questioning of Xue Fengchen still lingered in her ears: "That Heavenly Pride surnamed Lu—is he really worth you risking so much?"

Now Gao Yunyan had her answer firsthand.

More than worth it!!

Among the Human World, Mountain Realm, even the Cloud Sea above the Heavenly Realm's sky...

Someone like Lu Ran might truly be one of a kind!

To effortlessly wield all techniques, assimilating the forces of both gods and demons?

Gao Yunyan's mind was in turmoil.

Simultaneously elated and filled with longing!

At this moment, Lu Ran soared across the battlefield, encircled by hovering White Jade Stones that enabled his flight.

The Divine Technique of the Jade Talisman Sect!

"Holy crap, did we just encounter a True God..." Zhang Zhenghu muttered under his breath.

An Xian stared dumbly at the scene, her expression frozen.

Meanwhile, Song Yu diligently carried out the tasks assigned by his Pavilion Master, organizing the Shanwei believers like Xiong Xiong while keeping a close eye on Lu Ran.

Song Yu felt immensely grateful for making the wisest decision—remaining a loyal follower of Lady Luo Xian!

He was Luoxian Pavilion's first elder!

The guardian of Jiang Ruyi's rise and ascension.

The bond between Jiang Ruyi and Lu Ran was evident to anyone with eyes!

Without a doubt, he would catch Lu Ran's attention, ensuring a bright and promising future for himself. How could his destiny and career path possibly falter?

A multitude of thoughts surged in everyone's minds as they observed the cloaked figures invade the battlefield.

Meanwhile, Lu Ran had already flown over the battlefield and approached the heart of the skirmish.

He refrained from flashing forward because he intended to use Soul Binding.

Several evil dogs, long dead, had wandering souls high in the air. Lu Ran couldn't let them escape.

On the battlefield below, some human souls lingered, numbering about ten by his rough count.

Likely killed in the crossfire of the two Sea Realm Great Powers, their souls hovered briefly.

Since the battle was still raging, Lu Ran didn't retrieve them just yet.

No doubt, the Evil Dog statues in his Sculpture Garden had begun their upgrade mode, constantly expanding their form.

Lu Ran suppressed a groan of frustration.

The Barbaric Female Demon's Evil Sculpture was already vibrating, and now the Evil Dog joined in.

One resonating sculpture he could handle, but the simultaneous vibrations of two stone sculptures were taxing even for him.

"Hah!!"

Lu Ran sharply lifted his head, spotting a thousand-meter-long Wind Blade forming rapidly beneath the roiling clouds!

The Ultimate Move of the Night Charm Clan: Night Charm Evil Blade!

Lu Ran found satisfaction in the sight.

He was no longer the vulnerable newcomer he once was upon arrival.

Lu Ran now had many powerful comrades, not to mention the radiant mountain camellia he had personally nurtured.

In his current state of weariness, he could rely on his allies to unleash their might.

"Boom!"

The thousand-meter blade shattered the already fractured ground, slicing deeper into the earth below.

Nightmare's two protectors of Cong Long followed the Night Charm Evil Blade headfirst into the underground.

Countless smaller Canglong dragons were still pounding the ground, forging a path in pursuit of their concealed underground foe.

It seemed this Sea Realm practitioner of the Sea Drought faith had shifted tactics, abandoning hopes of escaping afar and instead drilling deeper underground with unwavering resolve.

"Ran Dog! It's you—the Ran Dog..."

A voice called out faintly from afar.

It had been a long time since Lu Ran had heard that peculiar nickname.

The buzzing in his head made him wonder if he were hallucinating.

"Ran Dog!!"

"Huh?" Lu Ran turned his gaze downward and spotted a soul.

The figure looked to be about twenty-five or twenty-six, tall and lean, with curly hair. His face was filled with shock as he stared in Lu Ran's direction.

Wang Xuyang's voice trembled, "Ran... Ran Shen, you can see me?"

Lu Ran sighed inwardly.

He had experienced this scene many times before.

Each time, it tugged at his heartstrings.

Wang Xuyang's eyes glistened as he pleaded, "Help me, Ran Shen! Please... can't you help me? I don't want to die! I know you can do something, Ran Shen..."

Lu Ran's face held an apologetic expression. "I'm sorry."

As Wang Xuyang's soul floated closer, he felt the pull of an unrelenting force.

"So... you can't..." Wang Xuyang looked as though he had been struck by lightning, crestfallen and shattered.

Lu Ran remained silent, his head turning back toward the battlefield below.

It wasn't indifference but a reluctance to face the other's despair and sorrow.

While Lu Ran didn't know this youth personally, he could tell that this was someone who had likely joined his ranks later—perhaps even a fan of *Heavenly Pride*, or an admirer of himself.

But in truth, there was nothing Lu Ran could do.

Wang Xuyang, unable to control his trajectory, was drawn closer to Lu Ran, his expression dim.

He looked up at Lu Ran's seemingly cold and detached figure and slowly let out a bitter smile. "Then... then you must live well."

Lu Ran's body stiffened.

The sudden care from a stranger.

A person who had already passed on.

Lu Ran's heart grew heavy, burdened with waves of helplessness he could not alleviate.

Wang Xuyang gazed at Lu Ran's silent figure, a sourness rising in his chest.

Of course, Lu Ran was Da Xia's Heavenly Pride, the Human World Sect Master—someone with a lofty stature.

Why would someone like that bother to notice him?

Why would he ever help him?

Wang Xuyang hung his head, his voice growing softer as he murmured, "Ran Dog... take care of the Pavilion Master and live well together..."

As he spoke, Wang Xuyang suddenly raised his head, mustering courage to address the seemingly indifferent silhouette. "If you two return to Da Xia, will you hold a wedding? Can you stream the wedding for us to see?

My mom really likes you two. She's been hoping for your wedding for so long. I don't even know if she can wait..."

Lu Ran closed his eyes, taking a deep breath.

Back when the Immortal Sheep Lord imparted the Pupil of the Dead World to him, the words spoken still lingered in his ears:

"With it, you will see the souls of the dead."

"You will witness their distorted visages and hear their anguished cries."

"You will see lingering souls clinging to the mortal realm, sobbing in sorrow until they dissipate entirely."

"Knowing this, do you still wish to learn?"

Suddenly, Lu Ran reached out to his side, summoning an antique, elegant copper mirror.

With a thought, he altered the properties of the Basic Technique-Mirror of Sin; though its outward appearance remained unchanged, it transformed into the Soul-hooking Mirror.

As energy surged through the mirror, it intercepted the Pupil of the Dead World, absorbing Wang Xuyang's soul.

"W-what is this?" Wang Xuyang's startled face appeared in the mirror.

Lu Ran clutched the edge of the copper mirror, turning it toward the surface, where the Drought Sea believer had been blasted out of the ground.

He spoke in a low voice:

"This is the one who caused your death, isn't it?"

...

Chapter 550: Sect Leader's Lady?

"Yes... Yes! It's him!" The dead soul within the mirror grew agitated.

Anyone who meets the person who killed them would probably find it impossible to remain calm.

Wang Xuyang's emotions were turbulent, his face filled with rage and unwillingness: "This man, being chased, deliberately drew calamity away by running to our side!"

He pushed the blame onto the West Desolation believers. I was... I was..."

Wang Xuyang couldn't continue, the memory of being buried alive by the yellow sand flooded his mind.

The suffocating sensation, the overwhelming despair, still lingered in his heart.

Strictly speaking, Wang Xuyang had never seen the true face of the Dry Land Believer, You Tianyao.

But among everyone present, there was only one Sea Realm Dry Land Believer. The real culprit was obvious at a glance.

"Hmm." Lu Ran released the Soul-hooking Mirror.

The Ancient Bronze Mirror floated by Lu Ran's side, facing the battlefield, letting Wang Xuyang witness everything clearly.

"No! No!!!"

A piercing scream shattered the sky.

You Tianyao was swept into the air by the gale, his turn to despair now!

Like the West Desolation Sect, the Dry Land Sect was also considered a ruler of the land. Such entities, when flung into the sky, were utterly at the mercy of others.

Just moments earlier, Deng Yuxiang had unleashed the Night Charm Evil Blade. Its main purpose wasn't to kill the enemy, but to clear a path!

The two protectors, Nightmare and Cong Long, streaked downward, relying on the mayhem of the gale and the ferocious fish swarm to block the escape route of their foe.

They trapped and forced the burrowing rat out of the ground with violent strikes.

"Ah! Aaaahhh!"

The harrowing screams of the Dry Land Believer filled Wang Xuyang with exhilaration, his heart swelling with ecstatic satisfaction!

Dozens of razor-sharp Night Charm Blades weaved in and out, determined to carve the enemy into a thousand pieces.

Countless little Canglongs hunted frenetically, swarming the enemy in an overwhelming tide.

The battlefield was chaos incarnate.

You Tianyao flailed amidst the dragon swarm and wind blades, his screams growing more desperate as he was battered back and forth by the onslaught.

To prevent You Tianyao from falling to the ground again, Yu Changsheng controlled the battlefield and summoned yet another Dragon Carp Heavenly Boat.

"Pop~"

A pale golden fish glistened brightly as it swam gracefully amidst the torrential downpour.

So harmonious, yet so surreal?

The 800-meter-long Dragon Carp Heavenly Boat propelled a tide of Canglongs and wind blades skyward, dragging the enemy along with them.

"Crack! Crack..."

Fractures spread across the Dragon Carp Heavenly Boat, yet it fulfilled its purpose.

Meanwhile, the two sets of armor on You Tianyao had already shattered to pieces.

Besides the Water Flow Armor, the Dry Land Sect also possessed the defense technique, Floating Dust Robe!

The defensive power of this "sand cloak" was quite formidable, but unfortunately, You Tianyao faced the combined assault of three Sea Realm powers.

"Crack!!"

In the end, You Tianyao's protective armor shattered before the Dragon Carp Heavenly Boat did.

The wind blades slashed and thrust relentlessly,

Cutting bloody lines across the enemy's body.

The Canglongs crashed and pierced repeatedly,

Gouging out bloody holes in the enemy's flesh.

Wang Xuyang's eyes widened as he stared intently at the scene before him.

The Dry Land Believer wasn't just Wang Xuyang's enemy; he was also a Sea Realm Great Power!

In the Holy Spirit Mountain, what did Sea Realm mean?

It meant you were a sovereign standing above all living beings, holding the power of life and death in your hands!

Just as You Tianyao had, moments earlier on the battlefield, casually thrown people toward Elder Peng or raised sandstorms to force them into his grasp.

The life and death of ants—what did it matter?

But now, this Great Power who once dictated others' fates...

Was being mercilessly slaughtered!

From torn clothing to a body covered in wounds.

From being riddled with holes to being completely dismembered.

Wang Xuyang witnessed it all, his phantom-like eyes almost bloodshot from emotion.

His great vengeance was fulfilled!

But the exhilarating sense of catharsis did not last long.

What remained was an endless sorrow...

Wang Xuyang's expression grew ever more somber.

If only he hadn't been crushed to death by two Sea Realm powers.

If only he could have lived long enough for Lu Ran to arrive, would his future have been brighter?

It probably would...

No, it definitely would have!

Damn it! Why did I have to die here? Damn it!!

Wang Xuyang had already realized that in his form as a dead soul, he had been imprisoned within the Evil Technique·Soul Hooking Mirror.

The fate of the dead souls in the mirror was singular—gradual obliteration.

"That's enough." Lu Ran flew forward.

The Canglongs and wind blades vanished altogether as Lu Ran grasped a cluster of black mist, sealing You Tianyao's soul within.

"Clean up... Hmm, let's go back." Lu Ran turned and flew east.

He had considered having someone collect spoils of war, but after such an immense outpour of power, what possible spoils could remain?

Deng Yuxiang and the others followed him closely.

While traversing the battlefield, Lu Ran absorbed all the dead souls along the way into his eyes.

"Sect Master!" On the battlefield, Jing Hong had already gathered the spoils of war.

From within Lu Ran's bamboo garb, a Treasure Gourd floated out. He spoke, "Accompany Little Chi Feng and absorb the corpse of the Evil Dog. Return quickly."

"Understood!" Jing Hong departed promptly.

Lu Ran and his company continued eastward, leaving the Ten Thousand Blade Mountain.

Jiang Ruyi had already landed on the ground, standing with her hands behind her back, waiting silently.

Behind the girl stood eight surviving members of the Luoxian Pavilion.

The pavilion had originally numbered 19. After the battle between the two Sea Realm powers, more than half the group had perished...

"You! How could you... Ah! Aaahhh..."

As Lu Ran hefted yet another cluster of black mist, Elder Peng's face, filled with shock, appeared within.

Elder Peng was both furious and aghast. Just as he opened his mouth to question, his entire body was consumed by Soul Fire.

He screamed in agony, his heart filled with regret.

Today's mission had originally been to annex the Hanhai Gang, to escort a group of Dry Land Believers back to Tianhuang Mountain.

Instead... he had encountered such a deity of slaughter!

Lu Ran stepped past the charred remains of Elder Peng, extinguishing the Soul Fire after a few seconds. The elder dared not utter another sound.

"Gulp."

Xiong Xiong swallowed nervously, his panic only growing.

He had thought Lu Sect Master already had enough methods at his disposal, but the intricately crafted bronze mirror floating beside him...

Was it a technique of the Evil Mirror Demon Clan?

And those two black mist clusters playing in Lu Sect Master's palm clearly resembled the techniques of the Soul-splitting Demon Clan!

Could Lu Sect Master, like the Soul-splitting Demons, torment the souls of the Human Clan?

As a few bamboo-hat and bamboo-clad figures approached, the fear of the Luoxian Pavilion survivors intensified!

Just one Sea Realm Great Power stepping closer was enough to inspire dread in their hearts.

Let alone three?

Deng Yuxiang, Yu Changsheng, and Luo Ying had just been through a great battle, their auras suffused with dominance.

Especially Deng Yuxiang—her killing intent was terrifying!

"Repress yourself. Ruyi and I are still in the River Realm." Lu Ran transmitted telepathically.

Compared to Jiang Ruyi, Lu Ran wasn't much better off.

His only consolation was having Deng Yuxiang by his side often, making it slightly easier to grow accustomed.

"Understood." Deng Yuxiang responded softly, working to rein in her aura.

"This woman in the white dress, is she the Sect Master's wife?" Yu Changsheng looked at Deng Yuxiang beside him and asked quietly.

"Yes." Deng Yuxiang nodded lightly.

Yu Changsheng smiled, sizing up the girl, and softly sighed, "Indeed, a beauty of celestial grace.

No wonder she commands the Sect Master's undying devotion."

Lu Ran: "..."

Thought you didn't know idioms?

Amidst the rain, the two teams finally converged.

Yu Changsheng folded his fan, bowed slightly to Jiang Ruyi, and cupped his hands in respect: "Protector of the Ran Sect, Cong Long, pays respects to the Sect Master's wife."

"Madam."

"Madam." Deng Yuxiang and Luo Ying both bowed respectfully.

The three mighty Sea Realm figures reverently greeted her.

An awkward silence fell over the scene!

Though externally calm, everyone's hearts were in chaos.

Each person's thoughts were tumultuous!!

The Luoxian Pavilion members could naturally discern that Lu Ran and the three Sea Realm powers belonged to the same organization.

A few had even speculated that Lu Ran, mysterious and powerful as he was, might hold a higher position within the group.

After all, the techniques Lu Ran displayed were utterly astonishing!

Even if Lu Ran was currently only in the River Realm, his potential was undeniable.

But what no one expected was the realization behind the words of these Sea Realm powers...

Lu Ran,

Was the leader of this organization?

Ran Sect? Sect Master?

"All of you... hello." Jiang Ruyi's gaze swept over them, her expression complicated.

She had worked hard to form a team, partly to better search for Lu Ran, partly to provide him with some support, hoping the two of them could navigate the Holy Spirit Mountain more effectively.

But now...

Lu Ran arrived with three Sea Realm figures?

Deng Yuxiang had advanced to the Sea Realm as well, and so quickly at that.

Finally, Jiang Ruyi's gaze rested on Lu Ran's face.

Memories flooded her mind.

From the moment the two of them became believers, Lu Ran had always been the one leading and protecting her.

Even though... she had always worked hard, always wanted to help him in return.

Later, he became the first Heavenly Pride of Da Xia, and she became known as Lu Tianjiao's fiancée.

Then, he became the Human World Sect Master, recognized as the Lord of Luoxian Mountain, and she was addressed as the Lady of the Mountain.

And now, in the Holy Spirit Mountain...

He was the Sect Master of the Ran Sect, and she would be known as the Sect Master's wife.

From beneath her veil, Jiang Ruyi smiled faintly.

Indeed,

Every time, you prove I worry for nothing.

You scoundrel.

Her heart whispered a silent reproach, but Jiang Ruyi's eyes grew softer, full of tender warmth.

"This is the Dry Land Believer who brought the battlefield to you." Lu Ran raised his left hand. "He killed many of your people."

Within the black mist cluster, You Tianyao's face was etched with utter terror, but he dared not utter a single sound.

He had already been burned once on the way back.

"And this is the Elder who was pursuing you." Lu Ran lifted his right hand, revealing another tormented face within the black mist cluster.

Jiang Ruyi looked at the two black mist clusters, then raised her eyes gently toward Lu Ran.

"Huff~"

Within the jet-black mist, a pale Soul Fire ignited.

"Ah! Aaahhh!"

"Sss... No! Stop, don't burn me! Show mercy, plea—aaaahhh..."

Piercing, heart-wrenching screams echoed far and wide.

Some found it satisfying, while others shivered in fear!

The rain continued to pour.

It could not extinguish the pale Soul Fire, nor could it quell the flame of anger burning within Lu Ran.

Outwardly, he seemed as composed as ever, but beneath the surface, his emotions were roiling.

This was evident from the Eight Desolates Annihilation Blade.

Though Lu Ran appeared calm, his mental state was anything but normal, drowned under the weight of some deep emotion.

How much did he desire the blade to advance?

But from beginning to end, he hadn't spared a glance at the hilt that trembled faintly...

Lu Ran knew well that even without him, Jiang Ruyi could likely have escaped on her own.

But still,

How could he not have been afraid?

The wails continued—so unbearably tragic that even bystanders felt chilled to the bone.

Lowering his head, Lu Ran silently gazed at the souls writhing in his palm, their faces contorted in anguish from the unbearable, bone-gnawing pain.

For a long time, Lu Ran turned briefly, glancing at the Soul-hocking Mirror.

What he could offer was little.

He could only hope... that like himself, others might find some small measure of solace in this.