

## Old Gods 661

Chapter 661: Things of the Past

Early the next morning, Lu Ran led the team back to Cloud Sea Cliff.

The southern expedition was not yet over, but the insight into the Divine Weapon Domain had already been fully realized.

No, it should be considered as an overachievement!

Lu Ran not only fulfilled his wishes by advancing the Eight Desolate Blade to a second-rank Divine Weapon, but also brought back a Great Martial Artist at the Sea Realm Peak!

Simply delightful~

After returning to Cloud Sea Cliff, Lu Ran specifically held a meeting to let the Ran Sect members get to know the new companion.

In the future, everyone would be brothers in the trenches, so of course, they needed to familiarize themselves with each other.

However, Lu Ran was a bit hesitant about the title.

Wu Xiao, as a Great Power at the Sea Realm Peak, fully deserved the title of "Divine General."

But in Lu Ran's heart, there were even greater expectations for Wu Xiao...

"Feng'er."

In the Council Hall, Lu Ran sat behind the desk and called out.

"Sect Master." Xue Fengchen immediately stood up, holding the Purple Thunder Mad Dragon Spear in his hand.

"How's the Divine Weapon?" Lu Ran asked.

"Much more obedient now." Xue Fengchen replied.

Since mid-October last year, Xue Fengchen had firmly kept control of the Purple Thunder Mad Dragon Spear, not giving it any chance to cause trouble.

For so long, all of the spear's resistance was in vain, and it no longer resisted as violently as at the beginning.

"Has it yielded to you?" Lu Ran got up, walked around the desk, and moved to the center of the hall.

"No." Xue Fengchen shook his head.

Throughout, Xue Fengchen had always considered himself a custodian, also using the Mad Dragon Spear to stabilize his Mental Realm.

He used a big axe, and also played with sand.

With the lightning attribute of the Sky-piercing Halberd, there was an attribute restraint, making this halberd unsuitable for him.

"Oh." Lu Ran extended his hand, and Xue Fengchen immediately handed over the Sky-piercing Halberd.

"Buzz!"

The moment they exchanged, the Purple Thunder Mad Dragon Spear suddenly acted up, attempting to fly away.

"Huh?" Lu Ran gripped the Mad Dragon Spear tightly, smiling and looking at Xue Fengchen, "It doesn't seem as obedient as you said, huh?"

Xue Fengchen looked embarrassed, rubbing his nose.

Seated nearby, Gao Yunyan couldn't help but chuckle.

"Sit down." Lu Ran patted Xue Fengchen's shoulder, the Purple Thunder Mad Dragon Spear in his hand fell silent again.

It seemed to want to take a chance but realized there was still no escape, and thus accepted its fate.

Lu Ran weighted the Sky-piercing Halberd and looked towards the chairs behind him: "Wu Xiao."

Wu Xiao immediately stood up.

"The battle for the Divine Weapon Domain is inevitable, I hope you won't blame me." Lu Ran spoke with some apology in his heart.

"The Sect Master need not feel that way." Wu Xiao said in a deep voice.

Everyone naturally understood the reasoning.

Lu Ran signaled for him to come forward: "This halberd is a second-rank Divine Weapon, named Purple Thunder Mad Dragon, with a tremendously explosive Divine Weapon Domain!"

Wu Xiao naturally understood what Lu Ran intended to do.

"In the Wusheng Sect, you have various attribute skills at your disposal, and lightning is one of them... By the way, can you use a halberd?"

"I know the basics." Wu Xiao replied.

"Good, with continued practice, it will suffice." Lu Ran handed over the Purple Thunder Mad Dragon Spear, "Here, this is your first task after joining the Ran Sect!

Make it truly yours, and it will become your Divine Weapon."

Wu Xiao looked at the luxurious halberd engraved with purple dragon patterns, then at the fierce gleam of the halberd head.

For a moment, he didn't know what to say.

Meanwhile, seated beside, Gao Yunyan's eyes gleamed slightly.

The Purple Thunder Mad Dragon Spear finally had an owner?

Feng'er no longer needed to hold it day and night!

From now on, when the doors of Feng Yan Inn were closed, they could enjoy their time together peacefully?

Initially, it was indeed suggested by Gao Yunyan, hoping Lu Ran would let Xue Fengchen take care of the Battle Axe, but now four months had passed, and the West Desolation's Phoenix's Dao Heart was already very stable!

"Take it." Lu Ran pushed the Sky-piercing Halberd forward again.

Wu Xiao accepted it with both hands, saying in a deep voice, "Thank you, Sect Master."

"There's no need for thanks, it's a task."

"Yes!" Wu Xiao nodded heavily.

From deep within the hall, a cool, clear voice suddenly came forth: "Your long spear, let the Ran Sect take care of it."

Wu Xiao was slightly stunned and looked up.

Jiang Ruyi sat elegantly in a chair on the side of the desk, quietly observing the Great Martial Artist below.

After a moment, Wu Xiao, who had been serious all along, suddenly smiled.

It seemed he understood something and accepted it calmly:

"Yes, Lady."

Having said that, Wu Xiao walked to the side, took the long spear from Liu Huo, and stepped towards the back of the hall.

Cold Xushuang, standing silently behind Jiang Ruyi, immediately reached out to receive the Black Iron Spear.

"Focus on practicing with the halberd in the future, you will still break your contract with the Divine Martial Artist and join Lu Ran's sect." Jiang Ruyi appraised the brave young man, looking into his eyes.

Wu Xiao, respectful in attitude, lowered his head and said, "Yes."

Jiang Ruyi spoke in an uncharacteristically gentle tone: "You will find the meaning of living, and regain a new life in the Ran Sect."

"Shu~"

Below the hall, Yu Changsheng elegantly unfolded a fan, lightly swaying the paper fan: "All past is like yesterday's death; everything henceforth is like today's birth."

Lu Ran couldn't help but look at Yu Changsheng, praising, "Sir, what exquisite craftsmanship in words!"

Yu Changsheng had a peculiar expression: "These words are from 'The Four Instructions of Liao Fan'."

Lu Ran: "..."

From what?

Forget it, better not to ask in the hall.

Lu Ran looked left and right: "Divine Seeking General, in a moment, ask Feixian Hall for a few people to build another house in the eastern region of the cliff."

Xun Yifei immediately accepted the order.

Since the whole family moved here, Xun Luo and his wife have been stationed at Cloud Sea Cliff, no longer needing to hide the Divine Weapon under the sea. During meetings, the two of them will also be present.

Lu Ran confirmed the site for the residence, then walked back to the desk and sat down heavily.

He looked at the people below the hall: "In the next few days, I have to make a trip to the north to meet the Ice Plum Demon Queen's clan..."

Before he finished speaking, Luo Ying stood up first: "Sect Leader, let me accompany you."

Xue Fengchen followed closely: "Sect Leader, I haven't been on the battlefield since I advanced to the Sea Realm!"

Gao Yunyan, supporting her own man, also stood up to request the same.

The believers of the Four Directions Martial Arts... at least the disciples of the West Desolation and Dong Ting sects are inherently battle enthusiasts.

Lu Ran looked at the divine generals volunteering for the task, feeling very moved.

Thinking back, when he and Big Nightmare were rushing around tirelessly.

Now it's better!

With enough forces, the soldiers' actions can be a bit slower, and they might not even be needed...

"Alright." Lu Ran didn't want to let the generals down and agreed to the three of them, then named Shangguan Hongfu, finalizing the team members.

Yu Changsheng looked at the young sect leader behind the desk with a profound gaze.

Previously always hanging onto me, causing a scene to have me by your side.

Now you have Shangguan Hongfu, don't need me anymore?

"Uh." Lu Ran suddenly shivered and turned to look, catching Yu Changsheng's eyes.

Goodness~

Such strong resentment!

Are you also a disciple of Qian Gu?

Do you also know the Yin Bone Curse?

Lu Ran said gently: "Mr. Cong Long, you've worked hard recently, have a good rest at home."

With so many people in the Council Hall, Yu Changsheng couldn't say much more, so he clasped his fists and bowed:

"Thank you, Sect Master, for your consideration."

Lu Ran pursed his lips and suddenly said: "Mr. Cong Long, would you like to go to Mist Rain Lake for a couple of days to recuperate?"

Yu Changsheng: ?

Why don't you just send me back to Qianhua Ridge!

The valley has streams, I'll relax there, not bothering you...

"It wouldn't hurt to take a look," Jiang Ruyi said, "oversee the work for the Colorful Divine General, representing the Ran Sect, and get closer to the Thousand Boat Alliance."

Yu Changsheng: "..."

He silently stood up, took the order, and said: "Yes, Lady."

Lu Ran dared not look at Yu Changsheng again and said to everyone: "We'll depart in the morning, everyone dismissed."

...

In the morning, He Yingcai received a "big gift" sent by the Ran Sect Lady!

Lu Ran's landing mirror opened directly on Green Lotus Island, in the forest hut.

At that time, an elegant lady in a green dress was waiting in the hall.

Seeing Lu and Yu emerge from the mirror, He Yingcai placed her hands at her waist and elegantly gave a deep curtsy.

Then, the Colorful Divine General gracefully extended her hand and linked arms with Yu Changsheng.

Such an immortal couple-like pairing indeed made Lu Ran feel pleased!

Unfortunately, there was no good news from Mist Rain Lake, as Alliance Leader Yun Qianzhou still hadn't emerged from closed-door training.

Who knows how long it will take to treat Elder Bai's eyes.

Speaking of which, hasn't Alliance Leader Yun been in retreat for too long? Does it really take this long to consolidate one's strength and realm?

Lu Ran even began to suspect if Alliance Leader Yun secretly ascended...

Hmm, probably not.

From all aspects and sides, Yun Qianzhou's character is very reliable!

Therefore, Lu Ran couldn't help having some other guesses.

What does this so-called Heavenly Realm,

ultimately bring to people?

Does someone painstakingly advancing to the Heavenly Realm end up losing freedom, having to stabilize their mental state day and night?

Is this a limitation set by gods for the human community?

Once Alliance Leader Yun emerges from seclusion, he must inquire well!

After delivering the gift, Lu Ran brought boxes of flower fruit cakes and two packs of Smoke Rain Tea prepared by He Yingcai and returned alone to Cloud Sea Cliff.

"Look, snacks." Lu Ran returned to Cloud Sea Residence and saw two beautiful ladies in the small courtyard.

Jiang Ruyi, not surprised, opened the dessert box and gestured to Leng Xushuang: "Have a taste."

Leng Xushuang silently picked up a piece of dessert and tasted it in small bites.

Jiang Ruyi, feeling something, turned her head and saw Lu Ran's eager expression.

"Ha." She couldn't help but chuckle, picked up a small piece of flower fruit cake, and handed it over.

Lu Ran didn't reach out to take it; he leaned over and opened his mouth directly.

"Mmm." Lu Ran, satisfied, nodded repeatedly.

Jiang Ruyi, with a teasing expression, turned to Leng Xushuang and said, "Go boil some water to brew some tea for our Sect Master."

"No, no, no!" Lu Ran quickly waved his hand and sat on the stone bench, "This tea is more bitter than my life!"

Leng Xushuang looked down at the lotus leaf packet on the table.

Jiang Ruyi, with a keen mind, softly said, "It won't be bitter anymore in the future; the Ice Plum Demon Queen can fly and capture souls, much stronger than the Cold Plum Sect's combat power.

The key is that once you're bonded with this Evil Sculpture, your cultivation talent will continuously improve.

The so-called Sea Realm and Heavenly Realm will not be your endpoints either."

Jiang Ruyi indeed had special treatment for her personal guards.

Once she advances to the Sea Realm, she can be by her side.

Lu Ran also realized that his jokes might be inappropriate, so he gave Leng Xushuang an apologetic smile.

Leng Xushuang lowered her head: "Mr. Cong Long said, 'The past is like yesterday's death,' this saying suits me too.

Xuan Shuang will replace that Evil God and stay with the Sect Master and Lady till the end."

Her voice was soft yet very determined.

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## Chapter 662: Ice Plum Demon Queen

The northern landscape, thousands of miles of drifting snow.

Lu Ran stepped on the dense snow and listened to the strange sound of "creak-creak," finding it quite interesting.

Becoming a cultivator brings many conveniences indeed.

The powerful body of the Sea Realm greatly enhances Lu Ran's resistance to cold.

If he were an ordinary person or a rookie at the Mist Realm level, he would likely be frozen, with hands and face pale, and limbs stiff.

[Master, I smell the fragrance of plum blossoms.] Yan Shuangzi's voice rang in his mind.

[Be careful, keep the Ice Heart Bracelet casting.] Lu Ran advised.

[Yes.]

This trip, Lu Ran only brought Feng Yan and Luo Ying as generals, along with Shangguan Hall Master and an Evil Shadow Guardian.

Under Lu Ran's persuasion, Jiang Ruyi did not come along and temporarily lent the Magic Artifact Ice Heart Bracelet to Yan Shuangzi.

The Evil Plum Demon Queen possesses a powerful Evil Technique - Soul Capturing Cold Fragrance!

The cold and distant fragrance captivates the soul, causing all sentient beings to become deeply ensnared.

For Lu Ran and Yan Shuangzi, this technique poses a significant threat!

Only with spirit defense techniques and purification skills can one resist this poison.

At this moment, at the rear of the team, Shangguan Hongfu carried a beautiful eight-sided lantern in his hand.

Divine Technique - Holy Fire Cage!

The sacred white light purifies the area, eliminating any possible abnormal states.

[To the front left!] Came another transmission.

"Everyone, pay attention!" Lu Ran spoke loudly, explaining the situation.

The team immediately headed to the front left, and soon, Lu Ran sniffed again.

Sniff~

The faint plum blossom fragrance, mixed with the cold chill, bewitched the heart.

Lu Ran was thoroughly enchanted!

Wonderful, wonderful!

In comparison, the disciples of Cold Plum are still too bland, the plum fragrance of the Ice Plum Demon Queen feels even more lethal.

Better days are ahead~

Lu Ran's lips curved into a slight smile.

Leng Xushuang is Jiang Ruyi's personal guard!

In the future, he could enjoy this captivating poisonous fragrance day and night... wait!

Lu Ran suddenly realized something:

After activating the Evil Sculpture, I'm quite fragrant myself!

No need to sniff Leng Xushuang then?

"Ah~" While pondering, Lu Ran spotted a beautiful scene.

Snowflakes gently floated down, scattered among the forest.

They also landed on the shoulders of a magnificently dressed woman.

She merely stood there appreciating the snow, exuding a sense of regal beauty.

She was draped in a snow-colored cloak, radiating presence, with a head of long silver-white hair, wearing a luxurious ice crystal crown.

On the ice crown, plum blossoms formed from frost and snow were intricately encrusted.

Exquisitely beautiful!

"Sect Leader?" Luo Ying held a bow with an arrow drawn and softly sought permission.

"Hmm." Lu Ran responded.

Luo Ying immediately released his fingers, the bowstring vibrating!

A Water Mist Arrow shot out swiftly.

"Hmm?" The Ice Plum Demon Queen turned her head sharply.

A fleeting glance, enough to make one's heart tremble.

She truly resembles a human!

Her fair face, delicate features, especially the touch of red on her lips, who knows how many pitiful humans she has entranced.

Fortunately, the Ice Plum Demon Queen has a pair of eerie pale purple devil eyes.

These devil eyes clearly inform the world of her true identity!

Evil Demon Clan - Ice Plum Demon Queen!

"Hmm!" The Ice Plum Demon Queen's pupils slightly contracted, seeing the Water Mist Arrow aiming straight at her face, she swiftly flew to the rear side.

In an instant, plum blossoms scattered.

Her silver hair fluttered, and her robes swirled.

Bringing a great visual impact to Lu Ran.

The Ice Plum Demon Queen's speed was far beyond fast!

Amidst the scattered plum blossoms, she left trails indicating her path of movement.

Evil Technique - Plum Falling Stunning Glance!

This is a movement technique that allows the caster to be light and agile, wandering freely between heaven and earth.

Light as a startling glance, shadow like plum blossoms.

In the process of dodging, energy surged in the Ice Plum Demon Queen's hand, quickly forming an ice crystal sword.

Evil Technique - Ice Plum Sword!

Whether it was her true form, the clear three-foot ice sword, or the decorative frost and snow plum blossoms on the sword hilt, all revealed the word exquisiteness!

Like a fine piece of art.

Unfortunately,

This piece of art encountered Ash's disciple, a ruthless killer.

"Whew!"

The Ice Plum Demon Queen swiftly flew backward, wielding the sword in front to slash.

Sword energy condensed from frost flew forward in an arc, extremely sharp, heading straight for the lone Water Mist Arrow.

Evil Technique - Ice Sword Energy!

The Divine Cold Plum, known as the Little Sword Lord, and why isn't the Ice Plum Demon Queen just as gifted?

Even this one move of the Ice Sword Energy carries the charm of Lord Jian Yi!

"Whoosh~"

The Water Mist Arrow suddenly adjusted its arrowhead, the forward-stabbing speed remained undiminished.

The tracking arrow forcibly penetrated the ice sword energy and outpaced the beautiful residual shadow of the Ice Plum Demon Queen's path.

Pierced straight into the heart of the evil demon!

"Crack!"

The Ice Plum Demon Queen's beautiful eyes widened.

In the end, she tried to block with her sword, but the sturdy ice sword shattered completely.

The arrow of the Yangyang Sea, how could a River Realm evil demon resist it?

Mighty Luo Ying, wherever his eyes glanced, left behind a skeletal corpse.

"Hiss!"

The Water Mist Arrow instantly pierced through the snow-colored cloak, penetrated the chest of the Ice Plum Demon Queen, and emerged from her back, pulling out a trail of blood.

Falling onto the pristine snow, it was quite poignant.

The Ice Plum Demon Queen fell heavily to the ground, and during her backward slide, piled up a tall heap of snow.

Lu Ran couldn't help but sigh inwardly.

He hadn't taken Luoshen on a mission for a long time, and he almost forgot what a killing deity this young mother was.

With Luo Ying holding the fort within the team, it seems unlikely that the two Feng Yan generals would have much opportunity to shine?

"Creak, creak..."

Lu Ran stepped forward on the snow.

He reached out with one hand, adjusting Evil Technique·Night Wind Assault to the lowest grade, blowing the snow off the body of the Ice Plum Demon Queen.

"Uh, uh..."

The Ice Plum Demon Queen hadn't completely died yet, blood spilled from the corners of her mouth, her devilish eyes gradually turning hollow.

"So beautiful indeed," Lu Ran lamented.

The last time he felt such emotion, it should have been due to those noble Evil Mirror Demons.

The time before that, likely the regal and pure Jade-faced Snake?

Further tracing back... forget it, too many.

The Evil Demon faction truly shone, ranging from the revoltingly ugly Tooth-Faced People to the bewitchingly captivating Sea Merfolk.

Regardless of beauty or ugliness,

while killing and torturing, the Evil Demons' expressions were consistently similar.

"Poof~"

The Ice Plum Demon Queen silently shattered, turning into wisps of white mist.

The little Blazing Phoenix flew out and began feasting on the spot.

Lu Ran also sensed that the Dead Soul of the Ice Plum Demon Queen had already been drawn into his eyes.

"Stay vigilant," Lu Ran instructed and closed his eyes, entering the spiritual world.

In the Evil Demon Sculpture Garden, Lu Ran found the luxurious Ice Plum Demon Queen, attempting to activate the Evil Sculpture.

"Buzz!"

The Evil Sculpture instantly quivered.

Success!

Lu Ran was quite satisfied, activating a Stone Sculpture required two thousand Mist Realm Dead Souls.

One River = ten Streams = one hundred Brooks = one thousand Mists.

Calculating it, Lu Ran required two Jiang Realm Dead Souls to activate an Evil Sculpture, and the recently deceased Ice Plum Demon Queen evidently collected a bit of Holy Spirit Energy.

Lu Ran waited a moment, discovering that the Ice Plum Demon Queen's Evil Sculpture paused at the Stream Realm Third Rank.

Hmm... that's fine.

Lu Ran opened his eyes and told everyone, "I'll make a trip back to Cloud Sea Cliff, please wait for me a bit."

"Yes!"

"Yes." Amidst a chorus of responses, Lu Ran activated a Transmission Mirror.

In a small courtyard at Cloud Sea Residence, two women practicing sword dancing paused and turned their heads to look.

Lu Ran, covered in frost and snow, stepped into the courtyard.

"Found it?" Jiang Ruyi sheathed her sword, still not letting Lu Ran see her dance moves.

It had been two days since Lu Ran led the team on the mission.

He should have found it by now.

Back when Lu Ran led the team to Sword Ridge Peak to rescue Yan Shuangzi, he had captured some Dead Souls of North Wind believers.

This mission allowed Lu Ran to trace the steps accurately because he had previously consulted the North Wind disciples about the northern environment.

"The Evil Sculpture has been activated." Lu Ran nodded slightly, looking at Leng Xushuang, "Come."

Leng Xushuang, suppressing her excitement, stepped forward quickly and kneeled.

As early as yesterday, she had torn the master-slave contract with Divine Cold Plum.

Unexpectedly, she suffered immense damage and fell to Jiang Realm Third Rank.

But at this moment, Leng Xushuang had no regrets.

Rather, her heart was full of anticipation!

"Hoo~"

An enormous shadow spread out from within Lu Ran, instantly making the courtyard colder.

The Ice Plum Demon Queen opened her devilish eyes, her expression icy, looking down at the kneeling Human Clan below.

The Realm of the Evil Sculpture was indeed not high, but the aura of the Demon Queen was astonishing!

After all, this was no mere Evil Demon lackey but a genuine Evil God shadow!

The lofty Demon Queen exuded a contradictory aura, a mix of solemnity and seduction, slowly extending her ethereal hand.

A human and a demon's palms overlapped, pressing onto Leng Xushuang's forehead.

"Hiss..." Leng Xushuang trembled, inhaling sharply.

A cold breath poured in from the top of her head, chilling her flesh and blood.

Lu Ran, eyes closed, skillfully performed, signing the Inheritance Contract with Leng Xushuang, binding firmly with the Evil God statue.

He was eager to activate the Evil Sculpture, even if it meant the coming days in battle would have his head buzzing...

Because Leng Xushuang's strength was slightly lacking,

more because her cultivation talent had reached its limit!

If the contract was signed with Leng Xushuang at the outset of the Evil Sculpture, then every promotion and vibration of the Stone Sculpture could benefit her considerably.

Even though a person and a Stone Sculpture become more integrated over time,

this special promotion process of the Stone Sculpture can hasten the integration of one person and one sculpture!

Ultimately, to enhance her cultivation talent as soon as possible.

It's clear that for Jiang Ruyi's guardian, Lu Ran had gone to great lengths.

"Hoo~"

The shadow of the Ice Plum Demon Queen quietly dissipated, the contract was made!

Leng Xushuang, head bowing low and face buried, spoke with a trembling voice:

"Th-thank you, Sect Leader."

She was once a weak disciple at someone else's mercy.

Imprisoned by the Wolf Bone Village Chief, her life devoid of freedom, only escaping through the tragic means of death to avoid an even more miserable fate.

And on that day, by that winding little river, everything changed.

The youth in the Emperor Robe appeared abruptly, took the sword from her hands, and pulled down the hand she tried to pierce her heart with.

He helped her get revenge, provided her shelter, returned her freedom.

Now, he helped her transform, granting her a "Divine Position."

A path to ascend to the heavens step by step.

Leng Xushuang did not believe she was deserving, but all this just happened.

Like an extremely unreal dream.

In a daze, she heard the gentle voice of the youth: "From now on, make sure to protect Ruyi well for me."

Before Leng Xushuang could respond, she heard the Sect Leader's wife's soft laughter.

Jiang Ruyi watched the retreating youth in the Emperor Robe, her gaze tender: "Be careful."

"Mm-hmm." Lu Ran nodded repeatedly, retreating into the mirror.

The Ancient Bronze Mirror quietly shattered, disappearing without a trace.

Chapter 663: A Sword Dance

Five days later, at dusk.

Outside the courtyard of the Cloud Sea Residence, a full-length mirror quietly opened, and a group of people emerged one after another.

"Thank you for your hard work, everyone." Lu Ran, supporting his buzzing head, looked a bit unwell. "Go back and rest well."

The group understood that the Sect Leader's mental state was not good, so they did not linger and left hastily.

Lu Ran turned around and opened the courtyard door, just in time to see Jiang Ruyi coming out to greet him.

"You're back... oh." Jiang Ruyi quickly extended her hand.

A coolness embraced her.

Lu Ran leaned forward, nestling into Jiang Xian'er's arms, his face buried in her neck.

Jiang Ruyi instinctively glanced into the distance, seeing the Divine Generals walking away faster than one another.

Without a glance back.

Only then did Jiang Ruyi slightly turn her head, softly asking:

"Are you hurt?"

"No." Lu Ran's voice was muffled, and his words were somewhat vague. "It's just a headache."

Looking at the person "playing tricks" in her arms, Jiang Ruyi felt both heartache and amusement.

In the mighty Yangyang Sea, who isn't a person of great influence?

The Sect Leader, however, behaves so improperly.

Well... thinking about it, it makes sense.

These past few days, he must have been especially distressed.

To better integrate Leng Xushuang with the Evil Sculpture, Lu Ran activated the Evil Sculpture early, enduring headaches and pushing through battles.

Especially after the promotion of the Evil Sculpture to the River Realm, each small rank required several hours of effort.

"Relax, you don't need to stay conscious anymore." Jiang Ruyi's voice was gentle, brushing away the frost and snow from his head.

"Mmm..." It was unclear if he was taking advantage or if it was an unconscious action.

He rubbed his face against her neck, as if seeking a more comfortable position?

Just then, Yan Shuangzi appeared, intending to return the Magic Artifact, the Ice Heart Bracelet, to the Sect Lady, and witnessed this scene completely.

"Be honest." Jiang Ruyi's cheeks flushed with a faint red as she softly scolded.

"Madam, your bracelet." Yan Shuangzi, with her head slightly lowered and a faint smile on her lips, handed over the exquisite bracelet.

"You've also been exhausted for several days, go back and rest."

Jiang Ruyi, pretending nonchalance, took Lu Ran back to the residence.

The Ice Heart Bracelet quickly flew over, landing obediently by its mistress's hand, and adorned her wrist.

Returning to the bedroom, Jiang Ruyi helped Lu Ran remove his black robe, brushing off the frost and snow.

Lu Ran, meanwhile, collapsed onto the bed like a pile of mud.

Jiang Ruyi hung the Emperor Robe on the rack, walked back to the bedside, and looked at Lu Ran's profile: "Shall I massage your head?"

But someone had already entered a "dim-witted" state.

No reaction at all.

Jiang Ruyi hesitated for a moment, then still leaned against the headboard, gently lifting Lu Ran, letting him rest in her embrace.

Her movements were tender, and the shyness on her face gradually faded, replaced by a hint of a smile.

This rascal...

If he could always be so quiet and well-behaved, that would be wonderful.

Speaking of which, he performed so well this time and was so hardworking... perhaps she could fulfill his wish?

Dance with the sword for him once?

Jiang Ruyi thought secretly.

The sun slowly set, and the stars and moon revolved.

At the break of dawn, Lu Ran was finally relieved!

The Evil Sculpture of the Ice Plum Demon Queen ceased trembling and did not expand further, yet Lu Ran did not fully wake up.

The continuous days of fighting and the constant buzzing in his head left him utterly exhausted.

Finally able to relax, Lu Ran fell into a deep sleep.

Listening to his long and rhythmic breathing, Jiang Ruyi quietly got up and left.

...

Dusk arrived again.

"Mmm..." Lu Ran turned over, letting out a faint nasal sound.

He sleepily rubbed his head, looking around to find himself on the large bed in the bedroom.

He reached out with one hand to the side, finding no one there.

Nor any residual warmth.

Lu Ran pursed his lips, sitting up against the headboard, and softly hummed:

"Knowing that heartbreak is inevitable, at every moment of waking from a dream..."

Suddenly, there was a light chuckle, faintly audible.

"Eh?" Lu Ran's singing stopped.

After a moment, he lazily tidied his messy short hair: "Evil Shadow Guardian, your Sect Leader also needs face."

[Hmm.] In his mind, there was a faint nasal sound.

"Where is she?"

[The Lady left in the early morning and hasn't returned since.]

Lu Ran thought for a moment and asked: "Any developments in the cliff?"

[The cliff is peaceful, everything is fine.]

Lu Ran: "..."

All right then.

He slightly lifted his head, and the next moment, plum blossoms began to fall in scattered flurries in the bedroom.

The temperature in the room dropped, and a delicate fragrance filled the air.

Lu Ran raised his hand, catching a pink and white plum blossom petal.

A simple action, yet it left several arm shadows, and as time passed, the shadows slowly disappeared.

Like a dream.

Though it was not very practical, and might even reveal his movements, but...

It's cool!

Evil Technique: Falling Plum Scintillation!

Activating this skill, Lu Ran felt his entire being become light and buoyant~

The list of Evil Techniques from the Ice Plum Demon Queen's clan was quite impressive.

There was the weapon-summoning Evil Technique: Ice Plum Sword; the technique to unleash sharp sword qi: Ice Sword Qi.

There was the technique that made one as light as a plover and shadowy as falling flowers: Falling Plum Scintillation; and the technique to bewilder the mind: Soul Capturing Cold Fragrance.

There's also the Evil Technique of summoning countless plum blossoms, traversing freely, and slaughtering enemy troops—Ice Plum Nine Heavens.

And a special Evil Technique—Proud Snow Ice Plum!

This technique allows Lu Ran to completely ignore the harsh environments, and furthermore, gain a full attribute enhancement within icy and snowy settings!

From now on, even if Lu Ran lies naked in the ice and snow, he won't suffer frostbite or freeze to death.

"You're awake." A voice suddenly came through.

Lu Ran turned his head and saw a woman in a white dress standing beside the elegant screen.

She matched well with the fluttering rain of petals inside the room.

"Decided to come back?" Lu Ran murmured.

Jiang Ruyi slightly raised her eyebrows, as if she sensed a hint of complaint in his words.

"It's been a day, where did you run off to?" Lu Ran canceled the Evil Technique.

The room returned to normal.

Yet it was still a bit chilly, and there was still a lingering fragrance.

Jiang Ruyi looked at Lu Ran with a half-smile, answering indirectly: "Xuan Shuang has already adapted to the Evil Techniques of the Ice Plum Clan and has completely transformed."

Lu Ran nodded silently.

The Cold Plum Sect from the Divine Faction is a support-type sect.

It has the ability to perceive, to calm the spirit and mind, and even to firm a companion's will with a sword dance.

After switching to the Evil Demon faction, Cold Plum Clan, Leng Xushuang's support abilities were completely dissipated.

She transformed into a high-speed, soul-capturing being, proficient in both single point and group attacks—the "Demon Queen."

The only thing that remained was the faint scent of plum.

Lu Ran was silent for a moment, then couldn't help but mutter: "Xuan Shuang truly rose from the ashes, with both a Sect Leader and a Sect Master's wife caring for her so much."

"Have you recovered?" Jiang Ruyi did not continue the topic, stepped forward with a smile, and tidied Lu Ran's hair on the bedside.

The intimate gesture made Lu Ran feel a bit more comfortable.

The Lu family siblings have the same survival principle, primarily focusing on two words:

Easy to please~

He shrugged his shoulders: "The physique of the Sea Realm, tough as nails."

Jiang Ruyi nodded slightly and suggested, "Accompany me to Qianhua Ridge?"

"Qianhua Ridge?" Lu Ran was somewhat puzzled, "What are we doing there?"

"Buzz~"

Unexpectedly, Jiang Xian'er's Cold Night Sword at her waist lightly trembled.

Lu Ran reached out to grasp the sword hilt, wanting to communicate with the Cold Night Sword, but was stopped by a slender hand.

He raised his eyes again, looking at the woman with a probing gaze.

Jiang Ruyi pressed her lips and asked again, "Do you want to go?"

Seeing her unusual behavior, Lu Ran thought for a moment, and then his eyes brightened, nodding repeatedly: "Yes, yes, let's go!"

Jiang Ruyi playfully rolled her eyes at him, walked to the wardrobe, casually took out a wide white robe, and tossed it to Lu Ran: "Let's go."

"Swish~"

Without a second word, Lu Ran directly activated the Transmission Mirror.

He casually threw the robe over himself and quickly stepped inside.

After many days, Lu Ran returned to the tranquil River Valley.

A gentle breeze stirred, and waves of flowers rose and fell.

The remnant glow of the sunset fell upon the endless sea of flowers, casting a light halo over the blooms.

In the cluster of falling flowers stood Ruyi, holding the hilt of the Cold Night Sword, turning her head to look at Lu Ran.

She saw him fully engrossed, his eyes seemingly sparkling with little stars.

"Foolish king..."

Jiang Ruyi's cheeks flushed slightly, her gaze lowered.

She thought it would've been enough to practice the way she usually did.

All day, she practiced again and again in the small courtyard of the Mad Immortal's residence, captivating Xian'er, while making Leng Xushuang nod continuously.

Jiang Ruyi had a strong foundation in swordsmanship, excellent strength and flexibility, complemented by an exceptionally graceful figure...

It gave Leng Xushuang a feeling of "the student surpassing the master."

This level was indeed worthy of performing for a certain person.

This was also Jiang Ruyi's plan.

However, until this moment, feeling Lu Ran's intense anticipation, she suddenly wanted to go back and practice for another year or two.

"Ruyi?" Lu Ran called out.

"Mm." Jiang Ruyi steeled her heart and drew her sword.

Petals danced along with the sword's breeze, forming a dazzling wreath around her.

Her ethereal form appeared and disappeared amidst a rain of petals.

The golden hue of the setting sun seemed to be drawn to her, coating the alluring contours of her body with a soft golden outline.

She was indescribably beautiful.

Lu Ran's gaze grew increasingly gentle.

The filthy Holy Spirit Mountain was forever cold and cruel.

Yet the woman in the white dress, under the resplendent glow of dusk, wielded her sword to trace graceful arcs, bringing a gentle shower of petals to this harsh world.

No,

This world was merely a spectator.

This sword dance was intended for just one person.

But, this dance was witnessed by a second person...

Upon the high ridge, a young man in black clothes stood silently.

He gazed at the sea of flowers, at the flowing figure.

From bewilderment, to appreciation, to sheer amazement.

Suddenly, the woman in the white dress halted.

Her initially bashful gaze instantly transformed, becoming bone-chilling cold as she looked up the ridge.

Along with her, the young man standing by the riverbank also turned his head to look.

"Hoo~"

Lu Ran's expression froze!

Upon the ridge, a dark Other Shore Flower blossomed.

Alluring and mysterious.

After blooming, it retracted.

The black-clad youth nodded apologetically, then his figure vanished without a trace.

Chapter 664: Small Request

"Huh?" Lu Ran watched as the young man in black disappeared, his face filled with astonishment.

Just left like that?

So clean and decisive?

Lu Ran turned his head, exchanging a look of mutual understanding with Jiang Ruyi.

After a long pause, he muttered, "Well, you really can't blame Shangguan Hongfu for this~"

Jiang Ruyi: "..."

At this moment, the two of them, just like Shangguan Hongfu back then, had encountered a Dust Shadow Disciple.

The result was no different.

Without even a chance to communicate, the other party directly teleported away.

"Swish~"

Lu Ran's figure flashed, appearing at the spot where the young man was before. Here, the flower clusters were lush, and the other party left nothing behind.

He slowly ascended, looking around:

"Really cherishing life..."

Qianhua Ridge was peaceful and quiet, brimming with vibrant colors; where were the black flowers and shadows?

The very realistic problem is: if the opponent is in the River Realm, the Divine Technique of the Other Shore Flower's maximum teleportation distance is 100 kilometers.

If the opponent is in the Sea Realm, then the Sea Grade Other Shore Flower will undergo a qualitative change!

Being the arch-enemy of the Evil Demon·Evil Mirror Demon Clan, the teleportation skills of the Dust Shadow Sect are in no way inferior to those golden branches and jade leaves.

As vast as heaven and earth, where to search?

Lu Ran silently searched for a while, then flickered back to the River Valley.

Only to see Jiang Ruyi walking over.

"Don't come over!" Lu Ran hurriedly reached out to stop.

This babbling stream was like the dividing line of a stage, and now, was Fairy Jiang to exit the stage?

"Next time." Jiang Ruyi said casually.

"Oh please..." Lu Ran looked regretful.

Damn Dust Shadow Believer, really good at ruining others' plans!

"Hehe~" Jiang Ruyi couldn't help but chuckle, but her steps off stage did not halt.

Her sword dance was interrupted, and she was no longer in the mood to continue.

A deeper reason was her awareness that there might be others present in this space.

So, she no longer wanted to dance.

Didn't want to let anyone else see.

"Ruyi Ruyi." Lu Ran clasped his hands together, closed his eyes, and muttered, "As I wish."

His demeanor was as if when he opened his eyes, he'd see Jiang Ruyi returning to the sea of flowers, continuing her unfinished sword dance.

Jiang Ruyi looked at Lu Ran with amusement.

You rascal,

Are you acting up again?

And Lu Ran kept muttering with his eyes closed, "Manifest quickly, manifest quickly~"

Jiang Ruyi felt a headache coming on, looking at Lu Ran helplessly.

Alright then,

I'll manifest just this once.

She gently descended next to Lu Ran, saying, "Bring Xuan Shuang over, let her dance for you."

"Huh?" Lu Ran opened his eyes, utterly confused.

Was that even an option?

Fairy Jiang spoke blandly, "Just right for me to learn as well, I always felt something was missing."

Lu Ran fell silent.

Something's off!

There's a trick in this!

Though he yearned for it, Lu Ran still shook his head and refused, "Forget it! I'll watch when you're interested."

Jiang Ruyi smiled, "If we linger here a bit longer, who knows, that person might come back."

Lu Ran was skeptical about that.

Jiang Ruyi added, "If we meet again next time, perform an Instant Teleportation immediately and kick that person out from the Other Shore Flower."

Forcibly interrupt the spellcasting?

Such a maneuver requires quite extraordinary skill.

Unlike the Evil Mirror Clan, the Dust Shadow Sect's spellcasting is incredibly fast; as soon as flowers open and close, they can leave.

The Evil Mirror Clan is much more troublesome, having to first perform the Basic Technique-Mirror of Sin, then alter the properties of the bronze mirror, transforming the oval Ancient Bronze Mirror into a full-length mirror.

Jiang Ruyi suggested, "Moreover, bring the Shadow Guard Team as well."

Lu Ran followed her thoughts, "If the person doesn't come back today, we could leave a Shadow Guard here, waiting like a hunter?"

After two or three years, this Dust Shadow Disciple visited again, surely he is quite attached to this place.

A better outcome would be if this person often came here to appreciate the scenery and relieve his mind without Lu Ran and the others noticing.

Lu Ran made up his mind, "Let's go, let's head back to the Thousand Flower Inn first."

This matter, requires covert operations!

In the River Valley, there are seven wooden houses of varying sizes, and only Lu Ran and Jiang Ruyi's residence deserves the name "Thousand Flower Inn."

Inside the house, Lu Ran activated the Transmission Mirror and called in several Shadow Guards, including the Evil Shadow Guardian.

He also summoned Leng Xushuang.

After receiving orders, the Evil Shadow Guardian quickly assigned tasks, and the four of them promptly vanished.

The unique environment of Qianhua Ridge, with its waist-high flower sea, made it convenient for the Shadow Guard Team to hide.

And when Leng Xushuang heard the task she had been called to fulfill, she immediately nodded in agreement, her expression exceedingly solemn.

"Relax a bit." Jiang Ruyi sighed internally.

She understood Leng Xushuang's mindset very well.

That's why she suggested bringing Leng Xushuang over.

Jiang Ruyi could feel that over these recent days, everything Lu Ran had done for Leng Xushuang brought her great pressure.

Leng Xushuang was eager to contribute something to the Ran Sect.

Unfortunately, her capabilities were lacking, and she didn't even have the qualification to accompany the Sect Leader on missions.

Shame, guilt.

Feelings of self-doubt, unworthiness, and more mixed together, nearly suffocating her.

And now, the Lady of the Ran Sect finally gave her a chance.

"Xuan Shuang?"

Leng Xushuang immediately regained her senses, looking at the young man.

Today, Lu Ran draped in a wide white robe, seemed much more approachable.

"No need to be so serious." Lu Ran's expression was odd, "I'm not an examiner."

Why did it feel like an exam?

"Yes." Leng Xushuang's expression was solemn as she nodded gently.

Lu Ran: "..."

"Right here in front of the door." Jiang Ruyi smiled, leading Lu Ran to sit on the steps in front of the house.

Although the two were very casual, Leng Xushuang remained vigilant.

Moments later, petals of plum blossoms drifted down.

A faint fragrance floated in the air around the house.

The Evil Technique of the Ice Plum Demon Queen's clan, anything with the element of "plum" would carry the scent of plum blossoms.

What left Lu Ran dumbfounded was, the movement technique, Evil Technique·Plum Fallen Frightened Goose, which made Leng Xushuang dance as if she was a startled swan.

Moreover, when she performed the sword dance, it was accompanied by beautiful afterimages!

The afterimages were dreamlike and ephemeral, lingering briefly in the world.

Under the afterglow of the sunset, it left frame after frame of breathtaking images.

"I can't believe it..."

Lu Ran was stunned!

It's much more beautiful than Ruyi's dance... cough cough.

Lu Ran snapped back to reality and sneakily glanced to the side.

And Jiang Ruyi nestled gently beside Lu Ran, her drunken eyes dreamy, already entranced.

Lu Ran couldn't help but sneer inwardly.

You little girl! How dare you call me a foolish lord?

The graceful silhouette draped in the evening glow, until the dance came to an end.

The afterimages chasing the quietly standing person, finally dissipated beside the woman.

Leng Xushuang's eyes lowered, as if waiting for judgment.

"Clap! Clap! Clap..."

Lu Ran couldn't help but clap his hands, full of admiration.

Jiang Ruyi's eyes shimmered, looking at the stunning woman, the more she looked, the more she liked her.

Growing up, she suddenly had a feeling of being a fan...

She suddenly said, "Seems like a tune is missing?"

"A tune?" Lu Ran pondered, there were many Believers who could play music.

Jade Flute Believer, Yaoqin Believer, Fairy Pipa Believer...

If the range for accompaniment is extended, they could also include Desolate Drum Believer, War Horn Believer.

Jing Hong, the Hall Master, could play the sound of a mournful horn.

Letting Leng Xushuang choose a tragic type of sword dance should fit well?

"Let's talk about it later." Lu Ran said, "Tomorrow morning we have to set off to continue southward."

The joyous time should make its appearance on the next day of triumphant return.

Jiang Ruyi slightly raised her head, looking at Lu Ran, "Just at dawn today, the evil sculpture in your mind finally stopped humming.

You only rested for one day, just waking up."

"No problem, I can handle it!" Lu Ran chuckled irresponsibly.

Jiang Ruyi sighed gently, "The battle of Wolf Bone Village, Wolf Flower Village, and Qianhua Ridge, along with the past seven or eight days of Snow Forest journey.

Lu Ran, you should take it slow.

Moreover, focusing on cultivation in Cloud Sea Cliff doesn't count as slowing your growth."

Lu Ran listened silently, his gaze far away, looking towards the colorful twilight on the horizon.

But this Spirit Mountain,

has many things waiting for me, I suppose.

Jiang Ruyi naturally noticed Lu Ran's eager heart.

She pondered for a long time, then turned to say, "You've never given Wu Xiao a title, do you have some other plans?"

Lu Ran nodded, "The Wusheng Sect's base is further south, and from Shangguan Hongfu's description, the purpose of this sect is no different from other major sects."

Jiang Ruyi realized that her conjecture was becoming reality.

Lu Ran became a bit more serious, "Wu Xiao is at the peak of the Sea Realm, if he arrives at the Wusheng Sect's base, he would surely have significant prestige!"

"You want Wu Xiao to become a Heavenly Emperor of one domain, another He Qifeng?"

"Indeed, but the path needs some adjustment. We must make good use of Wu Xiao's unique status. Ideally, to seize the position of Sect Master at the Wusheng Sect's base."

Jiang Ruyi pursed her lips, suddenly saying, "Jingting Mountain, Sword Ridge Peak, Tianhuang Mountain, and other sects, after all, were established by Second-class God disciples.

Wusheng is a First-class God, with exceptionally talented disciples.

Wusheng Believers who can enter Spirit Mountain have the qualification to change the human world's structure...."

Lu Ran raised an eyebrow slightly, "You're worried that the Sect Master of the Wusheng Sect might be a Heavenly Realm Great Power?"

Jiang Ruyi didn't respond, resting her cheek on Lu Ran's shoulder, reaching down with her delicate hand to grasp Lu Ran's palm.

Gently squeezing his palm.

Lu Ran: "..."

It had always been he who played with her hands, squeezing her palm.

"Slow down the pace, Lu Ran." Jiang Ruyi's voice was gentle, "Didn't you promise the Evil Shadow that when she reaches the peak of the River Realm, you'd take her to avenge herself at Sword Ridge Peak?"

"That did happen."

"It's mid-February now, will she not advance by March or April?"

"Yes, she should." Lu Ran nodded again to confirm.

"Before dealing with the Wusheng Sect, let's take the Evil Shadow to settle the grudge first." Jiang Ruyi rarely spoke pessimistically, "No one can guarantee what unexpected occurrences might happen during the mission."

Lu Ran recalled the battle he had with Wu Xiao.

For the Ran Sect soldiers, Wu Xiao was indeed an extremely terrifying existence.

Jiang Ruyi whispered, "How about we go back and cultivate for a month, without heading off on unexpected ventures before helping the Evil Shadow with her revenge?"

Lu Ran pondered for a while, muttering, "At my current cultivation pace, perhaps I'll advance by March or April as well."

Jiang Ruyi's eyes slightly moved.

Yes, this is what she wanted.

The higher the Great Realm of a cultivator, the more pronounced the differences between small ranks become.

From the moment Believers ascend to the River Realm, the Divine Technique they apply should not be roughly defined as River Grade.

But should be specified to River Grade First Rank.

The Sea Realm even more so!

Even with a technique like the Transmission Mirror, while the teleportation distance may not increase, the spell casting speed will indeed enhance.

Not to mention other offense and defense techniques, which will concretely increase in effectiveness.

With every step Lu Ran takes forward, his growth magnitude is astonishing.

"Then it's settled, okay?" Jiang Ruyi gently squeezed Lu Ran's palm.

That pleading look was entirely contrary to her aloof demeanor.

Lu Ran couldn't help but slightly lower his head, kissing those enticing lips:

[Alright, okay.]

...

Chapter 665: A cup of Smoke Rain Tea

In the distant mountains, the sunset was finally devoured.

Lu Ran discussed with Jiang Ruyi and left three Shadow Guards stationed at Qianhua Ridge, lying in wait.

Afterward, he activated the Transmission Mirror and led his team back to Cloud Sea Cliff.

Thus, the journey south of the Ran Sect was temporarily put on pause.

Lu Ran devoted himself to rigorous cultivation every day, never slacking.

The matter of "storming Sword Ridge Peak" was not only for avenging the Evil Shadow Guardian but also a long-standing wish of Lu Ran.

He had always harbored deep resentment towards Divine·Beifeng!

Between a man and a god, the feud started in Beifeng City. Lu Ran begged and pleaded until he finally brought out the Immortal Sheep, which rescued the Big Nightmare from Beifeng's grasp.

The truth that the weak will suffer predation is a time-honored principle.

Lu Ran could only endure humiliation, gather strength, and wait for the day when he could take his Big Nightmare and doorstep that bastard!

Now, within Holy Spirit Mountain, a disciple under Beifeng's command cruelly mistreated his Evil Shadow!

Their brutal actions didn't stop at cutting off Yan Shuangzi's arm and gouging out her eyes!

They even imprisoned her, torturing her day and night...

How could Lu Ran not be furious?

If not for considering Yan Shuangzi's path to becoming a god and facilitating her promotion to the Sea Realm, he would have stormed in with his team already.

Upon returning to the Ran Sect, Lu Ran often sat at the edge of the sea cliff.

Whether it was sunny or rainy, he would meditate for three to five days straight.

Now, it was Jiang Ruyi's turn to "fall for someone who never returns home"...

And there was always a Charm Shadow staying silently in the forest behind him, cultivating, no matter the weather, accompanying him silently.

Peaceful days continued for more than a month and a half.

During this time, there was a small interlude.

There were nearly one hundred seventy ordinary disciples in the Ran Sect, most of whom could never advance further, as their talent was not high enough, and they were severely injured when the contract was torn.

The path of cultivation was blocked.

But as always, exceptions existed among large numbers.

One disciple at the peak of the River Realm broke through in the Feixian Hall during the deity worship, returning once more to the Jiang Realm, causing two days of mist.

On the second day, the Sea Flame Flood Dragon, the sea overlord, was "drawn to the scent" and arrived again.

Lu Ran managed to get some exercise.

The poor Sea Flame Flood Dragon~

Indeed it possessed the power to cause great destruction, stirring storms and blood wherever it went.

But it just happened to encounter Master Lu stationed at Cloud Sea Cliff, becoming a small amuse-bouche during the Sect Master's days of cultivation...

Time rolled into the end of March.

Two unexpected visitors came to see Lu Ran.

It was a rare morning when Lu Ran had returned home to rest overnight. In the small courtyard, he was enjoying Smoke Rain Tea prepared by Miss Leng Xushuang.

"Master."

"Master!" Two strong and spirited voices called from outside the courtyard gate.

"Feng'er, Yan God General?" Lu Ran was quite surprised, looking at the two outside the picket fence, and immediately waved, "Come in, have some tea."

Xue Fengchen: "..."

Gao Yunyan: "..."

The two naturally knew how bitter Smoke Rain Tea was.

Lu Ran's face showed clearly how much he suffered from it.

"Come on!" Lu Ran urged again.

By the table, Leng Xushuang silently poured two cups of tea.

The Feng Yan generals walked in. Gao Yunyan inquired, "Lady, she..."

"Sleeping, young girls like to sleep... Anything you need from her?"

"No." Gao Yunyan shook her head, just a habitual check-in.

"Oh, taste it, very refreshing!" Lu Ran handed the cup over.

Gao Yunyan then understood why the Sect Master would drink something like this; she had heard that Lu Ran had been deeply immersed in cultivation on the cliff recently.

So, was the Sect Master using Smoke Rain Tea for "head hanging beam, awl stabbing thigh" inspiration?

Gao Yunyan couldn't refuse, took the stone cup, closed her eyes, and gulped the tea down.

"Uh." The Yan God General momentarily gave up on facial control, grimacing.

Smoke Rain Tea didn't have any sweetness at the end but got more bitter.

Bitter enough that she stomped her feet.

Yet it was really invigorating~

Lu Ran chuckled, "What brings you here?"

"Master, I came to report my cultivation progress." Gao Yunyan placed the cup on the stone table and picked up another cup, handing it to Xue Fengchen beside her.

Xue Fengchen: ?

Are we even on the same team?

Gao Yunyan's mouth was still bitter but seeing Xue Fengchen's silent look, she felt quite sweet inside:

"Take it, a gift from the Master."

Xue Fengchen silently accepted the cup, gulped it down.

The Mighty Feng of West Desolation certainly held a divine general's air!

He calmly returned the empty cup to the table, "Thank the Master for the gift."

"Oh?" Lu Ran was skeptical, "Quick, Xushuang! My great Feng likes tea, pour a few more cups!"

Xue Fengchen: ???

"Pfft... Haha~" Gao Yunyan couldn't hold back and burst into a hearty laugh.

She suddenly remembered that the Lady was still resting and hurriedly covered her mouth.

"You rascal, don't trouble people."

From the finely carved wooden window of the distant bedroom came a mildly reproving voice.

"Oh." Lu Ran pouted and turned to Gao Yunyan, "What was the matter?"

Gao Yunyan: "I am about to hit a cultivation bottleneck."

"Oh?" Lu Ran's eyes lit up.

This was excellent news!

He immediately asked, "When was your last breakthrough to the Sea Realm?"

"I broke through the bottleneck at the end of last August, completing the advancement on September seventh."

"Mm." Lu Ran nodded.

Now it was the end of March, which, upon calculation, was 7 months.

With ideal conditions, if in half a month Gao Yunyan successfully advances...

Seven and a half months!

From the First Rank of the Sea Realm to the Second Rank, that's quite fast.

Of course, it's no match for the Big Nightmare.

Lu Ran clearly remembered that Deng Yuxiang advanced to the First Rank of the Sea Realm at the end of June last year, and then advanced to the Second Rank of the Sea Realm in early December.

All in all, it was only five and a half months.

The difference in whether the Ran Sect soldiers bind with the Stone Sculpture or not had already become apparent.

Lu Ran also believed that as Deng Yuxiang's integration with the Stone Sculpture deepened, the time required for her cultivation and advancement should become shorter.

"Good!" Lu Ran casually gestured.

"Whoosh~" An exquisite Treasure Gourd flew out from inside the house.

Gao Yunyan's heart warmed, and she immediately knelt down on one knee, gratefully saying, "Thank you, Sect Leader."

She had come here to borrow a Magic Artifact.

Everything was just as she had hoped!

She didn't even need to open her mouth to request; Lu Ran would proactively help her without any hesitation.

Advancing in the vast Yangyang Sea, of course, requires the utmost caution!

With the strong support of the Second-rank Magical Artifact-Blazing Phoenix Patterned Gourd, her success rate in breaking through the bottleneck would greatly increase!

"There's no need to be so formal." Lu Ran handed over the small Blazing Phoenix, "If you break the shackles, the little Blazing Phoenix can feast, it would be delighted."

Gao Yunyan thanked him again before cautiously holding the Treasure Gourd.

Lu Ran looked toward the tall, silent figure: "Feng'er, when are you going to advance?"

Xue Fengchen: "..."

Lu Ran's face showed an encouraging look.

Xue Fengchen was silent for a moment before speaking, "Soon, soon."

"Hmm!" Lu Ran nodded in satisfaction.

Ah~

Comfortable!

Brother Deng, I found a substitute at Holy Spirit Mountain.

Without my urging, you can't slack off in the human world...

"Sect Leader, I will go into a closed-door cultivation now." Gao Yunyan said.

"Go ahead!" Lu Ran nodded immediately, feeling quite expectant.

Maybe both he and the Evil Shadow, with the momentum brought by Yan God General, could break through their cultivation constraints together!

As the two left, a celestial figure appeared at the doorway of the house.

It was evident that Jiang Ruyi truly regarded Leng Xushuang as her personal guard.

She didn't dress as gracefully in a white dress as usual, but wore Lu Ran's large white robe, lazily ruffling her hair, and sat at the stone table.

"Awake?" Lu Ran immediately handed over a teacup, "Here, have some tea to refresh yourself."

Jiang Ruyi wrinkled her nose, giving Lu Ran a dissatisfied look.

Her slightly coquettish appearance was without a hint of cold elegance.

She took the teacup and casually asked, "How's Xushuang's cultivation progressing?"

Leng Xushuang replied, "With this breakthrough of Yan God General, I should be able to use it to return to the Jiang Realm·Fourth Rank."

"Hmm." Jiang Ruyi took a light sip of tea.

Like Feng God General, she showed no change in expression.

Jiang Ruyi was even a cut above, because she wasn't drinking, but savoring.

Unable to stop himself, Lu Ran grinned widely.

Jiang Ruyi smiled at Lu Ran, "Should we bring Mr. Cong Long back to take part in this celestial blessing together?"

"Oh!" Lu Ran slapped his forehead, "Right, Cong Long is still at Mist Rain Lake!"

Jiang Ruyi chided, "This guy! Once he starts cultivating, he forgets everything.

Don't say such things in front of Mr. Cong Long, it'll hurt his feelings."

"Yes, yes." Lu Ran nodded repeatedly, but his mind was filled with doubts.

I haven't even gone home,

how could I have thought of other men?

Actually... it can't be said that I forgot, I was creating a world for two for Mr. Cong Long and Senior Sister He!

Yes, that's exactly it~

Lu Ran comforted himself secretly, looking up at the sky: "Later, I'll bring the Divine General back as well, and by the way, ask Qifeng.

This excellent cultivation environment should not go to waste."

Jiang Ruyi suddenly said, "Three days ago, Liu Huo came to visit."

"Oh?"

"She wants to switch to your sect."

"Jade Talisman? Or Lie Tian?" Lu Ran frowned slightly.

Liu Huo is someone with very distinct characteristics, truly fitting for the Blazing Blood faction.

Jiang Ruyi softly said, "She wants to become stronger, to improve her cultivation talent."

Improving cultivation talent means binding with the Stone Sculpture.

Lu Ran frowned even more: "Who told her? Wu Xiao?"

Though the matter of the generals binding with the Stone Sculpture is no secret, it was only known to the higher echelons of the Ran Sect.

Even though the Feixian Hall has statues of the protectors and generals, the disciples of the Ran Sect are not explicitly aware of who these Fake Gods truly are.

The disciples only have a vague understanding: Lu Ran is a rising new god.

Omnipotent.

Lu Ran did tell Wu Xiao explicitly that he would let him replace the Martial Artist Stone Sculpture.

Liu Huo's only contact would have been Wu Xiao.

But there's still something suspicious here.

Wu Xiao is not just someone who would blab, he is indifferent to everything.

Jiang Ruyi put down her teacup, her delicate hand gently resting on the back of Lu Ran's hand, softly saying, "I've already chastised Sister Xian'er, and she won't mention it again in the future."

Lu Ran: "..."

So it was Mad Xian'er?

Jiang Ruyi softly said, "Wu Xiao lives near Mad Xian'er, and after Xushuang moved in, Sister Xian'er and Liu Huo became friends.

Liu Huo finally had someone to talk to.

Her life is too bitter, after hearing many stories, Sister Xian'er just..."

Jiang Ruyi paused for a moment, then continued, "Actually, Sister Xian'er didn't specify, she just told Liu Huo that she could come to you for help, to respect you."

Lu Ran nodded silently.

Sister Xian'er's mouth may be filthy, but her heart is kind.

He picked up the teacup, sipped the bitter tea, imitating Jiang Ruyi, savoring the bitter taste within:

"What do you think?"

Chapter 666: Liu Huo? Wu Huo!

"A suitable choice," Jiang Ruyi responded decisively.

Lu Ran looked curiously at his fiancée, "You have high hopes for her?"

Jiang Ruyi played with the teacup, analyzing, "Like your three Shadow Guards, Liu Huo was once a member of the Blazing Blood City Divine Guard."

Lu Ran nodded lightly.

Such individuals are elite, one in ten thousand, with impeccable overall qualities.

Jiang Ruyi took a sip of tea, "Courageous, meticulous, understanding, and someone who would risk everything for her beliefs."

Unfortunately, fate is unkind.

Lu Ran's expression turned strange, "You know so much about her?"

"From our first encounter until now, haven't you noticed all the choices she's made under pressure?"

"Hmm..." Lu Ran nodded.

Liu Huo's charming, beautiful appearance, coupled with her stream of tears, is indeed quite deceptive.

But thinking back on her actions, from the perspective of a Weak God disciple...

Humble but not inferior, weak but not timid.

She is quite a bold character.

Beside her, Leng Xushuang silently refilled Jiang Ruyi's tea.

Jiang Ruyi glanced up, seeing the exquisite beauty with bowed head and graceful demeanor, she couldn't help but smile.

In this Holy Spirit Mountain, who doesn't have their own unique background?

Who doesn't have their own story?

The difference is whether they'll be seen or not.

Just like in the Human World of Da Xia, amidst the vast sea of people, everyone working hard to live, who doesn't have their own joy, anger, sorrow, and unforgettable moments?

Yet, each unique soul, throughout their lives, is just encapsulated in four words:

The masses.

"I have difficulty cultivating Cold Plum Divine Sculpture, and naturally also with Blazing Blood Divine Sculpture," Lu Ran pondered, "How about binding Liu Huo with the Black Fire Colt?"

"Sure." Jiang Ruyi approved.

The Blazing Blood Sect and the Black Fire Clan are archenemies, with many similarities in skills. After Liu Huo changes her identity, she can naturally connect seamlessly.

There's just one point: Liu Huo cannot become a blood-colored warhorse anymore.

The Black Fire Colts were already horses and do not possess the Evil Technique to transform into horses.

"I'll go to Mist Rain Lake to invite Mr. Cong Long." Lu Ran stood up, "Evil Shadow, go bring Wu Xiao and Liu Huo."

[Yes.]

In secret, Evil Shadow flashed and departed, Lu Ran left through a mirror.

Jiang Ruyi also immediately got up to return to the bedroom to change clothes, since outsiders were coming, she didn't want to appear in a lazy manner.

Moreover, she was still wearing Lu Ran's robe.

In just a few minutes, the small courtyard of the Cloud Sea Residence was bustling with people.

When Jiang Ruyi saw the figures of Yu Changsheng and He Yingcai, she couldn't help but secretly praise them as a perfect immortal couple.

Except that the "male immortal" seemed to have a somewhat melancholic gaze?

He kept glancing at Master Lu...

Causing Jiang Ruyi to chuckle internally.

Lu Ran originally planned to let Yu Changsheng stay at Mist Rain Lake for a few days, but unexpectedly, it became nearly two months...

"I heard you visited a few days ago." Lu Ran looked at the woman as radiant as fire.

"Yes, Master." Liu Huo respectfully kneeled and bowed her head, feeling very apprehensive.

A little worried that the Sect Leader might be angry at her presumptuous interruption.

And a little hopeful that the Sect Leader might be merciful enough to help her defy destiny...

"After binding with Evil Sculpture-Black Fire Colt, your cultivation talent will have no limits," Lu Ran slowly said, "I will also help you eventually become the true Evil God."

Liu Huo's delicate body trembled!

The anticipation in her heart becoming reality made her extremely excited, she immediately expressed her gratitude repeatedly.

Lu Ran, however, smiled and said, "But, you will no longer be able to transform into a warhorse, unable to roam the world with your loved one."

Liu Huo was momentarily frozen.

Wu Xiao, who had been silent all along, more or less understood the situation from the conversation.

He didn't know Liu Huo had come to seek an audience, nor about her ambition.

Wu Xiao didn't care about himself, let alone anything else?

The only time he considered Liu Huo was before the battle at Qianhua Ridge, when he gave his last instructions.

He asked Lu Ran not to inquire about her real name.

That's all there was to it.

Yet, Master Lu didn't let Wu Xiao die, and now looked at him and asked, "Don't you have anything to say?"

The words might not have sounded pleasant, but the blood-red warhorse was Wu Xiao's mount.

For a moment, everyone looked towards the man.

Especially He Yingcai, who curiously observed this brave young man.

From Yu Changsheng, she had already learned about Wu Xiao, knowing he was someone Lu Ran had "brought back to life," a man with a dead heart.

Seeing him today, he indeed lived up to his reputation!

The immense pressure from the Sea Realm Peak was suffocating.

Is this the intensity of a First-class God disciple?

"Wu Xiao?" Lu Ran called again.

"Following you, there's no need to roam the world anymore." Wu Xiao finally spoke, his voice hoarse.

Lu Ran: "..."

Maybe Wu Xiao really didn't care, showing no attachment towards either people or his mount.

Hmm... Regardless, at least he didn't hinder Liu Huo's future.

Liu Huo hung her head low, her expression gloomy, silent.

Initially, she only followed Wu Xiao carefully to survive.

Gradually, she developed a dependency.

The emotions between a man and a woman also grew uncontrollably.

She didn't blame anyone, knowing to Wu Xiao she was no different from that Divine Weapon Sword.

Her ungrateful desire for more led to greater disappointment and sorrow.

"Liu Huo?"

"Lady." Liu Huo looked up towards the stone table.

Jiang Ruyi spoke calmly, "Strength is the foundation of everything, no matter what you wish to do."

Liu Huo indeed was courageous, her expression serious, and she requested, "I beseech the Sect Leader and Lady to give me a new identity!

In life and death, Liu Huo will never forget this kindness."

"Alright, destroy the contract with the Divine," Lu Ran decided, explaining the method briefly.

"Bo~"

Yu Changsheng summoned a pale golden Dragon Carp in advance to help Liu Huo ease her mind.

Soon, a piercing scream echoed through the mountains and forests.

He Yingcai looked at the woman in the red dress with a painful expression and raised her delicate hand.

A crystal-clear dewdrop appeared in the palm of He Yingcai's hand.

This tiny dewdrop, filled with a rich life force, slid from her slim fingers and off her fingertips, flying towards Liu Huo's forehead.

"Hoo~"

A strange scene unfolded!

A thin, visible water veil instantly enveloped Liu Huo's entire body and then fused into her body.

Bi He Divine Technique · Azure Dew Purification!

The healing effect of this technique was quite remarkable!

After a long time, Liu Huo stopped trembling.

Lu Ran was also ready, a phantom of a warhorse spread out from within him.

The magnificent black horse, burning with a dim flame.

The massive horse's head lowered, its nose overlapping with Lu Ran's palm, moving towards Liu Huo's forehead.

"Heh..."

Liu Huo's eyes suddenly widened, the searing breath poured into her head, as if it was going to burn her flesh and blood to ashes.

Just over ten seconds later, another Evil God took shape under Lu Ran's hand.

To be precise, it was a Fake God.

"In the future, you will also go through such a ceremony," Lu Ran looked at Wu Xiao.

Wu Xiao watched everything quietly, his eyes, like a still pool of water, began to ripple.

Such a contract ceremony was indeed soul-stirring.

Not until the remnant shadow of the Evil God · Black Fire Colt gradually dissipated, did He Yingcai let out a sigh of relief.

She was well aware that in the future she too would become a Fake God · Bi He under Junior Brother Lu.

Or perhaps become Bi He's mortal enemy, Evil God · Tangled Silk Shadow?

He Yingcai secretly compared the two deities, one righteous, one evil.

The Bi He Sect encapsulates attack, defense, and control as one, coupled with impressive healing techniques.

Whereas the Tangled Silk Clan...

Pure poison!

Thinking of this, He Yingcai couldn't help but look towards Yu Changsheng.

Since his support methods were so powerful, perhaps she should transform into Tangled Silk Shadow, to complement each other?

Yet He Yingcai discovered that Yu Changsheng had a peculiar expression, looking towards the fence yard outside.

"Yo~ isn't that Mad Xian'er, my lord?" Lu Ran suddenly spoke.

In the dense woods to the south of Cloud Sea Residence, about a dozen meters away, a sneaky figure was bathed in golden drizzle, their face slightly awkward.

"Come," Jiang Ruyi beckoned.

Si Xianxian looked like a little child who had done something wrong, lowered her head and walked in.

"Liu Huo has been bound with the Evil Sculpture," Jiang Ruyi smiled, looking at Xian'er Sister.

"Mhm mhm." Si Xianxian nodded repeatedly, whispering, "Cong-congratulations, another general for Ran Sect."

Lu Ran also smiled at Si Xianxian.

The usually lawless Mad Xian'er, looking so well-behaved, was indeed very interesting.

"Sect Master," Wu Xiao's voice was hoarse, "If there's nothing else, I will return now."

Lu Ran paused, looked at Liu Huo, who was still recovering her senses, then looked at Wu Xiao.

The courtyard was silent.

After a moment's pause, Lu Ran said, "Go report to the Nightmare Guardian and tell her, Yan God General has already gone into seclusion, working on advancing, and I should catch this opportunity.

Follow her instructions, during this time, protect Cloud Sea Cliff well."

"Yes!" Wu Xiao responded with a slightly firmer tone, turned, and departed.

Kneeling on the ground, Liu Huo, enduring intense pain, labored to open her eyes.

She slowly turned her head, watching Wu Xiao's tall back gradually fade into the distance.

"Liu Huo."

"Lady," Liu Huo instinctively turned her head, looking at the young woman.

"From now on, stay by my side," Jiang Ruyi also gazed at the departing silhouette of Wu Xiao, instructing softly.

Liu Huo opened her mouth, as if wanting to say something.

But eventually, she lowered her eyes, softly replied, "Yes."

Jiang Ruyi signaled Leng Xushuang, "Take her back to rest."

The dwelling of Leng Xushuang was in the backyard of Cloud Sea Residence, a small log cabin built recently.

Not until the two left did Lu Ran look at Jiang Ruyi, "You are...?"

Jiang Ruyi replied, "Xuan Shuang Liu Huo, don't you think the names match well?"

Do they match?

Sounds like one cold, one hot...

Lu Ran called Yu Changsheng and He Yingcai to take a seat, teasing, "I thought you had some opinions on Wu Xiao.

Turns out Liu Huo is lucky, caught the Lady's eye, and will stay as a guard?"

"Oh, hush," Jiang Ruyi playfully retorted.

Lu Ran switched to voice transmission: [Isn't this a bit like breaking up a pair?]

Jiang Ruyi continued speaking aloud, letting Yu Changsheng and the others hear, "Aren't you planning to let Wu Xiao seize the Sect Master position of the Wusheng Sect, to become the second He Qifeng?"

Yu Changsheng indeed became interested, looking at Lu Ran.

He Yingcai timely picked up the teapot, pouring tea for everyone.

Si Xianxian was a bit dumbfounded, silently cursing herself for not having foresight...

"Indeed," Lu Ran nodded immediately.

Jiang Ruyi smiled gently, "If Ran Sect truly has the fortune to control the Wusheng Sect and build another Forbidden City, I will let Liu Huo return.

Let her stay by Wu Xiao's side to assist in management."

Yu Changsheng lightly nodded, added, "By then, Liu Huo would no longer represent just herself, but have the identity of the Sect Leader and Lady's guard."

Marvelous~

Lu Ran grew even more puzzled: [You're treating her quite well, even giving her a sort of honorary title?]

Jiang Fairy's usually indifferent nature taking such actions genuinely surprised Lu Ran.

Her enchantment with Leng Xushuang's sword dance, appreciating her talents, led to special treatment, which Lu Ran could understand.

But towards Liu Huo?

Jiang Ruyi shook her head with a smile: [If that day truly comes, she is to assist Wu Xiao, managing a sect and governing a city for you.

This identity, for Liu Huo herself, is also a reminder, a constraint.]

Oh boy~

Lu Ran stopped speaking, silently picked up the teacup.

...

Chapter 667: Step by Step to Heaven

April is fragrant, the spring mountains like dark green.

Lu Ran waited for Gao Yunyan's advancement amidst his day-to-day cultivation.

The advancement of a Great Power in the Sea Realm takes 5 to 10 days, during which the beings within the cliff can enjoy heavenly blessings.

This tremendous opportunity naturally comes with great risks!

However, the Ran Sect has ample experience in defense matters.

Under the organization of Chief Great Protector Deng Yuxiang, the soldiers and various halls of the Ran Sect operated orderly.

At this point, Cloud Sea Cliff could be called "impregnable."

During the first three days of Cloud Sea Cliff being shrouded in mist, Evil Shadow Guardian and Leng Xushuang entered their seclusion rooms successively to begin the breakthrough process.

Afterward, Lu Ran bid farewell to Jiang Ruyi.

He took the Cloud Sea Dust Cleansing Knife, which was the only non-Divine Weapon, and went to the number one seclusion room, and summoned back the Fiery Phoenix Patterned Gourd from Gao Yunyan.

Poor little Blazing Phoenix~

It had just helped Gao Yunyan break through her cultivation bottleneck and enjoyed a few days of leisure, only to be summoned again for labor.

Well... it doesn't matter.

Anyway, clouds of mist surrounded Cloud Sea Cliff, and little Blazing Phoenix could feast wherever it wanted.

It just needed to give its master a hearty drink when Lu Ran sought help...

Actually, in such an environment saturated with Divine Power, Lu Ran and the others didn't really need the assistance of Magic Artifacts.

But who wouldn't want a higher chance of breakthrough?

Thus, Lu Ran sat cross-legged in the pitch-black seclusion room, the Cloud Sea Dust Cleansing Knife laid across his knees, the Treasure Gourd in his arms, cultivating with undistracted focus.

He absorbed the Divine Power from the world, forming it into streams, merging it into rivers, and pouring it into Yangyang Sea.

Every inch of his skin, every piece of flesh and bone soaked in Divine Power, richly nourished.

The orderly flow of Divine Power repeatedly washed through his body's meridians, widening his body container.

Lu Ran indulged in this, gradually pushing the limits of his body.

Until April 12th, Lu Ran tremblingly picked up the Fiery Phoenix Patterned Gourd.

"Buzz~"

Little Blazing Phoenix happily swayed back and forth, its golden Phoenix Pattern flickering repeatedly.

Lu Ran had been silent for a long time, and at this sudden moment of taking the gourd, he was certainly ready to sprint forward!

"Guzzle, guzzle..."

Lu Ran tipped his head back and drank heartily.

Within the Fiery Phoenix Patterned Gourd wasn't mist-like Divine Power but the surging, torrential "rivers," and extremely pure ones!

Rivers flowing into the sea, Lu Ran felt his flesh swell up to the brink of bursting...

Boom——

Lu Ran's body shuddered violently!

In the mystic void, the old shackles shattered, the body container expanded forcefully.

The mist in the sky churned, swirling madly toward Cloud Sea Cliff.

"Heh..."

Lu Ran's face showed pleasure, even his sigh carried a trembling note.

Little Blazing Phoenix continued its buzzing vibrations, cheering excitedly for its master.

"Shh." Lu Ran patted the beloved gourd, slowly lowered his head, resembling an old monk in meditation, motionless.

At the same time, in the study room of Cloud Sea Residence.

Jiang Ruyi kneeled at the desk, a slight smile on her face.

The mist attracted by Yan God General hadn't dispersed yet, from the outside, Cloud Sea Cliff's environment looked no different from before.

But being within it, Jiang Ruyi distinctly sensed a qualitative increase in the concentration of Divine Power inside the cliff.

Undoubtedly, Lu Ran had also broken through the bottleneck, roaring into advancement mode!

"Lady." A female voice suddenly came from across the desk.

"Hmm."

"Subordinate has completed advancement." Yan Shuangzi dared not disturb Lu Ran and upon leaving seclusion, immediately came to Jiang Ruyi.

"Peak of River Realm." Jiang Ruyi muttered.

When people reach Fifth Rank in a Great Realm, they no longer need physical cultivation.

What remains is to clarify and deepen inner understanding.

Seeking an epiphany.

"Yes." Yan Shuangzi responded softly, "If you have no other instructions, I'll go guard the seclusion room entrance."

Jiang Ruyi smiled: "I actually want you to go home and prepare for advancing to the Sea Realm.

But being closer to him might be more suitable for honing your Dao Heart?"

Yan Shuangzi pressed her lips slightly, gently "Hmm"-ing.

Since last time at the sea cliff, when Lu Ran clearly told her she was an enchanting woman and hoped she wouldn't say misleading words...

Yan Shuangzi always had a trace of worry facing Jiang Ruyi.

Worried her presence or some action might displease Jiang Ruyi.

Strictly speaking, Yan Shuangzi wasn't concerned about Jiang Ruyi.

The problem is, Lu Ran cares.

"Go, in the next ten days half a month, sort out your emotions." Jiang Ruyi said with a smile looking at the dense mist in front, "That Sword Ridge Peak is Lu Ran's congratulatory gift for your advancement to Sea Realm."

"Yes." Yan Shuangzi relaxed internally, quietly flickered away.

Since Yan Shuangzi had been guarding Lu Ran so long, naturally she had noticed, the Lady occasionally showed subtle jealousy.

But upon careful reflection, whenever her issues were involved, Jiang Ruyi always seemed very generous?

Yan Shuangzi pondered inwardly as she arrived at the tunnel entrance to the number one seclusion room.

Why?

Sympathize with her? Impossible.

Or perhaps due to her worldly status?

Yan Shuangzi's expression was blank as she walked silently into the tunnel, until the light was completely dark, then she stopped.

She stood quietly for a long time, then leaned against the stone wall and slowly slid to sit on the ground.

"Buzz~"

The Evil Moon Scimitar lightly trembled, sensing its master's low spirits.

Yan Shuangzi didn't pay attention to the Evil Moon Scimitar but instead drew the Evil Moon Short Blade from the side of her calf, her fingertips softly stroking the blade.

"Is there an enemy of yours in that mountain?" The Evil Moon Short Blade uncharacteristically initiated conversation, a thread of energy belonging to the Sword Spirit flowed within the hilt.

As the Divine Weapon of the Wolf Flower Lady, beneath this short blade countless Dead Souls lay.

Killing,

is the inherent nature of this Black Ice Short Blade.

Since its old master fell and it was given to Yan Shuangzi by Lu Ran, it hadn't seen blood for a long time.

"Yes, a lot," Yan Shuangzi said offhandedly.

"I can feel the hatred in your heart," the voice of the Evil Moon Short Blade carried a trace of laughter, "Tsk tsk~ such deep hatred."

Yan Shuangzi suddenly said, "You don't want to live anymore."

Her core, after all, was a North Wind believer.

That cold and cruel heart could only be slightly gentle before a select few.

Yet, the Evil Moon Short Blade had an air of complete confidence: "I was gifted to you by your master. Dare you harm me?"

"Heh," Yan Shuangzi replied with a cold laugh, "You can try, go ahead and say one more word."

Evil Moon Short Blade: "..."

Yan Shuangzi pinched the cool, thin blade body with two fingers, gently stroking it.

The Evil Moon Short Blade spoke again, this time with a more serious tone: "My old master was fierce, a standout of the Greedy Wolf faction, cruel in his ways of torturing the enemy.

After being with the old master for so long, I know well how to make enemies suffer unbearably.

If you need it after you conquer that mountain, this Sword Spirit is willing to assist."

Yan Shuangzi listened silently.

The words of the Evil Moon Short Blade seemed to be too much.

This was not normal.

Whenever something is abnormal, it's usually because there's something desired or requested.

Yan Shuangzi picked up the hilt, a cold smile spreading across her lips: "Is it you who likes it?"

Evil Moon Short Blade: "..."

Yan Shuangzi's voice was icy: "Recognize me as your master, and I'll give you a chance to act wild."

As of now, the Evil Moon Short Blade had yet to recognize a master.

Thus it was unable to directly communicate thoughts, only able, when touched by Deng Yuxiang's palm, to surface as a Sword Spirit to communicate with her.

Yan Shuangzi continued, "All means you can think of, I can carry you to inflict a hundredfold, thousandfold upon Elder Xing."

The Evil Moon Short Blade remained silent for a long time before it suddenly laughed and asked, "What on earth did that mountain do to you?"

Yan Shuangzi spoke no more and picked up the short blade, sliding it back into the sheath strapped to the side of her calf.

"Whoosh~"

A surge of energy unfurled, spreading from Yan Shuangzi's slender calf to envelop her entire body.

Yan Shuangzi leaned the back of her head against the rock wall and slowly closed her eyes.

Soon after, a voice clearly imprinted itself in her mind: [Don't forget our agreement.]

[Mm.]

[The name Evil Moon doesn't suit me. Call me Owl Execution Blade—Owl, as in decapitation; Execution, as in slow slicing.]

[Is this your Divine Weapon Domain direction?]

[Perhaps.]

[When he gifted you to me, he said there's already an Evil Moon Scimitar, so go with a short blade.] Yan Shuangzi replied softly.

Owl Execution Blade: "..."

Indeed!

I'm the one who was given, I was present too!

He never instructed you to call me 'Evil Moon Short Blade'!

...

On April 21st, at noon.

Everyone inside Cloud Sea Cliff noticed that the dense fog between heaven and earth seemed to be gradually dispersing.

In the study room, Jiang Ruyi, who was meditating, quietly opened her eyes.

After a full ten days, had Lu Ran finally succeeded in advancing?

Jiang Ruyi rose slowly, and through the exquisitely carved wooden window, she caught a faint glimpse of the figures of Xuan Shuang and Liu Huo at the stone table in the courtyard.

The two guards also noticed the unusual situation and were preparing to report inside when, through the swirling fog, a silhouette was faintly seen walking out.

"My lady."

"My lady, the fog is about to clear." Compared to the reticent Leng Xushuang, Liu Huo had much more to say.

These two were not only contrasting in name and character, one cold, the other warm.

Even their true identities were the Ice Plum Demon Queen and the Black Fire Colt.

Truly, they were cold and fiery from the inside out.

"Mm, I'll go meet him." Jiang Ruyi, enveloped by the Jade Talisman Formation, flew toward the woodland behind the house.

Xuan Shuang, as a guard, immediately dispersed like plum blossoms, flying lightly.

Liu Huo, as a guard, trod upon flowers of flame, ascending to the sky.

Meanwhile, in seclusion room number one.

"Ugh~" Lu Ran lay on the ground, limp.

Finally!

Sea Realm·Second Rank!

This feeling of power surging through his body made Lu Ran hesitant to move recklessly, fearful of accidentally smashing the ground with a slap.

No wonder it's the Sea Realm!

Even a minor rank advancement significantly improved the body's strength.

"Whoosh~" The little Blazing Phoenix hovered before Lu Ran's face, flying left and right.

The plump Treasure Gourd ceaselessly celebrated, swinging side to side.

Adorably cute~

Lu Ran suddenly reached out, initially intent on stopping the bothersome Treasure Gourd.

Unexpectedly, the little Blazing Phoenix abruptly halted and then nestled up to him, lovingly nuzzling his palm.

"Hehe." Lu Ran smiled gently, carefully cradling the Fiery Phoenix Patterned Gourd to his chest, then softly sighed.

Closer to the Heavenly Realm,

again a step closer...

Yes, also closer to Sword Ridge Peak, almost at the door.

Chapter 668: hatred!

Lu Ran lingered in the seclusion room for a long time until the fog dispersed completely before he got up.

He gently took a step forward.

The way he moved cautiously, it was as if he was treating the solid ground as if it were thin ice.

After confirming the "ice" hadn't cracked under his feet, Lu Ran gave another gentle step forward.

Step by step.

Lu Ran was continually adapting to the unruly physical form, suppressing the sense of wild power, silently complaining to himself:

"How can one maintain balance with this mindset?"

Lu Ran continued to adjust himself, like a child learning to walk, until he reached the tunnel entrance and had adapted quite a bit.

The bright light was somewhat dazzling.

He squinted his eyes and saw many figures.

Leading them was a woman in a flowing white dress with an elegant fairy-like appearance.

Sniff~

Lu Ran tried to imagine the fragrance of jasmine but instead smelled the real presence of a faint plum scent.

Miss Xuan Shuang seems to be stealing the spotlight a bit.

Indeed, it's quite fragrant~

"Succeeded?" Jiang Ruyi asked gently, her hands behind her back, her eyes tenderly smiling.

If she tilted her head just a little more, that would be perfect.

Just like that lively young Ruyi from high school.

It's a pity, those youthful days are long gone~

It's been... err, less than two years since I graduated high school?

Darn it!

Less than two years? Why does it feel like it's been two centuries?

Oh, right! This year is 2021, and I just turned 20...

"Congratulations Sect Leader!"

"Congratulations Sect Leader on exiting seclusion successfully!" The chorus of congratulations awakened Lu Ran from his thoughts.

Lu Ran shifted his gaze from his fellow student Jiang and reverted back to the high-ranking Master of Ran Sect.

With a smile, he cupped his fists and greeted everyone: "Happy together, happy together."

The stronger the Sect Leader is, the higher the survival chances of the soldiers, and the brighter the future.

That phrase "happy together" was quite accurate.

After inquiring about the other soldiers who had advanced and receiving satisfying responses, Lu Ran's smile grew even bigger.

After some simple pleasantries, Lu Ran announced a meeting in an hour and dismissed everyone.

Soon, only Lu Jiang and the two personal guards of Lady Ran remained at the entrance.

The guards had a good sense of awareness, at least much better than Sister Xian'er.

They walked off into the distance, guarding with their backs to the two of them.

Lu Ran gently wrapped his arms around Jiang Xianzi's slender waist, handling her as if she were a fragile work of art.

Jiang Ruyi naturally sensed his unusual action and couldn't help but lift her eyes.

Her beautiful eyes examined Lu Ran's pupils while softly teasing him.

Lu Ran had excellent hearing, but he heard nothing at all.

He just watched her delicate lips open and close and then lowered his head to kiss her.

"Mmm..." Jiang Ruyi instinctively closed her eyes, basking in the deep joy in his heart.

If possible, she wished time could freeze at this moment forever.

But unfortunately,

when she opened her eyes again, she was still on Holy Spirit Mountain.

Next, Ran Sect would be heading to Sword Ridge Peak.

The main stronghold established by disciples of a second-class deity wouldn't know what awaited them all.

Would there be strong beings from the Heavenly Realm there?

It's said that when Lu Ran last led a team north to rescue Yan Shuangzi, the Peak Master of Sword Ridge Peak was already in seclusion.

It's been such a long time...

Has the Peak Master of Sword Ridge Peak advanced further?

"Mmm... Ran..."

"Hmm?" Lu Ran finally released her.

"This time, let's bring more people," Jiang Ruyi suggested softly, her forehead touching Lu Ran's.

"Of course."

"Before we set off, let's ask Elder Bai. If he feels uneasy, we'll postpone our departure."

Now, Bai Yanhui is an elder of Ran Sect.

Despite being an elder, specialization is key. Elder Bai mainly handles the ideological education of Ran Sect disciples and does not participate in other management affairs.

"Heh." Lu Ran laughed, "What's up with you, scholar master? You shouldn't make such mistakes, right?"

The predictions of Spellcaster Believer Bai Yanhui were all made from his personal perspective.

He might have a firm alliance with Ran Sect, but Elder Bai, being at Cloud Sea Cliff, could only predict the fortunes or misfortunes that might befall Cloud Sea Cliff.

When Lu Ran leads his team away from Cloud Sea Cliff to battle Sword Ridge Peak in the north, Elder Bai's predictions would be challenging to make.

"What mistakes?" Jiang Ruyi looked puzzled.

"Elder Bai's predictions are always based on himself, spreading out to the whole Cloud Sea Cliff..." Lu Ran was interrupted while speaking.

Jiang Ruyi brought her lips close to Lu Ran's ear and whispered, "Did I ever say he has to stay within the cliff?"

Lu Ran: "..."

Lady Ran... Is she planning to bring Elder Bai onto the battlefield?

It cannot be denied; this is indeed one way.

"What, can't bear to?" Jiang Ruyi asked with a smile.

After a brief consideration, Lu Ran spoke softly.

Elder Bai is not some flower kept in a greenhouse.

After joining Ran Sect and following a clear-sighted leader, Bai Yanhui lived peacefully at the cliff, taking up the role of a schoolteacher.

Before this, he was the leader and strategist of Sinless Valley!

He spent decades in the mountains, going through numerous large and small battles.

In the most recent war, Elder Bai personally led the army, maneuvering deftly despite an absolute disadvantage, embarrassing Luo Tiantu of Tiantu Mountain!

"Then let's bring him along," Lu Ran replied softly.

"Mm." Jiang Ruyi, rarely taking the lead, gently left a peck on Lu Ran's cheek.

Is it a reward?

One hour later, inside the Council Hall.

The members of Ran Sect gathered in full, yet the atmosphere wasn't as heavy as expected.

Instead, many warriors were eager for action!

The two generals of Feng Yan from the West Desolation Sect were inherently belligerent.

The Mad Immortal Guardian, a former Fierce Heavenly believer, was also a maniac for violence.

Not to mention, the grim-faced Deng Yuxiang.

Her best friend had endured such inhumane torture, of course, she loathed Sword Ridge Peak to the core!

The attitude of the first protector of the Ran Sect had undoubtedly set the tone for this mission.

Seated firmly behind the desk, Lu Ran scanned the assembled elite warriors below.

The hall was solemn, its aura astounding!

Even for those from the River Realm like Xuan Shuang and Liu Huo, breathing was difficult...

"Sword Ridge Peak, the base of the North Wind Sect." Lu Ran finally spoke, breaking the silence, "A behemoth."

Deng Yuxiang snorted coldly in her heart.

Lu Ran continued, "The only counterpart to it would be Thunder Mountain."

His gaze once again swept over the crowd, and he said gravely, "In the battle of Mist Rain Lake, we did play a crucial role, but we were backed by the Thousand Boat Alliance and aided by the Forbidden City."

Mentioning the Forbidden City, before advancing in rank, Lu Ran had specifically contacted He Qifeng, but the City Lord was busy and couldn't come over.

Lu Ran also learned that He Qifeng had already advanced to the second rank of the Sea Realm.

Whether personally or his city, both had developed quite well.

"I say these things to keep you from being arrogant and overconfident."

The hall was silent, listening to the Sect Master's exhortation.

Yet the young Sect Master wasn't stern for long before he joked, "If anyone deserves to be cocky, it should be me.

All of you, take a step back for me."

"Pfft~"

"Hahaha..." The atmosphere was instantly lightened, laughter echoing from below.

Jiang Ruyi, seated nearby, also chuckled helplessly.

When the hall returned to silence, Lu Ran said seriously, "We've been together day and night like family; I don't want to have to bury anyone after this battle.

Understood?"

"Yes!"

"Yes!" they all replied in unison.

Lu Ran nodded in satisfaction, "Before the meeting, I discussed with Mr. Cong Long and Elder Bai. For this expedition, the Ran Sect is divided into three teams... Nightmare Guardian."

"Present." Deng Yuxiang immediately stood up.

"You will lead Luo Ying and Wu Xiao as the vanguard."

"Understood!" Deng Yuxiang's eyes were bright.

Wu Xiao, the Great Martial Artist at the Sea Realm's peak, was so strong that even his face didn't matter!

In the entire Ran Sect, aside from the Sect Master, who could control Wu Xiao?

He's the absolute master of high-level situations!

Luo Ying is even more of a god of death!

Every time she draws her bow and notches an arrow, what she's holding isn't just a feathered shaft,

but the lives of hundreds or thousands of enemies...

"Dragon Guardian," Lu Ran continued.

"Sect Master." Yu Changsheng also stood up, awaiting orders.

"You will lead the two Feng Yan generals, and I'm assigning the Evil Shadow Guardian to you for better real-time communication."

"As you command." Yu Changsheng nodded immediately.

"The remaining team will be led personally by me and the Lady." Lu Ran named them one by one, "Mad Immortal Guardian, Elder Bai, Hall Master Jing, Hall Master Shangguan."

Upon hearing this, everyone stood up to receive their orders.

Jing Hong hadn't anticipated that she'd have a role in this journey either!

Recalling the previous attack on Sword Ridge Peak, her Divine Technique: Thunderclap Horn had truly caused the North Wind disciples immense suffering.

Looking at Xun Yifei, Lu Ran said, "Divine General Xun will hold the Cloud Sea Cliff, managing the rear during our expedition."

Xun Yifei stood and clasped his fists, agreeing solemnly.

Jiang Ruyi timely suggested, "Divine General is experienced at the cliff; I'll leave Xuan Shuang and Liu Huo to assist in the management there."

Please guide and properly train them, Mr. Xun."

"Yes, Lady."

From below, He Yingcai stepped forward softly, "Sect Master."

"Hmm?"

"I wish to join the expedition as well." He Yingcai volunteered, "During the battle against Thunder Mountain, I was constantly by the Lady's side..."

Lu Ran nodded but replied, "You've been at Cloud Sea Cliff for almost a month, haven't you?"

He Yingcai smiled, "I'll return after joining the Sect Master in destroying Sword Ridge Peak."

"Alright." Lu Ran also smiled, "With you by Ruyi's side, I'm more at ease."

After assigning roles, Lu Ran was full of confidence!

Counting himself, the Ran Sect's expedition comprised a total of 10 formidable warriors from the Yangyang Sea!

Plus several highly functional individuals from the River Realm, forming an army capable of world destruction.

Sword Ridge Peak, even if evenly matched with Thunder Mountain, so what?

Flatten it!

Flatten it all to hell!

Gouge out the eyes of my great Evil Shadow? Cut her arms?

Forced her to tear up the contract, then imprisoned her in a cold cave, torturing and tormenting her days on end?

Damn it!!

"Everyone go prepare, rest well!" Lu Ran's expression grew increasingly grim, "Whether in a day or a week, we're setting out for Sword Ridge Peak!"

"Yes!"

"Yes!" The unanimous and resonant voices filled the Council Hall.

Their spirit soared to the sky!

...

Chapter 669: on Sword Ridge Peak

The next day, early morning.

Lu Ran arrived at the council hall early, and was seated behind the desk, fiddling with the Cloud Sea Blade.

As his fingertips brushed over the blade, the Cloud Sea Blade occasionally trembled slightly.

Was it responding to its owner?

However, such a level of feedback could barely be defined as a "Divine Weapon Seed"; to become a true Divine Weapon, the Cloud Sea Blade still had a long way to go.

[Master, Elder Bai requests an audience.] Suddenly, a voice transmitted into his mind.

"Enter." Lu Ran laid the Cloud Sea Blade flat on the desk and looked towards the grand doors of the council hall.

An elderly figure, tall and thin with white hair, came into view.

Guided by the Divine-Earth Trace Sword, Bai Yanhui walked to the center of the hall and respectfully bowed: "This old man greets the Sect Leader."

"Elder Bai, how do you feel today?" Lu Ran went straight to the point.

"Please wait a moment, Sect Leader." Bai Yanhui raised his aging hands and expertly formed a seal.

An illusory Da Xia character "Heart" spread out from his body.

"Hoo~"

Lu Ran quietly observed the blind elder, seeing clearly how Elder Bai resembled a Caster's true form.

His white hair and beard, yet he was strikingly spirited.

In his long white robe, he indeed appeared immortal-like!

Eighty-something, full of wrinkles, yet giving off an incredibly handsome impression...

Perhaps, this is the legendary "atmosphere"?

"This old man feels peaceful and hasn't noticed anything amiss," Bai Yanhui slowly spoke.

"Oh?" Lu Ran tightened his grip on the handle.

Bai Yanhui respectfully bowed again: "I wish the Sect Leader victory in battle."

"Good!" Lu Ran felt a surge inside, unexpected, today was the perfect day to sweep clean Sword Ridge Peak!

He immediately ordered: "Evil Shadow, inform the warriors, gather in the council hall in half an hour!"

[Yes!]

Not even needing half an hour, merely a few minutes later, everyone had gathered in the council hall.

Lu Ran wasted no time, moving to the center of the hall, raising his hand to cast a spell.

"Hoo~"

The Ancient Bronze Mirror quietly appeared, rapidly changing nature, transforming into a floor-length mirror.

Deng Yuxiang took the lead, stepping into an icy, snowy landscape.

Snow fog filled the sky, obscuring the sun.

The biting wind akin to small knives blowing across Deng Yuxiang's face.

She vigilantly scanned the surroundings, immediately recognizing the place.

On their last attack on Sword Ridge Peak, they stood atop this snowy mountain, turning Sword Ridge Peak, twenty to thirty kilometers away, into a chaotic mess.

"Hm?" Deng Yuxiang softly voiced her doubt.

She looked northeast, but did not see the towering peaks piercing the clouds.

The North Wind Sect's base was indeed grand!

Not only were there four peaks in all directions, but the main peak even touched the sky, reaching the vast Cloud Sea.

Very conspicuous coordinates.

But now...

Where are the peaks?

"Ah?" Lu Ran was equally astonished, gazing at the former site of Sword Ridge Peak.

"I didn't transmit to the wrong location!" Lu Ran's expression turned sour.

Sword Ridge Peak... was gone?

After the last battle, the North Wind Sect suffered heavy losses, and simply relocated?

"You stay here, I'll go take a look." Lu Ran said in a deep voice.

"Conceal yourself." Jiang Ruyi did not stop him but advised.

"Mm." Lu Ran's figure quietly vanished.

With the Divine Technique·Wolf Concealment activated, any skill Lu Ran employed would cause divine power fluctuations.

However, despite the fluctuations, his invisibility remained.

Several simple flashes later, Lu Ran stood on the south side of the frozen Ice River.

He and the Big Nightmare had previously been searched by North Wind disciples in the Snow Forest back then, and were required to kneel and submit.

Now, the world has changed.

Lu Ran's gaze skimmed over the Ice River, looked north, and saw the collapsed mountains...

Last time, the Ran Sect members indeed caused damage to Sword Ridge Peak, but the mountains remained tall and firm, not destroyed so severely.

Now, the five peaks, including the main one, were all damaged!

Some peaks had collapsed.

Some still stood stubbornly, but had been cut off!

The cross-sections covered in thick snow, resembling "flat tops."

"Whoosh~"

Lu Ran's figure flashed again, stepping onto the collapsed mountain body.

"No way!" His heart sank.

He initially thought the North Wind Sect had moved.

But seeing the situation, Sword Ridge Peak clearly underwent a fierce battle!

Did another sect arrive first, annihilating Sword Ridge Peak ahead of Ran Sect?

Lu Ran pondered quickly.

Who could possess such power to destroy the North Wind Sect's base?

Sword One One Sect?

But that group of ruthless female sword immortals was afar!

Could it be the Mountain Lord Sect?

Both are Second-class God sects, and these two powerful cults have always been at odds.

In the Human World of Da Xia, Divine-Mountain Lord and Divine-North Wind's territories border each other, their two powerful divine sculptures are merely two hundred kilometers apart!

No weak god sect to act as a "buffer," unique to Da Xia.

In Holy Spirit Mountain, while Lu Ran hadn't encountered Mountain Lord disciples, he had pertinent information, knowing the Mountain Lord sect's base was also in the northeast of the continent.

Damn!

The more he thought, the worse Lu Ran's expression became.

After further searching, Lu Ran activated the transmission mirror again, and Ran Sect warriors filed out, quickly surveying the surroundings.

"There's no one here." Lu Ran said solemnly.

Anyone could tell, the Sect Leader's mood was bleak.

Deng Yuxiang, Yan Shuangzi, and others also looked grim.

Yu Changsheng suggested: "Sect Leader, let's conduct a detailed search, see if we can find some valuable information."

"Mm, don't act alone, be cautious." As he spoke, Lu Ran noticed Bai Yanhui among the crowd.

The old man's calm demeanor, was it because this expedition had no enemy?

"Pop~"

A pale golden fish soared upwards, golden beams quietly descended.

Yu Changsheng's expression turned grave as he discovered a corpse amidst the collapsed mountain.

"Damn it!"

Yu Changsheng secretly lamented; the scenario he least wanted to see appeared.

He cleared away the rubble to reveal a frozen body.

This was a middle-aged man dressed in white, with bloody holes on his body.

Such attire indicated that he was a disciple of the North Wind.

This face, frozen stiff, still bore an expression of terror as if he had seen something horrifying before he died.

"Sigh..." Yu Changsheng sighed heavily in his heart.

If there were no corpses here, everyone could believe that the Sword Ridge Peak had relocated entirely and destroyed its old site.

But the reality lay before them, buried within the collapsed mountainside were one corpse after another...

This once again confirmed that the Sword Ridge Peak was attacked!

In this way,

what will happen to the Evil Shadow Guardian...

The Sword Ridge Peak left too many scars on Yan Shuangzi.

Pain that pierces the heart and gnaws the bones, indelible.

After enduring endless humiliation, Yan Shuangzi finally amassed enough strength and, full of rage, came for revenge, only to find that her enemies were already annihilated.

How could her knot in the heart ever be untied?

Someone else slaughtered the Sword Ridge Peak, how could that count as her own revenge?

Though it's said that life has more disappointments than fulfillments.

Yet this filthy world has been far too cruel to Yan Shuangzi.

"Swish..."

Yu Changsheng pushed aside the frozen rubble and saw another disciple in white.

But this time, the corpse was only half intact.

Yu Changsheng looked up, gazing at Lu Ran standing by the pit's edge, their eyes meeting, sharing a mutual understanding.

"Whoosh~"

Yan Shuangzi gripped the crow blade fiercely, her figure vanishing.

Lu Ran turned his head, opened his mouth.

Looking at the desolate snowfield, he hesitated for a long time and finally didn't send a voice transmission.

This scene was an unbearable blow to Yan Shuangzi.

"What kind of wound is this?" Jiang Ruyi asked with furrowed brows.

Yu Changsheng lifted the corpse, examining the bloody holes closely.

From the side came the icy voice of Deng Yuxiang: "Knife wound, or sword wound."

"Hmm." Yu Changsheng nodded, looking at the other half of the corpse, which was cut in half; the incision was very smooth.

"Too few samples." Lu Ran casually activated the transmission mirror, instructing, "Hall Master Jing, go get Xiong Xiong and the others."

"Yes!" Jing Hong immediately walked into the mirror.

Deputy Hall Master Xiong, Shi Yong, and Shi Biao were all Shanwei believers, equipped with Perception Techniques: Mountain's Intent, capable of understanding surface and subsurface information.

In no time, Jing Hong returned with the trio, promptly beginning their work.

"I'll check on Shuangzi." Deng Yuxiang's voice remained cold.

"Let me." Lu Ran said deeply, "You're about to explode yourself, can't comfort anyone."

Deng Yuxiang suppressed the turmoil within, speaking softly: "Do you know where she is?"

Lu Ran nodded silently, flickering away.

When he reappeared, he was in the depression between two peaks.

Although most of the mountain had collapsed and the pointed peak was gone, the cave located in the middle and lower part of the steep cliff persisted stubbornly, like a stubborn illness.

This cave was once where Yan Shuangzi was imprisoned.

At that time, she was forced to tear up her contract, deprived of flying techniques, it was truly a dead-end.

Of course, even if she could fly, the prison guards watching her daily wouldn't let her escape.

Lu Ran floated slowly forward, landing at the cave entrance, and indeed saw a figure standing silently.

She was fearfully silent, gazing at the northwest corner of the cave, unmoved.

That was where she once lay, living without dignity, awaiting death.

"Whoosh!!"

The cold wind, as always, poured into the cave through the entrance.

Blowing over Yan Shuangzi, as if also blowing over the thin, emaciated woman in the corner.

The disheveled-haired woman did not shiver.

Not due to habit.

Before her physical death, her spirit had already been tortured to collapse, thoroughly destroyed.

"I." Lu Ran gently reminded, fearing this silent trapped beast would stab back.

Yan Shuangzi, like a sculpture, remained unresponsive.

Lu Ran stepped forward, reaching towards her back, but paused mid-air.

Full two seconds passed before his palm finally landed on her back.

Yan Shuangzi's body trembled slightly.

"Evil Shadow..." Lu Ran started to speak but abruptly stopped.

Only when he stood beside her, seeing her profile did he realize her face was already covered in tears.

No sound, no sobbing.

She just stood silently, looking at herself in the corner, battered, like a dead dog, motionless.

Scalding tears burst out uncontrollably.

She finally returned.

With a heart of vengeance, with those closest to her, she had come back to kill.

But the one who cruelly tortured her was no longer there.

Pain, despair.

Powerlessness.

The familiar feeling surged in, this place that once imprisoned her once again left her thoroughly scarred.

Why?

Why is the heavens treating me this way...

"Elder Xing is a Sea Realm Great Power, won't die so easily." A gentle voice came from beside her.

Yan Shuangzi turned her head slowly like a lost puppet.

Tear-blurred eyes could only see a vague outline.

Yan Shuangzi undoubtedly was a resilient woman.

At this moment, her near-broken appearance made Lu Ran's heart ache intensely.

"The peak masters and sect elders of Sword Ridge Peak are all Sea Realm, they won't die easily." Lu Ran softly repeated, "We dig out all the bodies, and you identify them one by one, okay?"

"What if...he really...is dead...?"

Lu Ran fell silent.

He gently embraced her, pressing her tear-drenched face against his shoulder, holding her by the nape.

Lu Ran's gentle eyes turned indescribably grim.

No way,

The North Wind Sea Realm disciples fly very fast.

They escape quickly.

Lu Ran kept comforting himself.

But if that old wretch was really dead, then his soul returned to the embrace of the North Wind.

North Wind...

North Wind!!

...

Chapter 670: Family Annihilation Mystery

The perception techniques of Shanwei Sect are indeed remarkable.

With the help of Xiong Xiong and others, the Ran Sect members found more than a hundred skeletons in the collapsed mountain!

Judging by the clothing, the majority clearly belong to North Wind disciples!

The servants in mixed, tattered clothes, in contrast, make up a smaller portion.

Such a scene sends chills down one's spine.

Even more terrifying is that most of the corpses retain expressions of terror from their final moments.

"What on earth happened at Knife Spine Peak..." Yu Changsheng mumbled.

"Sect Leader."

"Sect Leader." Several voices echoed in greeting.

Yu Changsheng turned his head to see Lu Ran and Yan Shuangzi walking over, one in front of the other.

The young man in the Emperor Robe had a face as stormy as water.

The woman behind him hung her head low, her face deeply hidden under the wide brim of her bamboo hat.

"Is this all of it?" Lu Ran asked in a deep voice.

Xiong Xiong, with his big shaved head, jogged over to seize the chance to perform: "Reporting to the Sect Leader, there are a total of 148 corpses.

There might be more around Knife Spine Peak, should I go search?"

Lu Ran thought for a moment and called out, "Nightmare."

Deng Yuxiang looked slightly worried at Yan Shuangzi, then stepped forward.

"Organize a team to protect Xiong Xiong and two others as they search in different directions," Lu Ran commanded.

"Yes." Deng Yuxiang immediately obeyed and swiftly assigned people.

Lu Ran turned and gestured for Yan Shuangzi: "Go take a look."

"Okay." Yan Shuangzi walked forward with her head low.

A deathly silence enveloped the world, broken only by the howling cold wind.

Blowing over this ghastly scene, it sent chills down one's spine.

Yan Shuangzi was very silent; Lu Ran even more so.

Undoubtedly, Knife Spine Peak had offended someone it shouldn't have.

Maybe it was just because of a dispute or a matter of the Divine Weapon or the servants' belonging.

Or perhaps... given the filthiness of Holy Spirit Mountain, both sides may not even have had intense conflict, only a simple encounter?

Such a colossal entity collapsed so tremendously.

Lu Ran couldn't help but think of his own situation.

The Ran Sect he took pride in, the seemingly impregnable Cloud Sea Cliff, could it also be obliterated in an instant?

"Sigh..." Lu Ran heavily sighed in his heart.

Jiang Ruyi walked over, her naturally lowered palm lightly brushed against the back of Lu Ran's hand through the sleeve.

Lu Ran turned his hand and grasped hers.

Jiang Ruyi softly said, "These dead believers seem to all be from Knife Spine Peak."

Lu Ran's heart sank.

This was a significant issue!

Knife Spine Peak had been annihilated, yet on a battlefield of this level, there was no trace of the opposing side?

Even the Sword One One Sect couldn't achieve this!

Lu Ran looked over the corpses, but indeed couldn't find any "Female Sword Immortal"-type believers.

As Jiang Ruyi mentioned, this place was filled with people in white or black tight attire, or dressed in mixed, tattered clothes of servants...

Suddenly, the sense of crisis in Lu Ran's heart surged!

This implies that the enemy had easily overwhelmed the North Wind Sect with absolute dominance.

Could this be?

Is this right?

Lu Ran suddenly realized his previous thinking was wrong.

The other side wasn't a powerful organization, possibly just a small team, or even a single person!

A word emerged in Lu Ran's mind—Heavenly Realm!

"Master." Yan Shuangzi flashed over, half-kneeling before Lu Jiang.

But Lu Ran was still immersed in the thought of "Heavenly Realm" and did not respond.

Seeing this, Jiang Ruyi asked, "What is it?"

"I saw 8 people from the Sea Realm." Yan Shuangzi's voice trembled slightly, "There's no sign of Elder Xing."

Jiang Ruyi asked, "Among these people, is there anyone not belonging to Knife Spine Peak?"

Yan Shuangzi strived to steady her emotions and replied in a deep voice, "I can't recognize everyone, but most people seem familiar, and they all belong to Knife Spine Peak."

"Return." Lu Ran blurted out, then hurriedly switched to voice transmission, [Big Nightmare! Call everyone back, quickly! In the other two search teams, who can I contact via voice transmission?]

[Cong Long, Mad Immortal.] Deng Yuxiang rarely heard Lu Ran so anxious and asked, [What's going on?]

[Come back, immediately!] Lu Ran didn't say much, immediately contacting the other two teams.

If the one who annihilated Knife Spine Peak was a Great Power of the Heavenly Realm...

What if the opponent was still nearby?

Lu Ran had directly interacted with a Great Power of the Heavenly Realm—Yun Qianzhou.

Alliance Leader Yun's seclusion is measured in "months," and from last November to this April, Yun Qianzhou was still in seclusion.

Almost half a year, and he hasn't shown himself!

[Lu Ran, we've found someone in the underground!] Just as Lu Ran was recalling Si Xianxian, he heard this kind of response.

Someone?!

Lu Ran's heart leapt into his throat, hurriedly sending a voice transmission: [Don't touch him, where are you?!]

[Huh?] Si Xianxian was a bit puzzled, [Yan God General has already pulled him out, he was trying to fly!]

Lu Ran paused for a moment, then immediately transmitted: [Bring him back, stop searching!]

During the exchange, he accidentally spotted Spellcaster Believer Bai Yanhui not far away.

Lu Ran finally remembered that the Ran Sect members had the "protection" of Mr. Bai during this mission.

He felt slightly relieved.

Indeed, a spellcaster believer at the peak of the River Realm couldn't possibly make a wrong prediction.

However, Lu Ran still did not intend to dance on the knife's edge; he planned to return to Cloud Sea Cliff after the soldiers returned by using the Transmission Mirror.

Soon, Yan God General returned to Lu Ran, dragging a small-statured youth with him.

"Thud"!

Gao Yunyan threw the frail youth in front of Lu Ran, his voice stern: "Be honest."

The Witch Crow Believers could not only fly, but also turn invisible and conceal their presence.

To capture him, Gao Yunyan even used the perception technique, Floating Sand, assisted by the flying Divine Weapon, Yellow Sand Axe, to intercept this little crow.

It was truly a lot of effort!

Honestly, if the youth wasn't tightly crushed by rubble and buried in soil, the Shanwei disciples might not have even sensed his physical outline.

"Alright, alright, I'm honest, I'm... Ran... Ran Shen?" The young man hurriedly spoke, but when he got up, he was met with the young man in the Emperor Robe.

The frail youth's expression shifted from terror, to confusion, to disbelief, and finally to intense joy.

This rapid expression change in just a few seconds reflected his intense psychological transformation.

"Ran... Ran Shen, it's you, it's really you..." the youth muttered, looking up at the young man in the Emperor Robe.

Since entering the mountain, Lu Ran had changed a lot.

His clothing style was ancient, his hairstyle altered too.

Most importantly, Lu Ran's strength had made a qualitative leap, the terrifying might of Yangyang Sea made him a different person from the youth in the River Realm in "Heavenly Pride."

Thankfully, Lu Ran's face wouldn't change.

Nor would Jiang Ruyi's face change.

When the frail youth saw the aloof fairy beside Lu Ran, he completely confirmed their identities.

To everyone's surprise, the young man sniffled and burst into tears:

"Ran Shen, wah... I... wah..."

The young man was very young, probably just in his early twenties, but he was at the River Realm, a formidable force in the human world.

Yet here in the Holy Spirit Mountain, he cried like a fragile child.

One could only wonder how much hardship he had suffered.

Gao Yunyan glanced momentarily at Lu Ran.

Judging by the expressions of the Sect Leader and his lady, they likely did not know this Witch Crow Believer.

But this person seemed like a wronged child who finally found his "home."

The influence of Da Xia's genius was truly astounding.

Despite being strangers with no prior interaction, the Witch Crow disciple's behavior showed his absolute trust in Lu Ran.

"Let's talk after we return." Lu Ran activated a Transmission Mirror.

The youth was sobbing uncontrollably, wiping his eyes with his arm, unable to suppress his emotions.

Lu Ran's gaze swept over the group, finally nodding towards Xue Fengchen.

Xue Fengchen got the message, striding forward to assist the frail youth into the mirror.

The group returned to Cloud Sea Cliff, directly stepping into the Council Hall.

"Give him a seat," Lu Ran said casually.

"Feng... Feng'er?" The youth just realized that the Sea Realm great power supporting him was also a familiar figure.

Previously, when the Ran Sect was searching, Feng Yan and Xue Tianjiao were assigned to different teams.

This led to the young man and Xue Tianjiao not crossing paths.

"Yes." Xue Fengchen patted the youth's shoulder with one large hand, seating him in a chair, "Stop crying, and answer Ran Shen."

Inside the room, the young man felt it difficult to breathe!

He looked around, seeing the impressive Council Hall.

One great power after another, each with different auras and styles, but sharing in common their terrifying might that could crush all beings.

The grand building seemed like a vast nether hall.

The young man could no longer cry, overwhelmed by both fear and awe, his body lightly trembling.

Among this group of earth-shattering great powers, the Pride of Da Xia remained the most remarkable.

The Black Gold Emperor Robe alone indicated that he was the leader of this group.

"What's your name?"

"Wu, Wu Huan."

"The Wu Huan from the nomadic tribes?" Lu Ran slightly raised an eyebrow.

Wu Huan nodded repeatedly: "I... my last name is Wu, my parents met under Wuhuan Mountain..."

"Quite romantic." Lu Ran smiled softly, "How long have you been in Holy Spirit Mountain?"

"Three months... or four months, I can't quite remember."

"Always at Sword Ridge Peak?"

Mentioning this, Wu Huan's face turned pained: "I was... caught by the North Wind believers, following their orders to work for them."

"Never thought of escaping?"

"They showed me the plight of the Weak God Disciples, living as slaves within Sword Ridge Peak, saying that this was what life on Holy Spirit Mountain was truly like."

Wu Huan's voice trembled, stammering: "They told me, I couldn't escape their ears, that there was no way out.

Even if I escaped, I'd be captured by other Strong God believers, facing an even worse fate.

Staying at Sword Ridge Peak, serving the master loyally, doing good work, would spare me some suffering, allowing me to barely... barely live..."

By the end, Wu Huan couldn't continue.

Lu Ran nodded silently, shifting the topic: "What happened at Sword Ridge Peak?"

Wu Huan's eyes gradually widened, filled with terror as if recalling something that had frightened him immensely:

"The Peak Master advanced, went mad, killing, continuously killing..."