

Dawn of a New Era

#Chapter 31: Holding Hands - Read Dawn of a New Era

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It's eight o'clock in the evening.

Chen Shouyi quickly replied to a text from Zhang Xiaoyue, and then the phone crashed again.

He looked frustrated, unable to stand this broken phone. Earlier, it crashed several times when he was ordering online, which he could understand, but this time sending a text, it crashed again.

He was no longer forgiving, nor nostalgic.

He took out the SIM card, and with a swift motion crushed the phone and threw it in the trash. He glanced at the Shell Lady, who was absorbed in watching cartoons, hesitated for a moment, then abandoned the thought of bringing her along.

After all, there was a phone store not far from the hotel, so it wouldn't take much time to go back and forth.

He walked out of the room, closed the door, and headed downstairs.

He quickly bought a mid-range priced phone.

However, upon returning, he saw a few police officers already standing at the hotel entrance.

Chen Shouyi's heart skipped a beat.

Has the Shell Lady been discovered?

His heart pounded wildly, but he maintained a calm face, looking indifferent as he approached the hotel.

In the past month, what he experienced was all sorts of strange, mysterious, and dangerous events that an average person might not face even in a lifetime. Not long ago, he had just killed two barbarians. In terms of mental resilience, he was way beyond what an ordinary teenager could measure.

"Wait, what are you doing here?" A policeman suddenly stopped him.

Chen Shouyi tried hard to act innocent: "I'm a student from the Fifth School. My family was worried I wouldn't sleep well because of the Martial Artist Apprentice exam preparation, so I'm staying here."

The policeman glanced at him, no wonder the boy gave him a subtle sense of pressure. His attitude improved significantly afterward:

"May I see your ID?"

Chen Shouyi immediately reached into his pocket, promptly taking out his ID from the wallet.

"Alright, go inside then!"

Just as he entered the hotel, six or seven scantily clad men and women were being driven out by the police, quickly squatting obediently in the hotel lobby. Many were pale and frantically making calls, trying their best to pull strings.

"Hey, Dad! I've been caught by the police."

"No, am I that kind of person? It's about that situation... please don't tell Mom."

...

"Honey, I'm about to go on a business trip.

"Yes, it's quite urgent, I have to leave right away... The boss can't do without me, you see... Maybe two or three days, or possibly five or six days."

"What noise? I'm just outside in the street!"

...

Oh, a police raid on illegal activities, how coincidental.

Watching these embarrassed figures, Chen Shouyi felt no glee at their misfortune.

Since they were inspecting the rooms, his wouldn't be overlooked.

Though he was anxious inside, his steps remained steady.

Upon reaching the second floor, he saw three people already at his room door.

One was a hotel staff member.

The other two were police officers.

At this moment, the staff member was holding a spare room card, preparing to open the door.

Chen Shouyi's heartbeat accelerated, and he hurried forward.

Once there, he didn't speak, standing calmly beside the others.

He knew the more he spoke now, the more it showed his inner tension, and the more it would raise suspicion.

The door opened, and one of the older policemen peered inside, taking a quick glance, seemingly finding nothing, then turned to Chen Shouyi: "Is this your room?"

"Yes, I live here!" Chen Shouyi hastily showed the room card.

The policeman checked it, confirmed the room number, and looked at him intently, saying: "Nice Barbie Doll."

Chen Shouyi forced out a slight dry chuckle in coordination.

The two officers suspected nothing and quickly moved on to the next room.

Once they left, he rushed inside, immediately seeing the Shell Lady in a princess dress, sitting motionlessly on the pillow, fully absorbed in watching cartoons, utterly unfazed by the recent commotion.

At a brief glance, she truly looked like a Barbie Doll.

Chen Shouyi exhaled deeply, unsure whether to compliment the Shell Lady for her "excellent acting" or to note her complete lack of vigilance.

He suddenly felt a dampness on his back, realizing he had broken into a cold sweat.

...

Thankfully, it was just a false alarm, though this hotel indeed seemed rather unsafe.

He could only remind himself to be even more cautious in the future and always bring the Shell Lady with him whenever he goes out.

He then remembered Zhang Xiaoyue's text, quickly took out the new phone, and found two new messages already.

"What are you doing?"

"Why aren't you replying?"

Chen Shouyi felt embarrassed and quickly composed a message to send her.

"Sorry, my phone just broke, went to buy a new one!"

After a full ten minutes, there was still no reply to the text message.

Chen Shouyi felt a little disappointed. He scrolled through his contacts, his finger kept sliding, and when he saw a familiar name, he hesitated for a moment, then pressed the call icon. After five or six rings, the phone was connected.

"Hello!"

The other person didn't speak, he could only hear a faint breathing sound and the noise around it.

The atmosphere seemed a bit awkward, this was the first time they had called each other since they met. For a moment, neither of them spoke.

After a while, Chen Shouyi finally spoke:

"I've been busy preparing for the Martial Arts Apprentice exam these past few days! I only have some free time in the evenings."

"I'm not anyone to you, you don't need to explain to me. Reply if you want, don't if you don't want to," Zhang Xiaoyue said softly.

Although there was a bit of a temper in her tone, it was also gentle and soft-spoken.

At this moment, Zhang Xiaoyue was shopping with her girlfriends, covering the microphone, her face flushed.

Chen Shouyi pretended to suddenly understand and said, "I get it!"

"What do you get?"

"I've suddenly realized you're a very realistic person?" Chen Shouyi said.

Zhang Xiaoyue dodged her friends' teasing, feeling a bit angry. This word was not a good one for a girl:

"Chen Shouyi, tell me, how am I realistic?"

"Aren't you just my class monitor? I just prepared to suspend my studies, and you've decisively drawn a line with me, isn't that being realistic?" Chen Shouyi circled around a big twist.

"Alright, even so, we're only class monitor and classmate, after all," Zhang Xiaoyue said with a pursed smile.

"Isn't the class monitor supposed to care for classmates like the warm spring breeze?"

"So how would you like me to be kind?"

"For example..."

"For example what?" Zhang Xiaoyue's heart couldn't help but pound, she said softly.

"Where are you now?" Hearing the slightly hurried breathing of the other person, Chen Shouyi felt an unprecedented strong impulse.

"Shopping!" Zhang Xiaoyue said, then added a sentence: "With my former middle school classmates."

"Give me the address, I'll come over right away."

...

Chen Shouyi hung up the phone, feeling excited, he waved his fist.

Looking at the Shell Lady still engrossed in watching cartoons, in pursuit of his own happiness, he had no choice but to let her down.

He took the remote control and turned off the TV. Before she could protest, Chen Shouyi blocked all her dissatisfaction with a small glass bead.

Then he happily grabbed the Shell Lady, tied her up with a rope again, and sealed her mouth.

...

After Zhang Xiaoyue hung up the phone, Cheng Juan was surprised: "Xiaoyue, be honest, when did you and Chen Shouyi start hooking up?"

She was a girl that could only score a seven, but her good figure made up for it. A loose short-sleeved T-shirt was almost turned into a tight fit by her, practically bursting out.

"What hook-up, that's so unpleasant, we're just ordinary friends!" Zhang Xiaoyue covered her slightly hot face and said coquettishly.

"Why are you blushing so much for an ordinary friend, should I mimic your tone just now? I want to see what kind of person has hooked up our former class flower."

"Don't say anything nonsensical then!" Zhang Xiaoyue said shyly and anxiously, she had never been so attracted to a boy, she always felt a bit anxious and uncertain.

"So you were the proactive one!" Cheng Juan opened her mouth in surprise, becoming even more curious. She wanted to see what kind of guy had the charm to captivate Zhang Xiaoyue.

Very soon, the two of them saw Chen Shouyi coming over.

Cheng Juan's first impression of Chen Shouyi was that his skin was really good, and then that he was calm, a kind of calmness not common among peers, a feeling she had only seen among her elders.

In fact, the truly surprised one was Zhang Xiaoyue; only she knew how much Chen Shouyi had changed, but being used to keeping her thoughts to herself, she didn't ask further.

Cheng Juan didn't have the awareness of a third wheel, persistently asking questions: "Are you in the same class as Xiaoyue?"

"Are you applying to the Martial Arts Academy?"

"Why are you carrying a briefcase?"

Chen Shouyi nodded sometimes and answered other times, like explaining about the briefcase.

Fortunately, it wasn't long before Cheng Juan was called away by a phone call, and the atmosphere suddenly quieted down.

"That's just how she is, straightforward and rough," after a while, Zhang Xiaoyue explained softly.

Today, she was wearing a white blouse and a black pleated skirt, revealing two sections of lotus-like calves. Her slightly immature face still bore a lingering blush, looking charmingly cute.

"It's nice, but I prefer a quieter type. My sister is already noisy enough."

"You have a sister? How come I've never heard you mention it?"

"You never asked!"

As they walked aimlessly, chatting in low voices, it was as if both had a volcano ready to erupt inside them; their words were deliberately restrained.

Unconsciously, they walked closer and closer. Chen Shouyi smelled the faint fragrance from the girl, and that small hand within reach; he seemed to hear his own heart pounding intensely in his chest, and his palms were slightly sweaty.

His hand reached out, then quickly retracted, repeatedly.

Finally, he gently took Zhang Xiaoyue's hand.

Zhang Xiaoyue's whole body instantly tensed, she made a weak attempt to pull away, lowering her head, her cheeks blushing.

Chapter 32: Chapter 32: Rapid Progress

It seems there is a strong, joyful emotion filling Chen Shouyi's entire chest.

Zhang Xiaoyue's little hand is tender and smooth, damp with sweat all over.

There are his sweat, and hers as well.

The conversation suddenly stopped, leaving the atmosphere tranquil, no one spoke, and everything seemed unspoken.

Zhang Xiaoyue only felt dizzy, as if her entire body was burning, light and floating as if standing on mist. Her footing lost its grip, not knowing how long she walked or where she was heading. At such moments, who would care, one wishes never to reach the end.

Only hearing Chen Shouyi's voice brought her back to reality: "Right, I haven't asked how I did in the monthly exam?"

"You're still concerned about the monthly exam, aren't you planning to take a break from school?" Zhang Xiaoyue's rapid heartbeat slowly calms down.

"After all, it's my exam, the result of a month's hard work."

"Not bad, you ranked 28th!" Zhang Xiaoyue covered her mouth and laughed: "I checked last year's end-of-term grades at the class teacher's office, you improved by one in class, and eight in the grade."

Chen Shouyi felt a bit embarrassed. He thought he had worked harder than before, yet he only improved by one rank.

But thinking about it, as he worked hard, others also didn't slack off. Especially after entering senior year, everyone inevitably feels a bit of urgency.

He decisively stopped continuing this topic.

He looked at the girl's face, as exquisite as porcelain, and petal-like lips, seemingly within reach, causing a stir in his heart.

"I suddenly remembered the question you asked earlier?"

"What question?" Zhang Xiaoyue tilted her head.

Chen Shouyi bore his wildly beating heart: "Didn't you ask on the phone earlier 'how do you feel about intimacy?'"

"Isn't this enough, what more do you want?" She gently pinched Chen Shouyi, expressing discontent.

Chen Shouyi stopped walking, turned around to stand face to face with her. She seemed to sense something, her heart fluttered like a deer, head shyly lowered, and then lifted again, her watery big eyes looking at Chen Shouyi, both timid and daring.

"Not enough!" After saying this, he lowered his head and leaned in.

The girl's eyelashes fluttered uneasily, breathing huffed, yet she didn't evade, her lips warm with a trace of heat, sultry and soft, her slender body gently shivering.

The two awkwardly moved, and after a while, finally parted.

"You bit me!" Zhang Xiaoyue said, overwhelmed with shyness.

"Oh! Sorry, sorry!" Chen Shouyi was overwhelmed with joy, losing his previous steadiness.

After all, he's just a seventeen-year-old boy, facing his first kiss, inevitably clumsy.

"Now satisfied?" Zhang Xiaoyue teased.

Chen Shouyi nodded repeatedly, somewhat overwhelmed with happiness.

"Then in the future, will you bully me?" Zhang Xiaoyue raised her head expectantly and asked.

"No! Of course not!" Chen Shouyi quickly promised.

...

The young couple immersed in the joy of first love, completely unaware of the passage of time.

Only a call from Zhang Xiaoyue's mother urging her to return home startled them.

Chen Shouyi escorted Zhang Xiaoyue to the gate of her community.

Returning with light steps, heart filled with burning passion, eager to shout a few times, and announce to the world.

When Chen Shouyi returned to the hotel, opened the briefcase, and prepared to release Shell Lady, he found she was already asleep.

She seemed to be dreaming, with her small face smiling broadly, occasionally muttering a few words.

He quickly and quietly took her out, placed her on the bed, and as soon as he untied the bandage, she awoke. She sleepily opened her eyes, seeing she was back in familiar surroundings.

Quickly tearing off the tape from her mouth, she sat up, patting the quilt, and energetically demanded to watch cartoons:

"Prepared! Prepared! Prepared!"

Chen Shouyi was in a good mood and didn't argue with her, took the remote, and turned on the TV.

Meanwhile, he continued responding to Zhang Xiaoyue's text while continuing to study the universal language.

...

Early next day, he habitually opened the attribute panel.

Other attributes had not changed, but Will had increased by 0.2 points, reaching 11.6.

This was obviously related to the incident with the Barbarian yesterday.

His heart felt little waves, not expressing any joy, as Will seemed to be the least useful of all attributes, apart from improving one's psychological quality and coping with extreme situations, it served no other purpose.

In contrast, he valued other attributes more, as they manifested strength more straightforwardly.

Unfortunately, since his body was transformed by the Book of Knowledge, apart from perception, no other physical attributes had improved, and the effect of Martial Arts 36 had become less noticeable.

...

The alternate world has forty hours each day, and it's still in a dangerous night there; he doesn't want to take risks there.

Carrying the briefcase with the Shell Lady, he once again went to the Archery Dojo.

According to routine, he searched through the experts inside, contemplated them in the Memory Space for a while.

Then he took a war bow and continued to shoot arrows.

Upon practicing, he immediately felt a difference from last time, not only did his archery not become awkward, it became more precise, every time he was about to shoot, he had a vague sense, foreseeing whether he would hit.

He couldn't help but recall some experiences shared online by archery experts; when they shoot, they don't deliberately aim at the bullseye, they shoot as they draw, relying solely on feeling and intuition.

He pondered inwardly.

This so-called "feeling" should be "perception," right?

Almost identical to how he feels now.

He immediately changed the way he was shooting, perhaps too deliberately, and at first, this feeling was hard to grasp.

Out of ten arrows, six or seven missed the target, even worse than before.

But slowly, he found the knack.

He gradually abandoned the distractions in his mind, becoming tranquil, with no thoughts at all.

"Thunk! Thunk! Thunk!"

Arrows swiftly struck the targets, making dull noises.

"Thunk!"

Finally, an arrow directly hit the bullseye.

Then the second, third...

His shooting speed increased, fetching arrows, nocking, drawing, and shooting all in one smooth motion, invigorating.

Grabbing the quiver hanging from his waist, he found all three quivers were empty.

He looked at the target ahead only to see it densely packed with arrows, resembling a porcupine, with a small half directly centering the target, basically shot later on.

"Little brother, good archery!"

Chen Shouyi heard a voice, turned around, and realized a crowd had gathered to watch.

This is the treatment reserved for experts, now he also received it.

Though there were only three people, incomparable to the real experts, he was acknowledged.

Chen Shouyi felt joy inside but said humbly, not conversing much.

Reclaimed arrows, exchanged the thirty-meter target for fifty meters, and continued practicing.

The distance increased nearly double, archery accuracy immediately declined.

Initially, in ten arrows, only one or two directly hit the bullseye.

But the more he shot, the previous feeling gradually returned, by practicing for two hours, he could basically hit the target every time.

Meanwhile, the number of watchers expanded from three to five and quickly grew to ten.

Chen Shouyi paid no mind to the spectators; it's the atmosphere here, the more viewers, the greater the glory.

...

At noon, he had lunch at the Archery Dojo's cafeteria, rested a while, and began practicing moving targets.

Moving targets, it's his first time practicing.

Chen Shouyi thought practicing would be difficult, given compared to stationary targets, moving targets posed an entirely different challenge.

But once he started, he found not much difficulty.

No need to deliberately calculate the trajectory of moving targets, just casually nocking and shooting, relying on the feeling in his heart, he naturally hit the bullseye, the high perception showing its full potential in archery.

When he left the dojo in the evening, he had accumulated a crowd of over twenty watching him.

...

Sitting in the taxi, he opened the attribute panel.

Found archery had gone from entry-level (10) to proficient (3).

Chen Shouyi quietly clenched his fist at the backseat, now confident in passing the Martial Arts Apprentice assessment.

PS: Sorry for being late today. Please give me a recommendation.

Chapter 33: Chapter 33: Tutoring

"Mom!... It's not cold at all! No need for my little sister to bring me clothes."

At the street barbecue stall in the evening, the boss had just served him some skewers when Chen Shouyi received a call from Mrs. Chen.

"I still have enough money, and food and accommodation are covered, so it doesn't cost much."

"It's fine over here, Teacher takes good care of me!"

"I'm making a lot of progress! I should be able to pass the assessment after it's over."

Chen Shouyi was telling all sorts of lies while eating the skewers.

At this moment, a dispute suddenly started nearby, and Chen Shouyi frowned, quickly covered the mouthpiece, walked to the side, and continued his phone call.

By the time he hung up and returned, the two groups had already started fighting.

The table he was sitting at had been knocked over, and skewers were scattered all over the ground, making Chen Shouyi's heart tighten. Fortunately, he soon found that his briefcase was still in its original place and hadn't been trampled on.

Otherwise, the consequences would have been unimaginable.

He quickly pushed away the few people blocking him, grabbed the briefcase, and turned to leave this place of trouble.

But many times, when you don't want to cause trouble, trouble finds you.

A young man whom he had just pushed stumbled a few steps and immediately flew into a rage: "You bastard, courting death, are we?"

As he spoke, he grabbed a beer bottle from a nearby table and smashed it towards Chen Shouyi's back.

Sensing something flying towards him from behind, Chen Shouyi instinctively shifted his body, and the beer bottle brushed past his side, shattering on the street.

Seeing this, Chen Shouyi also got angry.

A beer bottle, while neither too heavy nor too light, weighs at least a pound.

If an ordinary person were hit, they would at least be left with a bruise, and a severe hit could put them down for days.

He turned back and swiftly approached the hostile-looking young man, grabbing his face with his left hand and forcefully pressing him to the ground, his head hitting the concrete heavily. Before he could struggle, his eyes rolled back as he fainted instantly.

This commotion was like hitting a hornet's nest, and several youths around started cursing and charged towards him.

Chen Shouyi suddenly delivered a spinning kick.

A strong young man attempting to ambush him was kicked hard in the head, causing him to stagger back a few steps, sit heavily on the ground, froth at the mouth, and unable to stand up again.

This young man had learned some Martial Arts and was quite fierce in the brawl, often taking on three at once with ease, but was now downed in one blow.

The fighting crowd around him, seeing such clean and efficient tactics, all felt a chill, and both sides instinctively stopped their brawling.

In fact, even Chen Shouyi probably didn't realize that ever since killing two barbarians yesterday, a hint of savagery had unconsciously crept into his nature.

Fortunately, he still had his rationality, controlling his strength without daring to use excessive force. Otherwise, with his Martial Artist-level power, no one could withstand his blow.

He swept a cold gaze over them and wherever his eyes landed, the youth around him retreated, feeling icy cold.

Then Chen Shouyi quickly walked a few steps, leaving the area promptly.

If he didn't leave soon, the police would be arriving.

...

After finishing the interrupted dinner at a noodle shop, and waiting until past six o'clock, Chen Shouyi called his tutoring teacher.

"Hello, Teacher Wang, I'm Chen Shouyi. We arranged for today, are you available now?"

"You can come over!"

...

Shanshui District is considered a mid-to-high-end community in Dongning City, with beautiful surroundings and excellent greenery.

After getting off, Chen Shouyi searched for a while before finding Building 12.

The door was opened by a middle-aged woman with enduring charm; she looked Chen Shouyi up and down and immediately smiled: "You must be Xiao Chen, Ruyue is in the training room, come in!"

It turns out the beautiful teacher's name is Wang Ruyue.

Seeing a resemblance in her features to the beautiful teacher, he immediately understood this was her mother, and quickly said:

"Hello, Auntie!"

"What a polite child!" the middle-aged woman laughed.

A pair of paper slippers was already placed by the door; he took off his shoes and walked inside.

Once inside, he realized the house was large, with just the living room spanning thirty to forty square meters, and its decor being trendy and stylish.

After quickly scanning the room, Chen Shouyi shifted his gaze back.

By now, the middle-aged woman had already opened the door to the training room for him.

Entering, he saw the training room was about fifty to sixty square meters, featuring a weapons rack and a human model, with nothing else inside.

At this moment, the beautiful teacher was holding a real sword, persistently practicing her power generation.

Her movements were slow and gentle, with her muscles flowing like water, as if she was intentionally adjusting her power.

"Leave your slippers outside, close the door, and come in barefoot!"

"Alright." Chen Shouyi promptly took off his slippers, wearing only socks, stepping on the soft, plastic floor.

"Go get a wooden sword!" Wang Ruyue glanced at him and said casually.

Today's beautiful teacher gave Chen Shouyi a completely different feeling, her tone carrying a hint of coldness, unlike her gentle and kind demeanor in the training class.

He felt that perhaps this was her true self, and the image in the training class was just a professional facade.

Chen Shouyi went to choose a hardwood sword and stood aside, waiting for her practice to end.

Fortunately, he didn't have to wait long before she stopped, picking up a wooden sword from the weapons rack herself.

"Come, attack me!"

For a moment, Chen Shouyi thought he had misheard, his mouth agape in surprise: "Using wooden swords, that's too dangerous."

A wooden sword isn't like the safety swords in the training class; with the terrifying explosive speed of Martial Arts, it's not much different from a real sword when piercing the body.

"The first lesson I'll give you is to understand what real combat is; only danger can tap into one's potential."

"Come on!"

"Are you sure!" Chen Shouyi confirmed once more.

"So young and already so much nonsense, I told you to attack, so attack! You really think you can hurt me," Wang Ruyue said impatiently.

"I'll really go for it!"

Provoked, Chen Shouyi moved, shifting instantly like a phantom, sliding forward with a lunge, and thrusting like lightning.

Wang Ruyue slightly tilted her body, dodging Chen Shouyi's attack, swiftly turning to thrust downward, the wooden sword striking towards Chen Shouyi's shin with lightning speed.

Chen Shouyi lifted his foot, stepping back to easily avoid it.

He realized that fighting with wooden swords felt significantly different compared to when wearing a Protective Suit and wielding a Safety Sword.

Each move felt nerve-racking, worrying about losing control of his power and injuring the opponent, while fearing he'd inadvertently risk his life.

The wooden swords pierced the air with "whoosh" "whoosh" sounds.

Seeing Chen Shouyi's ease in battle, Wang Ruyue pursed her lips, her expression growing colder, gradually unleashing her full power.

In no time, they had exchanged over a dozen blows.

Their speed increased, with the movement of the wooden swords almost impossible for an ordinary person to discern, each move a fleeting shadow.

At this moment, Chen Shouyi felt immense pressure, losing his initial ease. His skin prickled with tension, clearing all distracting thoughts from his mind. As for the naïve idea of holding back, it had already been abandoned; he was giving it his all.

He found that compared to these seasoned Martial Arts Apprentices, apart from having a superior physique, his technical skills still lagged significantly.

Even with the same thrust, and identical basic steps, the opponent stabbed faster, with more agile footwork.

Finally, with a "pop," the two wooden swords collided.

The wooden swords shattered, spraying splinters in all directions.

ps: Requesting recommendations ah ah