

Dawn of a New Era

#Chapter 71: Setback - Read Dawn of a New Era Chapter 71: Setback

Chapter 71: Chapter 71: Setback

"Operator 8723 at your service."

"Is this the Changmen Town police station?"

"Yes, do you have something to report?"

"I just returned from Dongning City and discovered a spatial passage there, located in the parking lot of an abandoned building near the intersection of East School Street and Ningnan Street in Dongning City. I hope you can promptly alert the City Government of Dongning."

"Information has been recorded. Thank you very much for your noble act. According to current regulations, citizens who discover hidden spatial passages will receive a reward from the local government. Please come to the police station either now or tomorrow for personal information registration, and once the result is confirmed..."

"Hello! Hello! Are you still there?"

Chen Shouyi decisively hung up the phone and, listening to the hum of the generator, quickly exited the empty call center.

The call center was established after the power cut to facilitate citizens in making calls, but it can only dial certain public service numbers such as police, hospital, bank, and government agencies. It has always been relatively quiet here.

He walked down the street, feeling a bit unwilling yet somewhat relieved.

As if a heavy burden had been lifted, he no longer needed to worry and carry pressure every day.

He looked up at the dim yellow sun and sighed.

Sacrifice when necessary. With sacrifice, there is gain!

...

Time flew by, and ten peaceful days passed.

He mostly stayed at home, diligently training. During these days, his physique, perception, agility, and will each improved by 0.1, while his strength increased by 0.2 points.

All attributes have now become.

Strength: 13.3

Agility: 13.3

Physique: 13.9

Intelligence: 12.6

Perception: 11.3

Will: 12.1

The highest is still physique, with agility and strength ranking second and third.

Compared to ten days ago, his overall strength improved by more than three levels. If he were to fight that man in black again, Chen Shouyi believed he could easily kill him in just two or three rounds.

...

Early in the morning, Chen Shouyi hurried home with a newspaper.

"Dad, Mom, power has been restored in Ningzhou, and the newspaper specifically mentioned that there will be a Martial Arts Apprentice examination for all of Ningzhou's jurisdiction in two days."

The social situation is gradually improving. According to today's newspaper information, not only Ningzhou but also all first- and second-tier cities across the country have gradually restored power. This means that as long as I pass the Martial Artist Apprentice examination, I can proceed to Hedong City, the provincial capital, for the Martial Artist examination.

Once I pass the Martial Artist examination, our family won't have to hide and live in fear anymore.

"Is your identity okay?" Mrs. Chen worried about exposure issues.

"Mom, don't worry, when have you ever seen us get wanted, and we can't hide forever either," Chen Shouyi reassured.

Mrs. Chen and Chen Dawei exchanged glances, feeling heavy-hearted.

Yes, they might not care, but it's just this life for them anyway. However, the children are still young, and they can't always live like this.

Finally, Chen Dawei sighed and said, "Then go, be careful, and run immediately if anything seems wrong."

...

The examination is in the morning two days from now, and the schedule is quite tight. Chen Shouyi didn't delay, went back to his room to pack some luggage, and prepared to go to Ningzhou.

His parents and Chen Xingyue saw him off at the yard gate:

"Brother, stay safe," Chen Xingyue said. Given her brother's martial artist strength, she naturally wasn't worried about whether he could pass, as long as there were no identity issues, it was a sure thing.

"Don't worry, you don't need to see me off. Oh, if everything goes well, I may have to go to Hedong City for the Martial Artist examination and might not come back for a while.

While I'm not here, be careful, especially Xing Yue, try to stay in!"

"I understand, brother," Chen Xingyue said, "No need to worry about the house, I got it covered."

"It's been a bit chilly these past few days, make sure to cover up at night to avoid catching a cold," Mrs. Chen advised.

"Got it, Mom!"

In fact, with his current physique, it's almost impossible for him to catch a cold.

Mrs. Chen wanted to remind a few more things, but Chen Shouyi suddenly made a silencing gesture.

Soon, the landlady and her daughter came out carrying large and small bags. Seeing Chen Shouyi and the others, she smiled and asked, "Oh, are you heading out too?"

"Yes, our son is going to Ningzhou," Chen Dawei replied cheerfully.

"What a coincidence, my daughter is also going to Ningzhou for the Martial Arts Apprentice examination. They can be companions. I originally wanted to accompany her, but this girl insisted on going alone, it's really worrying."

The landlady said so, but there was a faint pride in her words.

She certainly had reasons to be proud. Not just the whole town, but even the whole city, how many at her daughter's age are going for the Martial Arts Apprentice examination?

At this moment, Chen Shouyi instinctively looked at his mom and saw her suddenly showing a subtle smile. He had a bad feeling.

Sure enough...

"Ah, all the same. When my daughter sat for the Martial Arts Apprentice examination, she didn't want me to accompany her either. She quietly passed the exam, which made me nervous for half a day. Now my son is going for the examination, and I don't feel anything!"

The landlady's smile stiffened slightly, and after a long pause, she asked, "How old is your daughter? So young and already passed?"

"She's already fifteen, born in June. If she weren't already guaranteed admission to the Beijing Martial Arts Academy, I would want her to properly take a university entrance exam. With all the sword dancing and gun twirling all day, it's hard for her to find a partner in the future."

This age is actually five months younger than her precious daughter, leaving the landlady silently devastated, only able to dryly laugh along, "You can't say that, the Beijing Martial Arts Academy is a top-notch school, how many are envious! If she becomes a martial artist, you can enjoy a life of leisure."

"It's not that easy to become a martial artist. If she can find a job at the academy as a Martial Arts Teacher after graduation, I'd be satisfied."

Her daughter blushed slightly, glanced at the indifferent Chen Xingyue nearby, and tugged at her mom, "Mom, stop talking. I'm leaving."

...

The girl carried a suitcase, face set, quickly walking along the street, her ponytail swinging back and forth.

Chen Shouyi followed leisurely behind.

She wore a white cotton T-shirt, a deep blue pleated skirt, white long socks, and blue and white sneakers, looking refreshingly youthful and energetic.

Before long, they arrived at a bus station, bought tickets, and sat waiting for the bus.

Feeling awkwardly uncomfortable with the silence, as they were going to travel together, Chen Shouyi broke the silence, "Let's get acquainted, my name is Chen Shouyi, and yours?"

"Zhou Xue!" The girl responded coldly, not looking at him.

"Still in first year of high school?"

"Yes!"

"Same as my sister," Chen Shouyi remarked.

The atmosphere became silent again.

Indeed, an aloof girl, Chen Shouyi thought to himself.

The bus arrived soon, and Zhou Xue immediately stood up to queue for boarding.

Chen Shouyi boarded the bus and sat beside her.

"Can you sit elsewhere?" Zhou Xue asked coldly.

"This is my seat!" Chen Shouyi showed his ticket as a gesture.

"There are so many empty seats on the bus, you can sit anywhere!"

"Alright then," Chen Shouyi felt slightly rejected, responding helplessly.

He stood up, found another seat nearby, sat down, opened his briefcase stealthily, and looked at the Shell Lady, who was sleeping soundly clutching her beloved crystal ball.

Then he zipped it back, adjusted the seat, leaned back, and closed his eyes to rest.

Chapter 72: Chapter 72: Steam Factory

Zhou Xue glanced at him for a moment, then took out a novel and started reading by herself.

The vehicle soon started moving.

This car was obviously somewhat old, and the engine sounded like an asthmatic patient gasping for breath, making a "ku-tong ku-tong" noise, which made Chen Shouyi worry if the car might break down halfway.

Fortunately, that didn't happen.

After lying down for about half an hour, he opened his eyes and looked out the window.

Outside was an industrial area, lined with chimneys belching large amounts of white smoke.

Pingqiu City is not far from Ningzhou, and this area is already considered the outskirts of Ningzhou.

Compared to the still-depressed Pingqiu City, traffic on the roads here had somewhat recovered, though still far less than before.

"Hey boss, I heard some factories here are still using steam engines?" someone in the car asked the driver.

"The ones that are smoking, mostly are!"

Currently, the electricity in Ningzhou can only supply residential areas and a portion of the industrial zones. Most factories have to generate their own power or switch to steam engines, modifying their machinery. I hear there's government subsidies in this area, and interest-free loans are available too," the driver said.

"This really is..." The passenger didn't know how to express their feelings, "I thought it was fake."

"Actually, steam engines aren't so bad. You see, thermal power plants and nuclear power plants still use steam turbines to generate electricity, and modern factory steam engines aren't like the old ones.

At least they're subcritical steam engines; one steam engine can drive hundreds or even thousands of heavy machine tools. Much more cost-effective than generating your own power!"

Having been a high school senior, Chen Shouyi had a rough understanding of what subcritical steam engines were.

During the heating and vaporization process, with the increase of pressure inside the boiler, the saturation temperature of water also increases, causing vaporization efficiency to decrease. When the pressure rises to a certain level, steam becomes saturated and no longer vaporizes, which results in steam and water having the same density, reaching a critical state.

If the pressure and temperature continue to rise, water fully vaporizes into steam, with no distinction between steam and water — water is steam and steam is water, reaching a supercritical state.

Subcritical means approaching the critical state; this is already considered a highly mature technology in modern times.

As for current thermal and nuclear power plants, they mostly use more advanced supercritical units, or even ultra-supercritical ones.

However, even the thermal efficiency of subcritical steam engines is already extremely high, far beyond the steam engines of a hundred years ago.

Though understanding it is one thing, looking at the chimneys outside, Chen Shouyi still felt a heaviness in his heart.

This is human civilization slowly declining.

Electricity is ultimately humanity's most convenient and cleanest energy source.

If the power from the other world continues to invade, and electricity becomes completely unusable, not only will the prosperous and convenient era of information electrification become history, but all industries, including metallurgy and chemistry, will also suffer serious decline.

The entire world will become dark.

Looking at the chimneys belching white smoke outside the window, Chen Shouyi felt as if he were seeing the twilight of a civilization on the verge of downfall.

An inexplicable feeling of melancholy arose in Chen Shouyi's heart.

...

The car continued for half an hour and finally arrived at the station.

Chen Shouyi and Zhou Xue got off together; stepping out of the station, they saw quite a few taxis outside:

"Want to share a ride?" Chen Shouyi asked.

Zhou Xue nodded, saying, "Yeah, let's share a ride to save money!"

After all, she was a fifteen-year-old girl who probably hadn't been to Ningzhou.

Of course, he hadn't either, but he was much bolder. He put his backpack in the trunk and got into the driver's seat:

"Boss, take us to the Martial Arts Assessment Center."

The taxi quickly started moving, "I've taken several rides today, all heading to the Martial Arts Assessment Center."

"Are there a lot of people?" Chen Shouyi asked.

"Lots! Most are coming from other places. I heard they'll lower the assessment standards this time!" The driver, seemingly well-informed, said.

"Really?" Zhou Xue immediately perked up upon hearing this, and quickly asked.

"Definitely. Think about it, with so many people coming, how long would it take to test them all one by one? They'll surely relax the standards then."

Having no confidence about the assessment, Zhou Xue couldn't help showing a hint of joy at hearing this good news.

Chen Shouyi paid no attention to whether this time would be difficult or easy, and then asked:

"Are there any hotels nearby?"

"There are quite a few, but I'd guess they're all full by now!"

"Let's check it out over there. We'll decide then."

They soon arrived at the destination.

"That building up ahead is the Martial Arts Assessment Center, a total of one hundred and twenty-five."

"So pricey!" Zhou Xue exclaimed from the back.

"What do you expect? Fuel costs have doubled, and driving consumes more fuel now. Look, I even used the meter." The driver said defensively.

Chen Shouyi didn't argue, he directly took out his wallet and paid.

After receiving the change, he took out their luggage from the trunk for her to get off.

"Way too expensive! I should've taken the bus instead." Zhou Xue murmured as she picked up her luggage, her face looking a bit distressed. She then took out a wallet, "Here's seventy yuan. You owe me eight yuan and fifty cents."

Chen Shouyi took it and put it in his wallet, saying:

"I don't have change, so I'll owe you first."

"You just took five yuan in change from the driver, give it to me first."

Chen Shouyi opened his wallet again, indeed finding a five yuan note mixed in, and handed it over, "Here you go!"

"Then you still owe me three yuan and fifty cents," Zhou Xue said seriously.

This girl is a bit exacting.

Chen Shouyi was speechless inside, "Don't worry, I'll definitely pay you back once I break this change."

...

The two then started looking for a hotel nearby, but they were either full or too expensive.

Chen Shouyi was indifferent since life had been quite comfortable after acquiring gold, splurging a bit more on spending.

But Zhou Xue remained unsatisfied.

"This one is even costlier than the last, three hundred for a single room, and we have to stay for two days."

"We've been at it for over two hours, why don't I pay for it, no need to reimburse me?" Chen Shouyi couldn't help but suggest.

"Who needs your kindness? If you're annoyed, just leave; I never asked you to keep me company," Zhou Xue's face instantly turned cold.

Having grown up in a well-off family, Chen Shouyi never worried about money; it was hard to realize the pressure a regular, possibly single-parent family might face in nurturing a Martial Artist Apprentice, and how it might make them more sensitive about money.

Realizing his mistake, Chen Shouyi quickly apologized:

"Okay, it was my fault for saying that. Let's continue looking!"

Neither spoke again, silently walking along, the slowly warming atmosphere, once again turned cool.

After searching for nearly half an hour, they finally found a hotel at a reasonable price.

Seeing their age, a pretty receptionist showed no surprise at all, "Would you two like a couple's room?"

A couple's room!?

The young girl clearly hadn't faced such situations before, her eyes widened slightly, her fair face quickly flushing a rosy pink, like a startled rabbit. She stammered, "We... we're not together, single room, I'll stay two days."

"Please present your ID, a deposit of one hundred, room charge of two hundred, totaling three hundred yuan."

After completing the formalities, Zhou Xue took her room card without waiting for Chen Shouyi and briskly carried her luggage towards the elevator, as though desperate to prove to the receptionist that they weren't related.

Chapter 73: Chapter 73: The Current Situation

The room number is opposite Zhou Xue's.

After Chen Shouyi completed the procedures, he opened the room.

Seeing the familiar light inside, he couldn't help but feel a sense of returning to civilization.

He sighed for a while in his heart and placed his luggage properly.

Though the room is small, it has all the necessary facilities, including a desktop computer besides a TV.

He immediately didn't feel like rushing out for lunch, instantly finding the remote and turning on the TV.

As a result, there wasn't any signal at all.

He was slightly disappointed, but not too surprised.

Whether satellite broadcast TV or cable TV, both require satellite signals, the former using a satellite dish, while the latter relies on ground stations to modulate the satellite signal into channels and send it out through cables.

Both require satellites.

And now that all satellites have lost connection, naturally, the TV can't be watched.

Next, he turned on the computer.

After waiting tens of seconds, the startup screen appeared. Seeing the internet connection icon, Chen Shouyi finally breathed a sigh of relief, at least the computer here could access the internet.

The desktop computer is connected using fiber optics, and the fiber transmission is of light signals.

Though both are electromagnetic waves, compared to radio waves or radar waves which are long waves, the wavelength of light is much shorter, carrying energy levels far higher than the former.

He quickly opened a news webpage:

"The country's president made an important speech during a visit to the Science Academy: Science is a practical method of understanding the world, no matter how the future situation changes, science will never be outdated. Scientists everywhere are expected to be prepared to face new situations and challenges..."

"The strategic missile force successfully detonated a 3 million-ton hydrogen bomb within a giant spatial passage. It's reported that the bomb was aurally deployed by a newly developed nuclear-powered gigantic steam airship, triggered by mechanical potential energy at a timed interval. This successful detonation signifies our country's strategic deterrence against the otherworld."

"The Middle East has fallen into chaos, causing major shocks to global oil prices, which have started to soar.

Zhao Zhongjian, director of the National Oil Strategic Reserve Center, stated in an interview: 'Currently, oil reserves are ample, even if all oil supplies are cut off, it's enough to support Great Xia Country for a year. Moreover, our country is one of the major oil producers, and as of now, oil security is still far from the warning line; there's no need to use oil reserves.'"

"The Ministry of Public Security warns: Crack down severely on cult activities, be vigilant of any activities under the guise of curing diseases or exorcism that propagate cult activities..."

...

All the news seemed to be shrouded in a looming oppressive atmosphere.

Chen Shouyi felt heavily burdened in his heart watching them.

He stood up and walked to the window, opened the curtains, and watched the bustling streets and bustling pedestrians, feeling a sense of calm before the storm.

Unfortunately, even with the power of a Martial Artist, in this tide of the times, he was just an insignificant individual, drifting with the current.

Standing in a daze for a long time, he collected his thoughts.

Feeling the hunger in his stomach, he checked the time and realized it was already past one o'clock.

He walked out the door.

Knocked on Zhou Xue's door across and asked:

"Want to go eat together?"

"I already ate!" A while later, Zhou Xue responded.

Such an unadorable girl.

If she weren't the landlady's daughter, Chen Shouyi would have long ignored her.

Of course, this had nothing to do with whether she was pretty or not.

Chen Shouyi closed his door, grabbed his briefcase, and left.

There happened to be a buffet nearby, so he walked in.

His appetite was enormous, and his daily physical exertion was staggering, consuming food nearly five to six times that of the average person. It was fine eating at home, but eating out often drew many curious looks.

In comparison, eating at a buffet drew less attention.

...

Third Category Investigation Bureau of Ningzhou District.

"The current situation in Ningzhou area is very serious. Both Dongning City and Pu Yan District have encountered problems, especially in Dongning City, where a cult blood sacrifice event has occurred. We still haven't determined how many people are involved. The pressure on us is huge now; if this isn't resolved, headquarters might send someone, which would put us in a passive position." A middle-aged man with an imposing presence spoke quickly and gravely as he walked.

Suddenly, something crossed his mind and he turned to a youth with a lean build beside him: "That Dongning-Ping Hill national highway midnight murder case you were investigating, does it have any ties to the cult?"

"According to the information provided by the Dongning sub-bureau, we've found some leads.

One of the deceased, Qian Huajian, registered Martial Artist, member of the Dongning Martial Artists Association, local police security advisor, with a departmental level treatment.

The second deceased, Jiang Wen Yong, a registered Martial Artist Apprentice, security captain of the Dongning Glorious Club, his fingerprints were found on a gun, and he was the gun carrier in the incident.

The third deceased, Mr. Cai, a registered Martial Artist Apprentice, training class teacher.

The fourth deceased...

We've investigated their relatives and friends but found no private connections among them, and there was no record of this action."

"So, the organization is very tight-knit then, huh, could probably be the case?" The middle-aged man tilted his head and asked.

"It's only a suspicion at this point, further evidence is needed."

"We don't need evidence, that's what the police are for, immediately control their families and follow this lead. I don't believe the organization is that tight without leaving a trace."

"By the way, what about the other martial artist, any leads?" The middle-aged man seemed to recall something.

"Not for now. We have some suspects, but they have alibis."

The middle-aged man thought for a moment and said, "Forget it, don't bother investigating anymore! Anyway, the ones killed were cult followers, it's no big deal. I guess that martial artist also didn't want to stir up trouble."

...

After eating his fill, Chen Shouyi returned to his room.

After meticulously checking the room to ensure there was no surveillance, he released the sleeping Shell Lady.

"My precious gemstone!" As soon as the tape was removed from her mouth, the Shell Lady exclaimed impatiently.

"What's the rush!" Chen Shouyi said irritably.

As he spoke, he took the crystal ball from his backpack and forced it into her arms with a little effort.

She was knocked onto the bed by the crystal ball but didn't care at all.

She nuzzled her face against it and gave it a few kisses, then with a foolish smile, she carefully held the gemstone in front of her.

The crystal ball was several times bigger than her body, but luckily she was inherently strong, and under the lower gravity of Earth, it was no effort for her to lift.

After amusing herself for quite a while, she finally turned her attention to Chen Shouyi.

"Giant, what are you doing?"

Chen Shouyi, sitting at the computer reading recent news, replied, "Nothing?"

Looking at the screen, the scenes seemed familiar to the Shell Lady. She placed down the crystal ball and sprinted to the end of the bed with her small legs to watch for a while before suddenly asking suspiciously:

"Giant, is Bei Qi in there?"

Chen Shouyi was taken aback, not expecting that after all this time, the Shell Lady was still attached to the cartoon.

He instinctively said, "I'll show it to you in a while!"

The Shell Lady was immediately thrilled: "Great Giant, Bei Qi has returned? Is Bei Qi truly back?"

"Quiet, wait a moment..."

"No, I won't wait, Bei Qi, Bei Qi, I want Bei Qi, I want Bei Qi now."

Damn, she's really impatient!

Chen Shouyi was extremely annoyed, slammed the mouse in helplessness, had to close the webpage, and searched for that cartoon. Fortunately, it was still available; he randomly opened an episode.

Once the familiar voices began playing, Chen Shouyi left the computer desk and turned back.

He saw the Shell Lady had already sat quietly and properly on the bed.

Chapter 74: Chapter 74: Special Assessment

Fortunately, Chen Shouyi arrived a day earlier.

Because by the second day, this hotel would be filled with people coming from various places to take the Martial Arts Apprentice exam.

Except for going out to eat, Chen Shouyi stayed in his room these past two days, practicing diligently.

The Shell Lady, on the other hand, watched to her heart's content, her gaze never leaving the screen from the moment she opened her eyes in the morning until she fell asleep at night. Chen Shouyi was a bit worried she might get nearsighted because of it.

But considering her comfortable days would soon come to an end, Chen Shouyi let her be.

As for the landlord's daughter, she seemed to intentionally avoid him, as he hadn't seen her these past two days.

...

In the evening!

Chen Shouyi closed his eyes, carefully feeling the exertion of muscles throughout his body.

Occasionally, he would use his palm as a substitute for a sword, slicing through the air with a "whoosh" sound.

The experience of exerting force during the black-clothed man's combat, he had completely absorbed during this time.

Although there was still a considerable gap between him and the other person's level of muscle control, just the unfamiliar sword forms and some flexible combat techniques he learned benefited him immensely.

These sword forms, after practicing for about ten days, he had become gradually proficient, using them with ease.

With this, he completely filled the only missing part of his Swordsmanship.

"In Swordsmanship, only precision and sincerity matter," he thought, indeed, "but it lacks change."

In the past, whenever Chen Shouyi fought, all he used was a thrusting sword, and only knew how to use a thrusting sword, always being straightforward.

While effective in real combat, it inevitably appeared somewhat rigid, inflexible, often missing out on many good opportunities.

For instance, during intense combat, sometimes a simple flick of the sword could end it, but often due to being unfamiliar with certain forms and his body lacking the awareness, he would instinctively widen the distance again for another thrust.

Leading to inefficiency in battle and simultaneously increasing his own risk.

How is his Swordsmanship level now? Even Chen Shouyi didn't know, since after the black-clothed man, he hadn't been in real combat again.

And he hadn't found a suitable opponent for comparison.

But the Swordsmanship level on his attribute panel had reached "Proficient (18)," steadily rising by three points during this time.

The more advanced the skill, the harder it is to improve, requiring thousands or even tens of thousands of practices for each point of enhancement.

Being able to improve by three points in ten days was already astonishingly fast.

...

The next morning, Chen Shouyi left his briefcase in his room and closed the door.

Then he knocked on the door opposite: "Going together, or by yourself?"

Though this young girl seemed to be a bit wary of him, as a man, Chen Shouyi felt he should be a bit gentlemanly.

The door opened quickly.

"Together!" Zhou Xue said briskly.

She had already gotten ready, clearly prepared for some time.

She was wearing a gray-white cotton tracksuit, her hair still slightly damp, probably after doing some warm-up exercises this morning and taking a shower afterwards.

"It's only seven now, let's grab breakfast first!" Chen Shouyi checked the time and suggested, "We can walk it off later."

Leaving the hotel, the two of them walked to a nearby breakfast shop.

...

"Do you always eat this much?" Zhou Xue, who hadn't spoken, finally couldn't help but ask upon seeing Chen Shouyi's astonishing appetite.

Seeing the young girl had finished eating, Chen Shouyi quickly finished his seventh basket of soup dumplings, took a sip of soy milk, and said, "Eating more is a blessing!"

What a pig!

Zhou Xue grumbled inwardly.

Chen Shouyi quickly downed his soy milk: "Waiter, check please!"

"Together?"

"Together!"

"That'll be eighty-five in total."

Chen Shouyi took out a hundred-yuan bill and received the change.

As they left the breakfast shop, Zhou Xue took out her wallet and said seriously:

"You owe me three and a half from last time, I'll give you fifteen now."

"Never mind, I'll cover it this time." Chen Shouyi said.

"No way, why are you guys always like this?"

Dealing with such a persistent person was truly troublesome.

Chen Shouyi reluctantly took her money.

About ten minutes later, they reached the Martial Arts Center and were taken aback.

The registration hall already had a long line, extending all the way into the corridor.

At a glance, the entire line stretched about a hundred meters. There were probably five to six hundred people.

And it wasn't even eight yet.

After Chen Shouyi and Zhou Xue lined up at the back, in just a few minutes, a dozen more people joined behind them.

Today's registration might reach nearly a thousand people.

Can they really finish the exam in one day?

Chen Shouyi had his doubts.

The time gradually approached eight-thirty.

At that moment, more than twenty buses drove one after another into the open space in front of the Martial Arts Center.

Soon, someone jumped out of one of the buses, moving quickly toward them as if taking giant strides.

The crowd stirred.

Chen Shouyi became slightly alert.

His strides showed no hint of concealment, advancing directly using the basic Martial Arts steps, each step covering four to five meters.

He could do this too, but compared to the opponent's smooth, pleasing movement, he was slightly inferior.

Undoubtedly, this was another Martial Artist.

He quickly reached the front of the crowd and called out loudly: "Quiet everyone!"

Intimidated by his aura, everyone closed their mouths the next moment, and it grew silent around, so quiet you could hear a pin drop.

The Martial Artist's face showed a hint of satisfaction:

"Here's the notification: Due to the large number of candidates, the exam location has been temporarily changed. Now, everyone must board the buses."

...

Chen Shouyi was puzzled.

Besides the Martial Arts Assessment Center, where else could the exam be conducted?

Could they be going to a neighboring city? But there was no need for everyone to go!

However, puzzled as he was, he could only follow the crowd and board the buses.

This time, Zhou Xue didn't mind sitting next to him.

Perhaps compared to unfamiliar people, she preferred someone she somewhat knew.

The bus started soon after.

Half an hour later, it gradually left the urban area, heading more and more remote, and then entered a winding mountain road.

At this moment, Chen Shouyi noticed a warning sign outside the window:

"Military Zone, No Admittance!"

Are they heading to a military base?

A commotion began inside the bus, with people chattering.

Soon they encountered soldiers on guard, the bus stopped briefly, seemingly to verify some credentials.

After a while, it continued forward.

Sparse military outposts were scattered across the distant mountains, armed with cannons and machine guns, intimidating to look at.

...

About two minutes later, the buses finally reached the destination.

Chen Shouyi followed the crowd, getting off the bus and observing the surroundings.

The surrounding peaks were bare, evidently coated with concrete.

About a dozen meters away was a huge cave, at least sixty to seventy meters wide, its surface reinforced with steel and concrete.

At this moment, several examiners whispered among themselves, then the person who spoke earlier stepped forward and said loudly:

"Perhaps you've already guessed, ahead is a concealed Spatial Passage, and the exam will be held inside this time.

Of course, this Spatial Passage has been explored several times already and is fairly safe, but we also can't guarantee it's without dangers. In a spirit of voluntariness, if you're unwilling to enter, please stay here, though it may impact your record."

There was an uproar among the crowd.

"I quit!" a middle-aged man calmly stepped out, already having a wife and children at his age, he didn't want to take risks.

"I quit too!"

More people gradually opted out, but there were only a dozen or so in total.

Chen Shouyi glanced at Zhou Xue, noticing her determined expression with no hint of backing down.

"Alright, follow us in now, as for registration, once you pass, you'll return to the Martial Arts Assessment Center to collect your certificate. Those who opt out, stay put, someone will record your information shortly."

Originally concerned about his identity issue, Chen Shouyi felt relieved upon hearing this.

Chapter 75: Chapter 75: Heavy Security

Next, everyone followed the eight examiners into the cave.

These eight examiners were clearly Martial Artists, their movements had a graceful fluidity.

It's estimated that even if you combined all the Martial Artists in Dongning City, there wouldn't be more than this number.

But in Ningzhou, just for one exam, so many were deployed.

Big cities, due to their quality education, infrastructure, and healthcare, often create a siphoning effect on talents from surrounding areas. The rare Martial Artists in Dongning were not as common in Ningzhou but were hundreds, if not thousands, times more numerous.

...

The cave was large, an estimated tens of thousands of square meters in area, like a gigantic plaza.

On each side were four infantry armored vehicles and a medium-sized tank, parked in a staggered formation, with five soldiers standing guard by each vehicle or tank, clearly prepared for emergencies.

The air seemed to carry a faint scent of gunpowder.

As the crowd reached this point, their voices unconsciously quieted, and the atmosphere turned somewhat oppressive.

For those living in peace, witnessing such a scene was a rarity.

The intimidating gun barrels made one worry that they might suddenly unleash a terrifying attack, tearing the crowd apart.

Chen Shouyi looked away and noticed a huge iron door at the front of the plaza, flanked by four fully armed soldiers.

The passage must be inside.

One of the examiners stepped forward, handing over a pass and a document.

The soldier flipped through a few pages, saluted, and then pressed a button beside him. As the sound of an electric motor buzzed, the iron door slowly parted, revealing a passage.

The passage was six or seven meters wide and tall, large enough to allow a tank through, constructed entirely of thick steel that emitted a dull metallic sheen.

The security inside was tight, and walking through it made Chen Shouyi's heart tremble with fear.

Every few meters there seemed to be a camera and a machine gun barrel, and the ceiling was dotted with small holes.

He guessed they were likely for spraying poison gas.

And there was more than one iron door inside!

The group passed through three iron doors consecutively. The first two were lit by incandescent lamps, while the last one had switched to oil lamps, and the power system was changed to steam mechanical transmission.

At the same time, Chen Shouyi felt a force awakening deep within his body; his gifted ability was reviving.

The passage was right in front of them!

...

"Before entering, let me say one thing. This time there are a lot of people, and we examiners can't manage everyone, so for safety reasons, you'll enter in batches. The first batch is two hundred, and each person will receive a bow and a cold weapon." The leading examiner shouted, "Line up in eight rows now. If anyone disrupts the order, this exam will be canceled."

The crowd buzzed and hurried to line up.

Under the sharp gaze of the eight Martial Artists, no one dared to cut in line.

Chen Shouyi roughly counted the number of people in front and realized he would be in the second round.

"Okay! The first twenty-five in each row, follow us to receive weapons."

The examiner opened a locked iron door beside the passage, and the crowd entered in an orderly fashion.

When everyone came out again, each person was armed.

Not wooden swords or wooden knives, but real swords and knives, and the arrows weren't practice ones but metal-headed arrows.

What is this all about?

Chen Shouyi had a vague feeling that ever since the otherworldly power invasion, the Great Xia Country seemed to be preparing something.

This sudden change in the Martial Arts Apprentice assessment process was probably just the tip of the iceberg.

The soldiers standing guard ahead worked together to pull down a massive opening valve. Accompanied by the harsh and dull grinding of gears, the last iron door slowly opened, revealing a faint glow in the distance.

...

As soon as the examiners left, the crowd immediately began to discuss, causing a commotion.

"This is the alternate world, huh? I've never been there; I heard the gravity is three times stronger."

"Do you think it's to make us kill Barbarians?"

"You're overthinking it; with our strength, we can only get killed by Barbarians!"

"Actually, it shouldn't be too dangerous. If there's a fatality, it becomes a big issue, and those examiners would be held accountable, right?"

...

"Are you not nervous?" The young man next to Chen Shouyi, about twenty years old, was visibly anxious, with his feet trembling slightly. Seeing Chen Shouyi standing there in a daze, he couldn't help but ask curiously.

"Oh, nervous, yeah!" Chen Shouyi snapped out of it, turning his head to reply.

Nervous my foot!

He'd been in the alternate world long enough, having even killed twenty or thirty Barbarians. Moreover, this Spatial Passage had been explored several times; there was no danger.

"You seemed lost in thought!"

"It's a way to relieve stress. Just let your mind go blank, drift away, and think of nothing, and you won't feel nervous," Chen Shouyi spouted nonsense.

"Really? I'll give it a try!"

Taking it to heart, he immediately imitated Chen Shouyi, letting his mind go blank.

"Is it working?" Not long after, a middle-aged man nearby couldn't resist asking.

Zhou Xue's ears perked up as well.

"I had just zoned out, but your voice brought me back. Though it does seem to work a bit."

...

Unexpectedly, Chen Shouyi's random spout of nonsense was mimicked by many nearby, and looking around, he saw numerous people standing vacantly, eyes unfocused.

As if they had caught some chicken disease.

Even Zhou Xue, who always maintained a cool demeanor, was among them.

Could it really be effective?

Even Chen Shouyi himself was puzzled.

...

Just over a minute later, someone emerged from the passage, limping.

His face was in disarray, and both knees were stained with blood.

"Brother, did you pass?"

His expression was gloomy as he shook his head, "A bit unlucky, I tripped on some vines, fell, and my arm's broken."

The crowd then noticed the protrusion on his exposed arm.

With triple gravity, even the bone strength of a Martial Artist Apprentice couldn't withstand a fall well.

"You really are unlucky. What's the passage like, and are the assessment tasks the same as before?"

"This time there aren't many tasks. The other side of the passage seems to be an island, and the assessment task is just one: hunt an aggressive sea bird. Kill one, and you pass, but I didn't see any before coming back."

Listening to the young man's answer, Chen Shouyi thought to himself, "It seems that the assessment requirements for Martial Arts Apprentices have been simplified this time, not as thorough and strict as before.

You can use either a bow or cold weapons to kill the bird,

as long as you qualify in one area, you can pass.

And being able to operate in the alternate world, killing a sea bird proves that one's physical condition meets the standards."

...

Before long, people began to exit continuously.

Some were pale, some were excited, others bore bloody wounds, while some were clean.

Fifteen minutes later, when five Martial Arts Apprentices with broken leg bones were carried out by several instructors, the atmosphere briefly quieted down.

"Let me warn you again, this assessment carries risks. If you wish to withdraw, now is the time."

But no one chose to quit. After all, the injured were a minority, less than a tenth, and judging by the circumstances, the pass rate was high, reaching almost thirty percent, something unimaginable before.

Most importantly, none of the candidates had died.

"Now for the next batch, the first twenty-five in each row again."

Finally, it was Chen Shouyi's turn.

He was invigorated, having waited impatiently for so long.

He, along with Zhou Xue, followed the group forward.

Chapter 76: Chapter 76: Caution

As soon as Chen Shouyi entered the passage, the invisible wind within a meter or two around him automatically began to flow towards him.

He keenly noticed that his Wind Control ability seemed to have improved a lot; previously, he could only control a slight breeze.

And now... he could still only control a slight breeze.

Of course, there was still some progress.

Previously, he could blow away an ant, and now he should be able to blow away a fly.

Comparing it this way, his progress was indeed rapid.

...

"Are you alright?" Zhou Xue, behind him, suddenly asked.

Chen Shouyi snapped out of his thoughts and realized he had been standing still for a while. He quickly stopped controlling the air and started descending the steps.

He sighed inwardly; despite manipulating the wind for quite a while earlier, the people just a few steps behind him didn't notice a thing.

...

This Spatial Passage wasn't flat on the ground but was about half a meter above it, so steps were artificially built here for convenience of going in and out.

He walked down the steps and looked around.

He was somewhat unsure if this was a small island; apart from 200 to 300 meters on the left where there was a beach, elsewhere it was hilly and covered with lush trees. If it was truly an island, it was probably a surprisingly large one.

"Everyone come and get your weapons. If you can't find a suitable one, go back to the warehouse and get it yourself," the supervising teacher called out loudly.

Watching the many candidates in front walking cautiously step by step, Chen Shouyi followed the crowd slowly forward as well.

He didn't want to show off; there was no point in it.

Moreover, his identity might have some issues; instead of standing out and drawing attention, increasing the risk, it was better to follow the crowd and pass the assessment smoothly.

The weapons were piled up, left by the previous batch of candidates.

Bows, swords, knives, and spears of all kinds.

Unlike other candidates who were being choosy, Chen Shouyi casually picked up a Long Sword, a War Bow, and a quiver of Arrows.

After equipping himself, he stood to the side.

A young examiner next to him glanced at Chen Shouyi and, looking somewhat surprised, said,

"Your physical fitness seems pretty good!"

"Hello, examiner. I've always been quite strong," Chen Shouyi quickly replied.

No matter how much he disguised, some details couldn't be concealed, like his movements appeared quite natural, with none of the stiffness typical under triple gravity, and even his demeanor didn't look as if he was facing a formidable enemy like ordinary candidates.

Zhou Xue, who was attaching a sword to herself, couldn't help but glance curiously at Chen Shouyi when she heard the examiner's compliment.

She suddenly felt that he seemed a bit different; his skin appeared fairer and with a subtle luster, and even his gaze became brighter and deeper, carrying a mysterious aura.

The person was still the same, and the features were unchanged.

If he looked just moderately handsome before, now it was as if a beauty filter had been applied, suddenly making him sharp and distinct.

Zhou Xue's face turned slightly red as she quickly averted her gaze and muttered under her breath.

Men are all the same!

...

In fact, even Chen Shouyi hadn't realized that upon entering this alternate world, his awakened Natural Healing talent ability not only made his Self-Healing Ability unusually strong but also subtly altered his appearance, making him more attractive.

"Those who want to come over here, gather around me," said the young examiner who spoke earlier.

He was also fully armed.

Immediately, Chen Shouyi, Zhou Xue, and others who were fully equipped walked over.

"You, you, you, and you, go to other examiners, and everyone else follow me,"

After counting the numbers and clearing out a few extras, the examiner led the group toward the beach.

"Be careful while walking. Previously, quite a few people had to withdraw from the assessment after an unlucky fall. It'd be such a pity," the examiner kindly reminded.

The examiner, a youth of about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years, appeared congenial.

Perhaps because of his amiable demeanor, several females who considered themselves attractive started to try out their own tactics:

"Brother, please look out for your little sister when the time comes."

This was relatively reserved.

"I'll buy you coffee after the exam,"

This was more bold.

Suddenly, Chen Shouyi noticed the examiner seemingly give a slight chuckle, then turned back solemnly and said, "This time I'll issue a warning to the two of you; next time if you disturb the examiners again, your assessment will be marked as a zero. When I need to look out for you, it's when you've failed the assessment. So remember, never ask me to look out for you!"

The two women's faces turned red and white with embarrassment, as did many other candidates who initially intended to cozy up, quickly gave up this notion.

The examiner continued,

"Just a reminder, there are many birds on the beach with strong aggression. Don't get too close, or you'll provoke an attack, and if too many come at once, I might not be able to protect you.

As long as I get involved, it counts as a failed assessment.

Also, remember this: if such a situation arises, crouch down with your hands over your head immediately, or your eyes could be pecked out."

The previously carefree Chen Shouyi listened with some seriousness; if they faced a swarm of attacking birds, it could indeed be quite dangerous.

Before long, he could see a large group of gray birds strolling leisurely in the shallow sea, occasionally dipping their beaks into the water and creating splashes, seemingly in search of food.

These birds were even larger than pigeons, with short, thick beaks slightly hooked at the end, clearly suited for tearing.

Given the strength of creatures in this alternate world, a normal Martial Artist Apprentice being pecked would likely suffer a laceration, tearing off a chunk of flesh.

As they got closer, several candidates' breathing became slightly quicker, and their steps more hesitant.

The short two hundred meters took nearly five minutes to walk, and the group was getting closer to the bird flocks on the beach, the nearest being only fifty or sixty meters away.

"Alright, stop here! Every five people go ahead once, and you only have one minute for the test. If you exceed the time, you'll fail the assessment. Who's brave enough?"

Chen Shouyi took a step forward, and soon three more people boldly stood out.

Zhou Xue glanced at Chen Shouyi who had stepped forward, hesitated for a moment in her heart, and decided to wait and see what others would do first.

"We're still short one person. Since no one is volunteering, I'll just call someone. It's you." Faced with this situation, the proctor was not surprised at all and directly named one of the women he had warned earlier.

The beautiful woman's face turned a little pale, but in front of this seemingly strict proctor, she didn't dare to act out.

Soon, the five of them carefully walked forward.

A few gray birds nearby fluttered slightly restlessly. Chen Shouyi walked quickly and, looking at the nearest bird, got closer and closer, then drew an arrow, notched it, and pulled the bow fully.

The bow was too light.

He frowned slightly.

He had been used to a five-hundred-pound Heavy Bow, and using this three-hundred-pound one felt uncomfortable and hard to handle.

He estimated in his heart the effect of gravity on the arrow's trajectory here.

To be safe, he walked forward another ten meters or so.

At this moment, the bird suddenly got startled by Chen Shouyi, flapped its wings, and fiercely flew towards him quickly.

At the same time, Chen Shouyi also released the bowstring.

The bird had only flown up two meters before it fell with a splash, its body pierced by a sharp arrow.

"Pass, you can come back now!"

Chen Shouyi heard the proctor's voice and started walking back.

He had only taken a few steps when he heard Zhou Xue shout, "Watch out!"

As the words fell, his senses already detected something vague approaching. Instantly, he couldn't be bothered with hiding his strength, drew his Long Sword in a flash, and slashed back fiercely. Just like a flash of lightning, a gray bird was instantly split in two and fell to the ground.

Damn, I was too careless, and I attracted another bird.

The proctor slowly released his War Bow, which had been drawn like a crescent moon, and gave him a meaningful look.

Logically, he should have released the arrow long ago when he saw the gray bird attacking, but he suspected the other party was hiding his strength and wanted to see how he would respond. It turned out to be true.

After returning to the group.

"That was amazing, I couldn't even see how fast that slash was."

"Do you have eyes on the back of your head, to still hit it!"

"Young people these days are really getting more and more impressive."

"Just a coincidence, hehe, I didn't expect to hit it."

...

Not long after, others also returned one after another, and the four who volunteered all passed the test smoothly.

After all, being able to stand out in the first round already showed confidence in one's own strength.

Only that beautiful woman didn't pass.

After missing her shot and with the gray bird angrily flying at her, she seemed a bit flustered, squatting down from afar with her hands over her head, finally causing the proctor to shoot down the bird with an arrow.

The proctor took out a notebook, recorded the names and ID numbers of those who passed, and informed them that they could leave directly after the test.

Many people immediately headed for the passage, as staying under triple gravity was an ordeal even for a Martial Artist Apprentice.

Chen Shouyi, however, stayed in place, preparing to leave with Zhou Xue after she finished.

Compared to the first round, the second round was a bit tragic. One person stumbled and broke a hand bone while avoiding a gray bird, and two others, wildly swinging their swords, were scratched and bloodied by the birds.

In the end, only two people passed the test in this round smoothly.

By the third round, Zhou Xue finally gathered the courage to go on stage.

She took out an arrow while cautiously walking forward. After walking twenty or thirty meters, she stopped and aimed for a long time before shooting an arrow.

However, she was still a bit too nervous.

Not only did she miss, but she shot too far away.

The arrow flew past the gray bird and directly into the flock, provoking two gray birds at once.

With no time to shoot again, Zhou Xue tossed away her bow and quickly drew her Long Sword, clearly not wanting to give up.

Chen Shouyi's expression changed slightly as he watched.

Her stiff movements clearly showed she couldn't handle two gray birds.

If she gave up, it would only result in failure. If she stubbornly persisted, getting her face scratched could ruin her looks. For a beauty-loving girl, such a fate would be as devastating as ruining her life.

Chen Shouyi hesitated for a moment, quickly drew his bow and shot an arrow at one of the gray birds.

The distance was a bit far, and the arrow speed was too slow, too unstable, as the arrow grazed past the gray bird without hitting it.

Luckily, it was startled and immediately redirected its attention, darting towards Chen Shouyi.

After shooting one arrow, his actions didn't pause at all, quickly notched another arrow and released it, with a time gap of less than 0.3 seconds between the two arrows.

With a "snap" sound.

The gray bird let out a mournful cry and fell straight down.

With one gray bird drawn away, Zhou Xue, who had been tense, relaxed too. As the remaining gray bird approached, she sharply captured the opportunity, swiftly stepped forward and thrust her sword, the next moment, skewering the bird on her sword tip.

The proctor, while keeping an eye with his War Bow, commented, "Your little girlfriend?"

Seeing Zhou Xue successfully kill a gray bird, Chen Shouyi also sighed in relief, "Uh, no, just came together."

"You know, what you just did is considered cheating, and it's not allowed," the proctor said.

"Come on, do you have to be so strict?"

Having already revealed his strength, Chen Shouyi was somewhat relaxed.

"Everyone must kill however many they attract themselves!"

"In another world, caution is absolutely necessary. The incautious have long since died. But forget it, since your little girlfriend managed to kill one, I'll let it pass this time."

Chapter 77: Chapter 77: The Mysterious Stranger

The examination of nearly a thousand people was completely over within two to three hours.

But an accident still occurred.

A female examinee fell and hit her head directly on a stone, dying on the spot.

When the blood-covered corpse was carried out, everyone fell silent.

Compared to the warm and mellow evaluations of the past, this assessment was undoubtedly bloody and brutal.

...

On the way back, the injured boarded the bus first to leave. They wouldn't go to the Martial Arts Assessment Center again; instead, they were sent directly to the hospital.

Sitting on the bus, the two were silent for a while. Zhou Xue suddenly said softly, "I heard you helped me during the assessment."

"A minor effort." Chen Shouyi shrugged and said.

"Thank you!" Zhou Xue said, her face blushing, quickly turning her head to hide.

Such a shy young girl, she had probably been preparing to say this thank you for a long time.

"You're the landlord's daughter, so I have to look after you a bit!" Chen Shouyi said, noticing her unease, stopped teasing her, and got down to business: "Just to inform you

in advance, once we get back to the hotel, I won't be returning to Changmen Town with you. I need to go to Hedong to assure my parents of my safety."

"Got it!" Zhou Xue, though curious, didn't ask as she usually didn't like to ask more.

"Do you know how to get back?" asked Chen Shouyi.

"Yes!" Zhou Xue's face turned cold as she replied.

And thus, the conversation ended there.

...

The bus soon arrived at the Martial Arts Assessment Center.

The registration, certification, and oath processes that followed are not worth mentioning.

The identity issue that Chen Shouyi was worried about turned out to be nothing after all.

Gazing at this small and exquisite certificate, he finally felt like a person with political rights.

A month ago, if he could have gotten this certificate, he might have laughed in his dreams.

But that could only happen in dreams.

At that time, he was as far from being a Martial Artist Apprentice as dream was from reality.

But at this moment, he didn't feel any joy.

Very bland.

Just like an old hand at driving an illegal taxi finally passed the driving test, everything seemed so natural.

For him, he was now pursuing a Martial Artist Certificate.

A Martial Artist Apprentice Certificate was already beneath his notice.

Returning to the hotel with Zhou Xue, Chen Shouyi shouldered his backpack, took his briefcase, unzipped it to check, observed that the Shell Lady was sleeping soundly, and zipped it back up.

After leaving, he knocked on the door across the hall: "I'm leaving now."

"Okay!" Zhou Xue answered from inside.

Chen Shouyi smiled, not minding, as he had grown accustomed to Zhou Xue's somewhat aloof nature. Besides, he didn't want to trouble a young girl.

...

He checked out at the hotel service desk, hailed a taxi, and headed straight for the high-speed rail station.

An hour later, he had boarded the high-speed train to Hedong City.

Arriving at his carriage, he found someone already sitting in his seat. Chen Shouyi indicated with his ticket, saying, "Excuse me, this seat is mine?"

The carriage was quite empty, clearly not overcrowded, so Chen Shouyi felt a bit puzzled.

"Oh, sorry." The young man quickly stood up and sat across from him.

Noticing his strange accent, Chen Shouyi couldn't help but glance at him. He saw that the other was already looking out the window.

This was a young man who looked about twenty, with smooth and delicate skin. Although he was wearing ordinary clothes and wasn't particularly handsome, he possessed a peculiar charm.

Chen Shouyi didn't scrutinize him further and soon pulled out a book of universal language to read.

The train gradually started moving.

The young man maintained this posture for more than half an hour before withdrawing his gaze and looking at Chen Shouyi: "I hope I'm not disturbing you. What book are you reading?"

If one ignored his somewhat strange accent, his voice carried a magnetic quality, sounding pleasant and elegant.

Chen Shouyi looked up and smiled, "Universal Language!"

"Universal Language? What language is this?" The young man seemed a bit puzzled.

"It's a language from another world." Chen Shouyi didn't find it strange because not many people studied Universal Language, only those in Martial Arts Academies or specialized research institutions would learn such a niche language.

"Another world..." he murmured softly, "I'm sorry, could I take a look?"

Chen Shouyi didn't mind and handed the book over.

The young man began to flip through it at an incredible speed, turning a page every second or two, seemingly playfully. After a minute or two, he stopped and returned the book to Chen Shouyi, "Interesting! Is this something every warrior must learn?"

When Chen Shouyi received the book, he was momentarily taken aback upon hearing his question.

Then, puzzled, he asked, "How do you know? You shouldn't be from the Great Xia Country, right? In Great Xia, they're not called warriors!"

"You're right, I'm from far away. As for how I can tell, it's because it can't escape my eyes. You're much stronger than the ordinary people here," the young man said with a confident smile.

Chen Shouyi was stunned, and as he reflected on the final words, realized how unusual they were, as if the young man wasn't from this world.

Suddenly, a bolt of lightning struck his body, freezing him in place, while a cold sweat began to seep from his back.

"Are you nervous?" the young man asked with a smile.

Though his demeanor remained amicable and gentle, Chen Shouyi could distinctly feel a high-handed and superior indifference in his smile.

"No, it's probably just because the carriage is too warm," Chen Shouyi hurriedly concealed, his heart pounding dramatically!

He tried hard to calm himself; he knew being tense was useless. In the presence of such a terrifying entity, his life was a mere thought away from being taken.

The young man did not further press the issue and sighed in an oratory tone: "This world is exquisite yet fragile, powerful yet weak. Fortunately, everything is changing for the better. The war is coming, the foolish will fall into Hell, and the wise will achieve glory!"

Chen Shouyi wanted to object but ultimately held his tongue. Under the eye of someone who could take your life at any moment, any action that might provoke them was foolish.

Just then, an attendant entered the carriage, followed by several police officers.

"We're conducting a temporary ticket check. Please present your ticket and ID card. We apologize for any inconvenience caused." they announced.

The ticket check proceeded sequentially through the carriage.

Chen Shouyi's heart tensed. Glancing at the mysterious young man, he found him looking nonchalant as he even offered a mysterious smile.

Could it be that he was mistaken?

When the attendants reached him, Chen Shouyi took out his ticket and ID from his wallet, placing them on the small table.

Soon, the attendant approached, picked up his ticket and ID for a glance, and said: "Please keep these with you."

As Chen Shouyi slowly put away his ticket and ID, his muscles tensed, his internal alarms blaring.

Unexpectedly, the attendant and the policemen passed by the mysterious young man as if he did not exist at all. Looking around, Chen Shouyi noticed the other passengers didn't seem to be aware of anything unusual either.

What was happening here?

"Is it strange?" As if noticing Chen Shouyi's confusion, the young man smiled and said: "In this world's language, it's simply a minor psychological suggestion. If I don't wish to be seen by them, I might as well not exist."

"However, I must be leaving now. I've foreseen this as a bad omen, with all those annoying surveillance and irksome pursuers," he said with a smile.

As he finished his words, he extended his hand towards the bulletproof glass of the carriage, causing it to blur briefly. The next moment, a gale roared, the glass shattered instantly, and simultaneously, Chen Shouyi saw his figure flicker and vanish completely.

He leaned out of the window quickly, catching the final image of the young man leaping off the high bridge.

Chapter 78: Chapter 78: Questioning

The loud noise caused exclamations throughout the carriage, with glass shattering and scattering all around.

"What happened, how did the window break?"

"What just happened?"

"Such a loud noise, was it an explosion? Scared the hell out of me!"

Everything happened so quickly before that no one could see it.

Chen Shouyi watched the mysterious youth disappear and finally breathed a sigh of relief, pulling his body back in from the window, collapsing into the seat as if exhausted, not wanting to move at all.

His back felt a bit chilly, and his clothes were already soaked with sweat.

His heart was still pounding violently.

This was a near-death experience.

This mysterious person gave him the impression of a primordial giant beast, truly terrifying.

It wasn't about aura, but rather that high-and-mighty demeanor of viewing all things as ants, a transcendent sense of aloofness, that made ordinary life seem as fragile as soap bubbles in his eyes.

Even on this superordinary Earth, with his terrifying physical strength. If he unleashed his slaughter, not only this carriage, but even the entire high-speed rail would be a river of blood.

...

People quickly surrounded Chen Shouyi's area.

"Did you see how the window broke?" a somewhat plump middle-aged man asked.

Seeing someone asking him, Chen Shouyi regained his senses, wiped the cold sweat off his forehead, and shook his head.

"That's strange, I saw you leaning out of the window, I thought you saw something?" the middle-aged man was still rattled, the noise earlier was so loud, it was like an explosion, almost giving him a heart attack.

"Yeah, you were sitting right there, how could you not have seen it?"

"Could it have been him who broke it?" someone whispered.

"This is bulletproof glass, what could he have used to break it? Besides, even if he struck it, he wouldn't be able to shatter the entire glass at once."

The crowd discussed around him, and soon people from other carriages came over as well, creating a buzzing noise like countless flies in Chen Shouyi's ears, making his head throb slightly and giving rise to a bit of irritation.

And after one window broke, the wind became quite strong, making his eyes uncomfortable. He stood up, grabbed his luggage, and was about to change seats:

"Excuse me!"

He said as he squeezed through the crowd.

"Could it be guilt? Maybe he really did do it?"

Chen Shouyi's steps halted, his expression turned cold. He had just felt like he narrowly escaped death, and was in an unstable emotional state, extremely irritable. Being baselessly accused, a wave of anger surged within him.

He turned and looked at the bespectacled youth who spoke sarcastically:

"What did you just say? I didn't hear clearly, say it again!"

Chen Shouyi was tall with a big frame, though his body didn't seem particularly strong, a slight movement revealed his finely detailed muscles, whereas the bespectacled young man looked thin and frail.

Just in terms of physique, the bespectacled man already seemed less imposing. He didn't expect a mutter to be caught like this. His eyes shifted as he forced himself to remain calm, "I... I was just talking, can't I speak?"

"No one's stopping you from talking, but dammit, accusing me without evidence? I've got to intervene in this, there are cameras in the carriage, do you think I'm guilty?" Chen Shouyi said with a laugh of anger.

Feeling the crowd's disdainful or disgusted stares, the bespectacled man's face flushed red and then white, and he quickly slinked away.

...

Before long, two train officers approached: "Excuse me, we might need to take a bit of your time, there are some situations we want to understand, and we hope for your cooperation."

Chen Shouyi deftly grabbed his backpack and briefcase.

"Does everyone need to go?"

"Everyone in this carriage needs to go, it won't take much time."

Soon the group arrived at a police office.

One officer took out a laptop playing surveillance video and placed it on the table:

"Everyone look closely, do you recognize this person?"

"Never seen, was there someone sitting here?"

"I don't recognize them either, I thought only that young man was sitting there."

"No impression, officer, is this the person who broke the glass."

...

Each person looked over but all shook their heads, everyone was surprised to realize there was a person sitting by the broken window that they had not noticed at all.

Especially the middle-aged man who was sitting just about a meter from the mysterious youth, looked as if he had seen a ghost, he had no impression of the person sitting next to him.

"The others can return, but you need to stay, we have a few questions to understand." One of the officers said to Chen Shouyi.

"No problem!" Chen Shouyi said.

He had mentally prepared for this and wasn't surprised.

"How did you notice him?" an officer asked seriously.

"He was sitting in my seat!" Chen Shouyi said.

He suspected he might not have noticed him if not for that circumstance.

"I saw you have a conversation with him, what did you talk about?"

...

Half an hour later, Chen Shouyi left the police office and returned to the carriage.

The carriage was full of chatter and noise.

Chen Shouyi chose a vacant spot and leaned wearily against the seat.

...

"The train will soon arrive at Hedong High-speed Railway West Station. Passengers getting off at Hedong High-speed Railway West Station, please prepare in advance, the train will stop for five minutes..."

Chen Shouyi exited the station and quickly got into a taxi: "Driver, Martial Arts Assessment Center."

The car soon drove off.

Chen Shouyi silently watched out the window.

The towering buildings, dense traffic, hurried pedestrians.

Looking at the still prosperous Hedong City, the gloom over his heart since meeting the mysterious person dispersed somewhat.

"Driver, when did this place get electricity?"

"You mean electricity, it's been on since five days ago, you're not from around here, are you? Still not there yet?"

"Not yet, our small place, who knows how long it'll take?"

The driver immediately became chatty:

"I say it's best to move to the big city, for your place to get electricity, it might take another half a year, I have a friend in the power grid, now the national electricity supply is extremely tight, even first and second-tier cities don't have enough, waiting for small cities, who knows when that'll be."

"But you can't afford to buy houses here!" Chen Shouyi echoed.

"That's true, the prices were high enough already, and with the electricity coming, Hedong's housing prices have shot up further, fortunately, I was compensated with two houses in the past relocation, otherwise I couldn't afford my son's marriage house."

Chapter 79: Chapter 79: Registration

Half an hour later, Chen Shouyi finished the check-in procedures at the hotel and entered his room.

He lay back on the bed, unwilling to move for a long time.

After a long while, he got up, opened his briefcase, and released the Shell Lady.

"Giant, you've changed your sleeping place again?" The Shell Lady immediately surveyed the room's environment and then asked the question she was most curious about, "Is everything prepared here?"

"No!"

"There must be, you're lying." The Shell Lady looked at the room's computer and gestured, "Giant, you need to press here, and everything will come back."

Learning quite fast.

Well, whatever, life is short. Let her watch if she wants. Even if her eyesight worsens, he doesn't care anymore.

He opened the computer and found her favorite cartoon.

Suddenly, the world fell silent.

He lay back on the bed, closed his eyes, and in the next moment, his consciousness was already in the Memory Space.

He returned to the scene on the train.

...

"This world is changing, war is coming. Fools will fall into Hell, wise ones will achieve glory."

The young man had a mysterious smile, as if he was uttering some kind of aphorism.

Not long ago, in this scene, Chen Shouyi was sitting on pins and needles, hairs standing on end, drenched in cold sweat.

But at this moment, in this Memory Space, watching from another perspective, he felt an unusual calm.

No matter how real this world seems, it's still false, just his memory.

His consciousness wandered like a ghost through the Memory Space for a long time, finally making a determined decision, plunging into it suddenly.

Without much surprise, the moment he made contact, there was a "boom" in his mind, and his consciousness was flung out. When he regained clarity, he felt dizzy, mentally drained, almost unable to think.

Knew it would be like this!

Chen Shouyi felt a bit disheartened.

Last time, when it was the big tree, this situation occurred. This time, it was even more straightforward.

His consciousness floated dizzily above. Gradually, he suddenly felt a slight tremor in the Memory Space.

At first, he thought it was an illusion in his dazed state, but soon he realized something was wrong.

This world indeed trembled, everything within sight in the train carriage seemed unnaturally distorted and deformed.

It felt as though this space was on the verge of collapse.

No way!

Chen Shouyi's mind, dulled by the previous shock, finally started to react.

Before he could respond, a sudden sense of panic arose in his heart.

Unease, anxiety, palpitations, oppression.

All these oddities seemed to warn him.

Danger! Danger! Danger!

In a vague sense, he seemed to perceive a majestic gaze, projecting through endless space.

Not good!

He was scared, his consciousness trembled, finally fully awake. Resolutely, he immediately exited this space.

Before leaving, he glanced instinctively at the mysterious young man, only to be shocked to find his figure had become blurred and dim, his face no longer visible, as if gradually disappearing from this space.

Chen Shouyi suddenly opened his eyes, filled with lingering fear.

He lay on the bed, breathing rapidly, heart pounding, hands and feet feeling icy.

Listening to the nonsensical dialogue of the cartoon, and looking at the focused Shell Lady beside him, only after a long while did his heart gradually calm.

"Thankfully, everything is fine, this is still Earth."

"The deities of the other world aren't strong enough to project power across space to kill him. If they were truly that strong, humanity would have long faced its end."

"After all, wasn't it just the consciousness entering his body?"

"Was it really necessary to be so sensitive?"

"Was it necessary?"

However, this unexpected incident completely woke him up.

He must never casually let his consciousness enter the bodies of those terrifying beings again.

No, he must never be unlucky enough to encounter those beings again.

Too dangerous.

Fortunately, this is Earth. If it were in another world, such behavior could have left him obliterated.

It's said that some true deities possess mysterious abilities, sensing when someone mentions their true name, depending on their power, hearing a few syllables or even an entire conversation.

Clearly, memory might also carry some power unknown to him, as entering the bodies of these beings allows them to sense.

Moreover, the memories in this Memory Space are far from just simple recollections.

The Book of Knowledge seems to have a powerful analytical and complementation ability, even a taste of omniscience, making fleeting memories become vivid and full.

This is more like a projection sealed within memory than mere recollection.

"Huh!"

He suddenly realized he couldn't remember the appearance of that mysterious person, unsure if the person even existed.

"Should I revisit the Memory Space!" He felt a surge within.

Chen Shouyi hesitated for a moment, finally gritted his teeth,

This is Earth, there's nothing to fear, worst case, he'd escape back.

Then he returned to the Memory Space, back to the original scene.

He was shocked to find the mysterious person had disappeared, replaced by a blurred, dim shadow, and his former self was talking to this indeterminate shadow.

This scene was as strange as it could be.

As for what the shadow looked like, whether it was human or beast, the expression, what was said, Chen Shouyi couldn't remember a thing.

Thinking back over time, unless faced with a logical contradiction, he felt he had indeed only seen a shadow, and the other party had never spoken.

...

Early the next morning, Chen Shouyi arrived at Hedong City's Martial Arts Assessment Center.

Entering the building, he took the elevator to the top-floor Martial Arts assessment registration office, which was more humane compared to the cold and rigid registration for the Martial Artist Apprentice assessment.

Inside it was like a club, elegantly and brightly decorated, with a row of leather sofas against the wall, a table with assorted fruits and pastries, and even a small bar.

Entering the hall, Chen Shouyi momentarily doubted he'd come to the wrong place.

Fortunately, a young, beautiful staff member with a swinging slender waist, walked over shortly.

"This is the Martial Arts assessment registration office, is there anything I can assist you with?"

She particularly reminded him.

Mainly because he looked too young, dressed casually, like a high school student.

"It's good to be here, I'm here to register!" Chen Shouyi said.

She paused for a moment, but her trained professional demeanor quickly masked her surprise, smiling:

"Alright, please hand me your ID and Martial Artist Apprentice certificate; we'll help you with registration procedures, and you can rest here a bit."

Having come to register, Chen Shouyi was naturally prepared. He handed over his credentials and ID, saying, "Thank you."

"It's no trouble!" The staff received it with both hands, turned around, took a few steps, then suddenly came back: "Excuse me, I want to confirm, it seems your apprentice certificate's issue date was yesterday?"

"Yes, I passed it yesterday, is there a time interval requirement for taking the Martial Artist assessment?" Chen Shouyi asked in confusion.

"No, there's no requirement... It's just..." The staff wasn't sure how to gently explain to this somewhat recklessly daring young man.

"Oh, I understand!" Chen Shouyi nodded knowingly.

Sigh, youth's folly, always suffering in this regard, and since being altered by the Book of Knowledge, he looked even younger.

"You think I'm overestimating myself! Please help me with my briefcase."

She instinctively took the briefcase handed by Chen Shouyi, wanting to say something.

Then she saw the boy's figure suddenly blur, using a lunge strike technique, he threw a fierce punch.

The next moment the air resounded with a booming crash, and wind howled.

She quickly closed her eyes, and when she opened them again, three to four meters away, the table was in disarray, with fruits and pastries scattered everywhere.

"Uh, do I need to compensate for this?" The boy said with some embarrassment.

That damned innate destructive urge, always unable to resist the desire to break something.

"Compensate... no, no need!"

"Good, then return my briefcase, by the way, no issues with registration, right?"

The beauty, puzzled, handed back the briefcase and then hastily replied, "No... no issues."

Chapter 80: Chapter 80: The Old House

As soon as Chen Shouyi sat down, a waitress approached him:

"Would you like tea, coffee, or another beverage?"

"Just a glass of plain water, please!"

"Of course!" The waitress smiled briefly and soon handed over the water.

He leaned back on the sofa, took a sip from the glass, and assessed his surroundings, marveling at the perks of being a Martial Artist. Unlike his previous experience as a trainee, where he had to queue up early in the morning to register, this felt like VIP treatment.

Here, everything was taken care of without him lifting a finger.

After about three minutes, the same staff member approached briskly: "Hello, your paperwork is complete. Your physical assessment is scheduled for tomorrow at 10 AM, at the same location. Any issues? If tomorrow is inconvenient, the next available slot is in half a month."

"No issue at all!" Chen Shouyi nodded in agreement.

The Martial Arts Assessment is unlike the apprentice assessment, consisting of two exams. The first is a physical assessment, measuring overall physical fitness against a standard. Once passed, the practical combat exam follows, usually involving completing specific tasks within a Spatial Passage for evaluation.

He accepted his ID and apprentice certificate before exiting the building.

The sunlight overhead was a bit harsh, its rays through his eyelashes forming a colorful halo. Observing the busy crowd on the street, Chen Shouyi paused, then entered a cold weapons store near the Martial Arts Assessment Center.

He ignored the real weapons glistening ominously under the lights at the counter, heading instead to the practice wooden swords on the shelf at the entrance, sifting through them.

He hefted each one for weight before selecting one that felt just right.

"How much for this practice sword?"

"It's made of hardwood from another world, heavy and durable like steel, hence the high price." A salesperson explained.

"How much?"

"Twelve hundred!"

After paying, Chen Shouyi left the weapons store.

His fingers traced the rough texture of the sword's handle as he wandered the streets, looking for a place to practice, only to find nowhere suitable.

The city was too hectic, crowded with people, devoid of any quiet spots.

The hotel room was too cramped; practicing at full speed—enough to break the sound barrier—would be disruptive, and any damage would incur hefty compensation.

He wasn't particularly nervous about tomorrow's assessment; there was no reason to be.

His current strength and agility both stood at 13.3.

Expressed numerically, his strength roughly equated to 380 kilograms, far surpassing the 300-kilogram Martial Artist benchmark.

Agility, even harder to enhance for a Martial Artist, had improved more substantially; he was now reacting nearly 40% faster than when he fought the man in black weeks ago, an increase from initially being 30% faster.

Given that the opponent was already a Martial Artist, surpassing the agility standard, it implied his nerve reaction speed likely exceeded the Martial Artist standard by 50%.

That's equivalent to a full point higher.

Nerve reaction speed is a key attribute reflecting combat prowess,

In life-and-death combat, a 50% speed advantage is decisive, neutralizing the opponent before they can react, regardless of their experience or muscle control.

His actual combat capability had long outstripped that of freshly minted Martial Artists.

...

He simply wanted to practice Swordsmanship.

Since losing access to the Spatial Passage, he had been in hiding, refining muscle force in his bedroom, subtly etching muscle memory of various techniques until they became instinctual.

Such slow refinement proved beneficial, as his sword skills improved by three points in a short span.

But just as medicinal preparation requires both patience and urgency, Swordsmanship too demands a balance of tranquility and explosiveness.

All training serves the purpose of delivering explosive power in a critical moment.

...

After a long search, he finally found a place to practice sword fighting: an old house in a small alley.

The building was weathered, with marble walls covered in creeping ivy, and rusty gates festooned with similarly rusted padlocks.

Through the gaps in the iron gate, he saw a courtyard overrun by weeds and a crumbling wooden door, indicative of long abandonment.

Chen Shouyi was puzzled; how had a three-story building in a bustling district fallen to such disrepair? A little renovation could yield substantial rental income.

But it wasn't his concern.

It was perfect for practicing sword fighting.

Checking that no one was around, he effortlessly vaulted over the wall.

Among overgrown grass and a dry pond, animal sculptures coated in moss hinted at the former wealth of the owner, underscoring the property's current value.

Placing his briefcase in a corner, he started with a set of thirty-six body-strengthening exercises before immediately beginning his sword practice.

He closed his eyes and imagined the man in black as his opponent.

Easily executing a high-speed thrust, he followed with a nimble stride, slicing horizontally as he leaped five meters ahead.

No good.

Too weak.

The black-clad man's capabilities must be enhanced.

...

Gales whipped up around as a silhouette moved swiftly, sometimes producing sonic booms, sometimes trailing sword light, flattening surrounding grass and stirring up dust.

A drooping branch shook, its leaves shredded by the sword wave, now left bare.

"Bang, bang, bang, is anyone inside?" A few minutes later, Chen Shouyi heard an old woman's voice.

He stopped immediately.

"Granny, what's the matter?" Chen Shouyi approached the entrance.

The elderly woman's face was lined with wrinkles, her gaze foggy, yet she stared intently at Chen Shouyi, her raspy voice questioning: "Young man, what are you doing in there? Are you courting death?"

"Granny, why? I thought it was quiet here and wanted to practice sword fighting. Is that not allowed?"

"It's haunted! No one knows how many have died here over the years, and still you come? You risk your life."

"Granny, it's all right. I'm not afraid of ghosts," Chen Shouyi chuckled. He suspected as much; no wonder there was a pervasive chill, a sense of eeriness here.