

Dawn of a New Era #Chapter 81: Search - Read Dawn of a New Era Chapter 81: Search

Chapter 81: Chapter 81: Search

"Young people just don't listen to advice, once something happens it's too late. I suggest you head back early!" The old woman said and then prepared to leave, trembling.

At this moment, Chen Shouyi noticed the phrase "all these years" in her earlier words.

His heart stirred, and he called out to the old lady, asking:

"Granny, wait a moment, I want to ask, how long has this house been haunted?"

"Why are you asking this? About ten years or so. I'm getting old and can't quite remember things clearly. It's an old story by now..."

After listening to the old lady ramble on for a while, Chen Shouyi finally got the gist of it.

It turned out to be an unavoidable story between an old widower whose children were all living abroad and a young maid.

In the end, the young maid could not bear the humiliation and hanged herself.

For fear of exposure, the old man hid the body in the basement, pretending to live normally every day, until one day, he never came out again.

Later, the house changed hands several times because the price kept getting cheaper, and there were always buyers who didn't believe in such things. However, without exception, everyone who lived here first became weak, then fell into lingering illness, and eventually died mysteriously.

Gradually, the place became completely abandoned, and no one came in anymore.

After finishing her story, the old woman gave another word of advice and then left.

Chen Shouyi stood in place, pondering quietly.

Ten years, that's quite a long time.

Before the mysterious force field intrusion from another world, did this world have ghosts? Chen Shouyi couldn't completely deny it, but mostly there weren't any, and there was no way to prove the existence of ghosts in this world.

At least from childhood to adulthood, he had never seen any himself, nor had anything similar happened to those around him.

There were many ghost stories, but most were fabrications or hearsay, rumors spreading unchecked.

Moreover, even if there were ghosts, they couldn't possibly be so powerful.

After all, before the force field intrusion from another world, Earth was ultimately a world where mysteries were not evident.

But if this matter were true, it would be quite peculiar.

He couldn't help but muse over it.

He glanced back at the house; perhaps it was psychological, but even with the glaring sun overhead, the whole house felt somewhat eerie to him.

At that moment, an idea struck him — why not search around a bit?

He had no fear to speak of.

First, it was broad daylight now.

Secondly, from the old woman's description, this ghost wasn't powerful enough to kill someone at first sight.

Moreover, as a martial artist, his blood aura was far stronger than that of ordinary people. The field of strong creatures, some weak spirits couldn't even get close to him.

After a slight hesitation, he picked up his briefcase and headed towards the dilapidated large door.

The door lock of the house had long since decayed and fallen, saving him the trouble of breaking it open violently.

He pushed open the door, and with a creaking sound, a mix of dust and a strong musty smell hit his face. The room's light was dim, and a thick layer of dust accumulated on the floor.

The windows were an old-style wooden frame, with broken glass and somewhat decayed frames. A gust of wind blew in, causing the windows to shake slightly and creak.

In the front hall of the living room hung a huge half-tilted landscape oil painting, and the living room was filled with many pieces of rosewood furniture. Passing by a chair, Chen

Shouyi wiped off the dust and found that these pieces of furniture were still largely intact.

The house had been abandoned for so long, yet the furnishings inside appeared untouched.

Evidently, the last homeowner was likely frightened away without wanting anything else. Moreover, no one else dared to touch these ominous things.

...

Chen Shouyi walked around, checking every room on each level.

Finally, he tried to look at the basement where the maid had died, but couldn't find the entrance. He assumed it had probably been sealed off long ago.

Before long, Chen Shouyi retreated.

The place indeed had a heavy gloomy aura, like being overcast with a shadow. Staying there made him uncomfortable. Initially, he thought there might be a spatial passage here, but throughout the visit, he found no such clues.

Was he overthinking it?

Chen Shouyi chuckled self-deprecatingly!

If there really was a spatial passage, it would have been discovered and controlled long ago; it wouldn't still be left till now.

He went to the courtyard, practiced swordplay for half an hour, and then returned to the hotel.

...

The next morning at nine-thirty, Chen Shouyi arrived at the Martial Arts Assessment Center's registrar for martial artists.

Inside were already a dozen people.

Some were chatting in groups of three or two, while others sat quietly with a somber expression.

Seeing Chen Shouyi enter, most of them turned to look at him.

"Ha, he's not much older than my son!"

"Probably just signed up for fun, after all, there aren't many requirements."

After a few comments, they no longer paid attention to Chen Shouyi.

"Lao Liu, I think you'll definitely pass this time."

"Haha, aren't you the same? I've often seen you in the training room in the other world these past months."

"The training effect there is indeed good, but it's too costly. It costs two thousand a day. I've already spent two hundred thousand in these months, and if I don't pass this time, I'll bash my head in."

"With so many people competing for limited opportunities, there's no other way, and this is an investment. Once you become a martial artist, this money will be nothing to you."

Chen Shouyi walked over and sat beside them. Filled with doubt, he was about to ask when a nearby young man inquired on his behalf: "Excuse me, what do you mean by the training room in the other world?"

"Don't you have it there? In the Liudong District of Hedong City, there's a spatial passage leading directly to the underground of another world. A few years ago, the city government developed it into a training room."

"It's great for you locals, not only do you have electricity, but you also have plenty of spatial passages. We don't have even one." The young man said somewhat regrettably.

"That's not necessarily a good thing. More spatial passages mean more risks. If something happens, it could be dangerous."

"That's true, but for us martial artist apprentices, it's hard to improve."

...

"Have you heard? There was another cult blood sacrifice incident in Dongning City in Ningzhou?" At this moment, a middle-aged man suddenly brought up a topic.

Chen Shouyi's face turned solemn, and he hurriedly asked, "When did this happen?"

"A few days ago. Are you from Dongning City?" The middle-aged man glanced at Chen Shouyi and asked.

Seeing Chen Shouyi nod, he continued, "This time it was truly tragic; more than a hundred people died, including men, women, elderly, and children. I've heard that Dongning is now under lockdown, and a full investigation is underway."

...

Has it deteriorated to this extent in Dongning?

Chen Shouyi felt heavy-hearted upon hearing this.

Aside from his parents and sister who were not in Dongning and thus reassuring, almost everyone he knew was in Dongning City.

His uncle's family, his classmates, his friends, and Zhang Xiaoyue — he didn't know if they were safe.

Chapter 82: Chapter 82: Passing with Ease

As time passed, people came and went, and the number quickly exceeded fifty. Women made up only about a quarter, making the entire registration area crowded.

As it approached ten o'clock.

A group of uniformed men and women pushed the door open and entered.

The newcomers consisted of two men and one woman: a middle-aged man with a crew cut and a strong aura, a thin and serious young man, and a cold-faced young lady who looked about thirty years old.

"It's the notaries from the Martial Arts Certification Office," someone whispered.

Immediately, the previously noisy atmosphere turned quiet, and a solemn silence prevailed.

Chen Shouyi could clearly see that these people were martial artists, especially the leading middle-aged man with the crew cut, whose steps were so light and silent like a lazy leopard walking, giving even Chen Shouyi a vague sense of oppression.

This is probably a grand martial artist!

The martial arts levels are martial artist apprentice, martial artist, and grand martial artist. Grand martial artists are the most powerful beings known to Chen Shouyi among humans.

In fact, if one is not in the same circle, it's rare to encounter martial artists, let alone grand martial artists.

Of course, even if ordinary people met them, they wouldn't recognize what kind of person they were.

"Director, it's about time. Should we go in?" the cold-faced young lady looked at her wristwatch and asked the middle-aged man with the crew cut.

The middle-aged man with the crew cut nodded: "Let's go in."

Everyone immediately stood up.

The group followed behind the martial arts notaries through a passage, quickly entering a hall behind them.

Inside, there was a professional track, various force testing machines, and numerous instruments.

"There are quite a few people, so let's not waste time and start with the punch speed test," the young notary said, opening a folder containing a thick file and flipping through it, "First, Mo Xingyuan."

A staff member from the assessment office quickly switched on a laser speed meter and then hastily exited.

A young man, about twenty-seven or eight years old, immediately stepped forward, took a deep breath, and delivered a punch using the bow step thrust technique.

"205 meters per second, passed. Next, Lin Haoran."

...

The bow step thrust is the fastest among all martial arts moves, involving the most muscles and having the strongest attack power, making it the most representative move.

It often delivers unimaginable damage with its unparalleled explosiveness.

However, this move is like the demonic path in novels.

Apart from some applications in swordsmanship or spear technique, few use the bow step thrust method to punch directly, as it usually ends with one's fist breaking, and the target being blown apart.

...

"Next, Chen Shouyi!" The notary couldn't help confirming, "You're only seventeen?"

Chen Shouyi stepped forward and nodded, "Yes!"

The notary glanced at him, then at his file, and his face suddenly turned a bit displeased, "The martial artist assessment is serious, not child's play. Although every apprentice can apply, I hope you won't waste resources; come back after training for a few years. Next, Hu Yuting."

He has always been annoyed by those who clearly lack strength yet lack self-awareness, wasting their time by registering.

"Wait!" Chen Shouyi felt unsatisfied, "You can't judge based on age; how do you know I'm not capable? You should at least let me try."

"I'm not picking on you; this isn't about being young. If you'd been an apprentice for a few years, I'd consider you a genius, but according to your file, you passed just the day before yesterday, and you're even a high school student."

The crowd chuckled quietly.

Chen Shouyi opened his mouth, but he couldn't argue with that. Should he blame himself for advancing so quickly?

"It won't take long; let him try," the middle-aged man with the crew cut suddenly said.

Seeing that the director had spoken, the notary reluctantly said, "Then let's begin quickly and not waste time."

Encountering such strict and serious people, Chen Shouyi felt truly frustrated.

He suppressed his annoyance, walked to the speed measurement line, and calmed himself.

Then, he stepped out like a ghost, the power transferring from his toes, increasing continually like tightly meshed gears. By the time it reached his arm, it was like a cannonball, blasting out as a shadowy afterimage.

The punch was executed perfectly, smoothly pouring out all his strength.

"Boom!"

The air exploded like a bomb, creating a fierce wind that roared around.

All the onlookers instinctively took a step back.

"Three... eighty-five meters per second!" The cold-faced young lady notary behind the speed meter, unable to contain her emotions, exclaimed in shock.

She couldn't produce such speed herself. In fact, aside from the director, who among the general martial artists could achieve this?

An uproar arose around them, even the middle-aged man with the crew cut couldn't help but glance at Chen Shouyi, surprised to see a hidden dragon leap forth!

...

"Isn't the requirement for martial artists' punch speed only two hundred? This is nearly double; it's exaggerated. Could a senior martial artist be pretending?"

"This is a monster. The punch was like an explosion, blowing the air apart."

The crowd murmured quietly.

The young notary looked astonished, and after a long time, he came to his senses and said self-mockingly, "It seems my judgment was off, but I only focus on the matter, not the person. I hope you don't mind. Passed! Next, Hu Yuting."

Chen Shouyi was already indifferent, as he said, focusing on the matter, not the person. Anyone would have questioned it. He smiled slightly and stepped back.

"You're amazing, brother! With your strength, you could've been a martial artist long ago. Have you been holding back without taking the test?"

"If I could pass, who wouldn't? My strength has always improved quickly, but my swordsmanship has held me back, so I haven't taken the test." This was Chen Shouyi's helpless smile.

He had prepared this explanation long ago; it was the most reasonable one.

"No wonder!" Everyone nodded in understanding.

Some people are naturally gifted in acquiring strength.

Especially children from martial artist families, who have superior genes, sometimes even possessing divine power from birth. Even if they don't pursue martial arts, their strength in adulthood exceeds that of ordinary people.

This seems to be the case for him.

...

Next was the speed assessment.

"On your marks, get set, bang!"

When the signal gun fired, Chen Shouyi pushed off the ground with powerful force.

The ground's rubber surface emitted a bit of smoke and a foul smell.

He leaped five to six meters with each step, moving his feet in rapid succession like a shadow, reaching the endpoint in no time!

"4.65 seconds, passed!"

Chen Shouyi shook his head. He hadn't practiced sprinting and had no technique in his running style. If he trained professionally, he estimated he could achieve under 4.5 seconds.

If his wind control ability was still there, he might even reach under three seconds.

His strength and agility were 3.5 times that of ordinary people, with wind resistance being the biggest hindrance to his speed. Once reduced, his speed would significantly increase.

Then came piercing small balls.

This test had the highest failure rate.

The assessment required simultaneous handling of seven irregular iron balls, the size of pinky fingers, without missing any or striking empty, for a minute.

Many people failed at this stage; it required solid fundamental skills, quick reflexes, strategic planning, and it hugely tested individuals' psychological endurance—any slight nervousness or internal turmoil would likely lead to failure.

But for Chen Shouyi, who once trained under triple gravity, this assessment was effortlessly completed.

All candidates were stunned, even the notaries frequently watched Chen Shouyi closely.

By the final strength test, everyone finally breathed a sigh of relief.

Though his strength far exceeded martial artist standards, it wasn't excessively over the top.

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By close to eleven thirty, the martial artist assessment was completely finished, with only a twenty percent pass rate. Many missed the mark just barely; a slightly better performance could have seen them through, but nerves or bad luck resulted in failure.

Of course, for someone like Chen Shouyi, even with poor performance, passing would be easy.

"The final pass list will be posted on the Hedong City Martial Arts website! The next actual combat assessment is set for five days later, meeting at the Martial Artist Club then. Please check the website for specific information."

Chapter 83: Chapter 83: Divine Blood

Leaving the Martial Arts Assessment Center, the crowd dispersed in groups of threes and twos. Some had excited expressions, while others looked dejected.

On the way back, Chen Shouyi was no longer alone.

"You stay here? I didn't expect you to be staying at the same hotel as us!" said a burly man with a full beard loudly as they reached the hotel's entrance.

"Yes, what a coincidence," Chen Shouyi replied with a smile.

Through conversation, he learned that the man's name was Lu Weifeng and his companion was named Wei Chenghao. Both were from the same place, but unfortunately, only Lu Weifeng passed the preliminary test.

"Let's have a meal together later," Lu Weifeng said, extending an invitation to Chen Shouyi. Although there were significant age differences between them, it didn't stop him from befriending Chen Shouyi. A person like him, barring any accidents, was destined to become someone important.

Wei Chenghao, who had been somewhat gloomy, also chimed in, "Yes, let's have a meal together, and choose a nicer place."

"Alright, I just need to grab something first," Chen Shouyi agreed readily.

"Let's meet at the hotel entrance then," said Lu Weifeng.

Chen Shouyi returned to his room, picked up his briefcase, took a quick look inside, then closed it back up. By the time he reached the door, the two men were already waiting outside.

The group chose a high-end restaurant and booked a private room.

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"I'm not planning to go back; I intend to train at the training room in this otherworldly place for a while," Wei Chenghao said as he put down his chopsticks and gulped down a drink, speaking in a serious tone.

"What about your wife and kids?" Lu Weifeng asked.

"I'll just have to bring them over. Luoshan City is still experiencing power outages, and she doesn't have a job anyway, so it doesn't matter where she stays. Fortunately, we have some savings, so we should manage for a year or two," Wei Chenghao sighed.

Lu Weifeng was also tempted, but then shook his head, "Hedong City is indeed much more convenient, with more resources. I want to move here too, but the housing prices are too high."

"You and Shou Yi have nothing to worry about. From what I know, Hedong City offers a settlement grant of three million to attract Martial Artists, so how could you not afford a house?"

"That much?" Chen Shouyi said, somewhat surprised.

"Is it a lot?" Lu Weifeng asked, seeing Chen Shouyi's astonishment:

"I watched the news yesterday, and now the housing prices in Hedong have risen to fifty thousand per square meter; three million is just enough to buy a small apartment. Moreover, once you become a Martial Artist, you'll need to purchase your own equipment. Buying a slightly better sword and a War Bow will cost a million.

Additionally, a Martial Artist friend told me that future training is quite costly. You need to regularly procure 'Divine Blood' and some special treasures through special channels, otherwise, it's hard to improve your power."

Chen Shouyi thought he misheard or misunderstood something else, so he couldn't help but ask:

"Divine Blood! You mean the blood of a deity?"

"Well, that's not exactly wrong. You should know that over a decade ago, many deities fell on Earth, right? Aren't you curious about what happened to their corpses?"

Wei Chenghao, who hadn't heard of this either, looked curious, "Were they cloned?"

Lu Weifeng couldn't help but laugh, "It's not that easy to clone them, instead they were cultivated. These remains possess highly active cells and an incredible metabolism, and Divine Blood is the cell fluid extracted from them."

"Why use cell fluid? Isn't directly using the flesh better?" Wei Chenghao asked.

"I don't know, I'm not a scientist. But it should be very dangerous. The flesh of such terrifying beings probably retains some inconceivable abilities, even on Earth,"

Lu Weifeng continued, "It's said that the initial Divine Blood was the most effective, but it has degraded gradually during cultivation, which is quite a pity."

"So are these gods still alive or dead now?" Chen Shouyi asked, voicing his confusion.

"That part is unclear, probably dead. But who can say for sure with these things?"

When talking about taboo topics like otherworldly deities, the atmosphere inevitably became more excited, and they ended up having dinner for a full two hours.

This meal was quite insightful for Chen Shouyi, revealing many secrets about Martial Artists. Compared to these veteran Martial Artist Apprentices, he lacked both social experience and knowledge.

Some things simply cannot be found online and only circulate within small circles and special channels.

For instance, "Divine Blood".

He had never even heard of such a thing before.

But thinking about it makes sense.

For one, the annual production of this stuff is quite limited.

Secondly, if it were put online, it might cause a stir and create a wave of public opinion.

The internet is never short of moral crusaders, and although the forms of the Otherworldly gods are often not human, they are still considered intelligent creatures. Consuming "Divine Blood," for those with a moral purism, is akin to cannibalism.

When it came time to pay after the meal, they found that Lu Weifeng had already settled the bill when he supposedly went to the restroom.

"How about we relax a bit, for digestion?" Lu Weifeng suggested as they stepped out of the restaurant.

Seeing the somewhat sly smile on his face, this "relaxation" clearly had a special meaning.

Startled, Chen Shouyi quickly said, "No thanks, I think I'll pass. You guys go ahead."

"I'm not going either!" Wei Chenghao also declined, lacking interest, "I need to go home this afternoon to bring my family here."

...

Back at the hotel, Chen Shouyi put down his briefcase.

He sat in front of the computer desk, turned on the computer, and once the desktop appeared, he quickly logged onto the Hedong City Martial Arts website. Soon, he found that the list of those who passed the physical assessment was already out. He clicked on the list, and the first name on it was his own.

He glanced at the bottom of the list—the location and gathering time for the Martial Artist Club.

Then he closed the webpage and opened Dongning City's official website. There was little information there, and nothing about "evil cults." Chen Shouyi clicked on a news item titled "Notice on Strictly Cracking Down on Violent Crimes" published the day before yesterday.

He skimmed through it.

It appeared Dongning City was already under lockdown, with a significant number of workgroups dispatched to comprehensively take over the city's affairs and security, and large-scale inspections had started.

He sighed.

Then he looked up news from Pingqiu City but found little useful information; many of the items were dated over twenty days ago, before the power outages. Nevertheless, no news was indeed the best news.

...

At this moment, an idea struck him, and he immediately entered the address of the haunted house.

Hedong City, Shigang Alley 18.

The first few entries were information about this haunted house being for sale.

"Twenty-two million!"

Chen Shouyi glanced at it, feeling utterly indifferent.

He wasn't going to buy it, nor could he afford it.

In fact, the price wasn't high; it was practically dirt cheap. The haunted house was in the downtown area, with the house and yard occupying an acre, and judging by Hedong City's market, the land alone would cost much more.

Sadly, this property had been on the market for three years without being sold.

Chen Shouyi continued his search for a long time until he finally found something useful.

"At the time, to save money, I bought a haunted house, namely Shigang Alley 18. I didn't expect it to really be haunted. Every time I sleep, a woman appears in my dreams. I've had several rituals done and even invited a master to change the feng shui, but it seems ineffective. My mental state is getting worse, and now, even when I'm awake, I've seen this woman..."

It seemed to be a post by a former owner from years ago on a local forum, but when he clicked on it, he found it had long been deleted.

Chapter 84: Chapter 84: Courting Favor

Forget it, it's just a "spirit."

Chen Shouyi stood up, stretched lazily, picked up his wooden sword and briefcase, and went out again.

Might as well go practice swordsmanship, rather than let the Shell Lady watch cartoons all day again. At least until the evening, he wasn't planning on letting her out.

Soon after, he arrived at the haunted house.

During this time, the old lady heard the noise and came once more, stood at the entrance for a moment, reminded him of something, then left quickly.

Chen Shouyi didn't bother with her and continued practicing until dusk before returning to the hotel.

...

Five days passed in a row.

During these days, Chen Shouyi lived a regular and simple life, occasionally dining out with Lu Weifeng or relaxing at a bar.

As for Wei Chenghao, after returning home five days ago, he disappeared without a trace and hasn't returned since.

During this period, his strength, perception, and willpower each increased by 0.1 again.

The increase in strength and perception was understandable, but the willpower increase seemed inexplicable. He guessed it was likely due to spending every day practicing swordsmanship in that haunted house and gradually overcoming the residual fear of it.

Unfortunately, after five days of sword practice, his swordsmanship only improved a bit.

Reached (Proficient 19)

...

Early the next morning, while Chen Shouyi was brushing his teeth, he heard a knock at the door.

With a toothbrush in his mouth, Chen Shouyi walked out of the bathroom, opened a crack in the door, and glanced outside.

It was Lu Weifeng, looking all excited, making Chen Shouyi say helplessly, "No need to be this early, right? Give me a few minutes!"

Before Lu Weifeng could say anything, Chen Shouyi immediately closed the door!

If Lu Weifeng hadn't instinctively stepped back, he might have gotten a nose hit, so he said with a bit of annoyance:

"Really, there's no woman in there, why so secretive? Huh, are you watching Peppa Pig first thing in the morning!?"

"Mind your own business. I can watch whatever I want." Chen Shouyi coldly retorted with a toothbrush in his mouth.

He ignored him; after spending enough time together, it became clear that although Lu Weifeng looked like a burly man, he actually had somewhat of a clownish nature.

Of course, it could be intentional in front of him.

Chen Shouyi continued brushing his teeth in the bathroom, and after finishing, he disregarded the Shell Lady's desperate struggles, tied her up again, and stuffed her back into the briefcase.

Then he opened the door and said, "Let's go!"

...

The Martial Artist Club was located in a manor villa by Sun and Moon Lake in the city center.

It occupied a considerable area, but not massive.

Compared to some affluent clubs, it seemed a bit shabby.

Just as they were about to enter, they were stopped by four fully armed guards: "Sorry, we don't accept guests here!"

"We're here for the martial artist assessment!" Lu Weifeng said with a smile.

"May I have your names?" one of the guards asked.

"Chen Shouyi!"

"Lu Weifeng!"

"Please come in!"

The guards immediately let them through.

"So strict!" Chen Shouyi marveled: "There are even guards at the gate."

"These guys might be actual soldiers, as martial artists and the military often collaborate closely. If we weren't semi-official martial artists now, we wouldn't even get in."

Inside the villa, there were already three people.

At such an early hour, obviously, no martial artists would come over; it seemed everyone was there for the practical assessment.

"That pervert I mentioned earlier is here; that's the young one," one person whispered to the others upon seeing Chen Shouyi.

The other two discreetly glanced at Chen Shouyi.

Even though he spoke quietly, Chen Shouyi's keen senses picked it up clearly.

He pretended not to hear and, while admiring the villa's decor, entered with Lu Weifeng, then sat on the sofa.

Soon, two pretty attendants served tea to them.

Lu Weifeng, quite sociably, started chatting with the trio: "This one looks familiar; probably saw him last time. You two are a bit unfamiliar, though?"

"Our physical assessment was in October; yours was in November," a bald man said grinning.

"No wonder! So, two batches combined into one."

"It depends on how many people pass the preliminary test. If there are many, the practical assessment will happen soon; if not, there's waiting involved. We waited for over half a month," the bald man said, frequently glancing at Chen Shouyi.

Being cautiously eyed by such a big guy every now and then, Chen Shouyi felt uncomfortable, so he turned to the bald man and asked: "Why do you keep looking at me?"

"N-no!" the bald man said quickly, slightly nervous, but once he started talking, he relaxed: "I heard about you and was just curious."

"What's there to be curious about?" Chen Shouyi said irritably.

"Yes!" the bald man replied submissively.

Chen Shouyi was speechless. Was it that the bald man was too timid, or had his own reputation become this intimidating?

...

As time approached, people started arriving one after another.

This time, three additional Martial Arts Notarization Office members arrived.

Besides the director, the other two were different.

One notary opened a room containing a cold weaponry, saying, "Choose a weapon each, then we leave. Our destination this time is Tunnel 10233 in the outskirts of Hedong City."

...

On the bus, Chen Shouyi held an alloy sword, resting his eyes.

At this moment, the director in the front seat suddenly turned and asked:

"Your name is Chen Shouyi, right? After the assessment, any thoughts? Any preferred destination?"

Everyone turned their heads immediately, looking envious.

This was blatant recruitment, almost as if he was preselected.

Chen Shouyi, quick-witted, promptly replied, "I guess I'll return to my hometown, Dongning City!"

"Dongning City, not speaking ill, but Dongning's offers definitely won't match those of Hedong City. Hedong's martial artist stipends and housing allowances are the highest in the province, and the situation in Dongning isn't good now; it's practically on lockdown."

"No matter how good the terms, it's impossible to afford housing!" Chen Shouyi got straight to the point.

The director's face darkened slightly upon hearing this.

This was indeed an issue. Since the power outage, people flocked to Hedong City, causing a housing price boom and continuous rise with no end in sight. The previous three-million martial artist settlement could buy a 100-square-meter house, but now it barely gets you 50 or 60 meters.

He contemplated briefly, then vaguely said, "True, but we highly value talent and can make special arrangements. For instance, our Inspection Department provides additional relocation subsidies."

"May I ask, aren't you from the Jiangnan Provincial Martial Arts Notarization Office? How come it's become the Inspection Department?" Chen Shouyi asked in confusion.

The director chuckled, "Our department's full name is the Jiangnan Provincial Martial Arts Notarization and Discipline Inspection Office. Martial arts notarization is just one of our duties; our main responsibilities are in the latter, handling and capturing martial artist criminal cases."

The other two notaries exchanged glances.

Was this still their stern, no-nonsense leader?

He was discarding his pride to recruit this young man.

Naturally, the director didn't imagine his subordinates were secretly critiquing him.

On one hand, he admired talent; on the other, he intended to form a good rapport.

With such body conditions resembling a Senior Martial Artist at seventeen, barring accidents, becoming a Grand Martial Artist was almost certain, and the entire Jiangnan only had a few Grand Martial Artists, including himself, totaling fifteen.

Though a Grand Martial Artist, despite appearing thirty-something, he was over fifty and had noticed a decline in his physical abilities, necessitating future planning.

Chapter 85: Chapter 85: Giant

Martial Arts Certification and Discipline Inspection Office.

At a glance, this department is clearly one of those powerful and authoritative ones.

Ordinary Martial Artists would naturally feel intimidated.

But Chen Shouyi was still a bit hesitant.

God bless, he's only seventeen, and until recently he was still in high school, suddenly having to choose the path for his future one day.

No matter how mature he was, he found it hard to adapt immediately.

He felt he needed to think carefully:

"I can't decide this on my own, I need to ask my parents' opinion!"

The director paused, looking at his somewhat youthful face.

Still just a kid!

He smiled and said, "Of course, there's no rush. Take your time, discuss it with your parents!"

...

Chen Shouyi looked out the window.

In the distance, chimneys stood thick, white smoke billowing, the entire industrial zone shrouded in a thick layer of white clouds.

Most of the factories here seemed to have been converted to steam engine factories.

He felt somewhat confused.

About the choices for the future.

Before coming here, his thoughts were simple: to obtain the Martial Arts certification, elevate his social status, and improve his family's situation. Beyond that, he had not thought much; as for where he would go in the future, what he would do — he hadn't considered it at all.

In his heart, he naturally inclined more towards returning to his hometown of Dongning City.

After all, it was where he had lived since he was a child.

There, too many memories were left behind, including his first love whom he lost contact with.

Moreover, after returning to Dongning City, he could once again utilize the spatial passage in the underground parking lot of the unfinished building.

With the identity of a Martial Artist, he could easily obtain an Explorer ID, granting him free access to any spatial passage.

However, compared to Hedong City, conditions in Dongning City were undoubtedly more difficult, not only was electricity uncertain but public security had also deteriorated, and cult activities had not been eradicated to this day.

Of course, given his current strength, issues like public security didn't concern him much.

But his parents were ordinary people, and although his sister had some strength, she still couldn't withstand real danger.

Compared to Dongning City, bringing his parents and sister to Hedong City would naturally be much safer.

He felt desolate in his heart; after thinking for a long time, he couldn't come up with any clear solution.

...

The bus gradually drove towards the countryside, and fields began to appear on either side. After driving for another dozen minutes, the bus stopped at the entrance of a village.

The group quickly picked up their weapons and got off the bus.

Chen Shouyi felt that the houses in this village seemed strange, but he couldn't pinpoint where the strangeness lay; it felt as if nobody had lived there for a long time.

As he was puzzling over this, a notary with a horrific scar on his face said in a deep voice:

"Before going in, let me briefly introduce this passage numbered 48233, which was discovered half a month ago, but by then the tragedy had already occurred."

At this moment, a middle-aged man asked, "Is it the incident where the village people disappeared overnight?"

"Yes, it's this passage! During the investigation over this period, we found that a small tribe of over a hundred people lived near the passage. This wasn't the issue; the key was that this group of barbarians were slaves to a giant.

The food obtained by the Barbarian Tribe was mostly needed to feed the giant. If the food was insufficient or unsatisfactory, the giant would devour the barbarians as punishment. Until the barbarians discovered this passage..."

Everyone looked solemn, the subsequent events were entirely predictable.

The barbarians found that the frail humans were easier to hunt than prey, perfectly compensating for the shortage of prey, an unexpected windfall that excited them greatly. Then the tragedy occurred; overnight, hundreds of villagers, regardless of gender or age, were driven into the passage like cattle and sheep.

Under triple gravity, they couldn't survive for long.

"As Martial Artist Apprentices, you're not ordinary people; in some sense, you're quasi-military personnel, militia. Our task this time is to massacre this tribe and kill this giant. But don't worry, this giant is about six meters tall; judging by its development, it's still a minor! Your performance will form part of the criteria in this assessment."

"This operation does carry some risk; is there anyone who wants to withdraw?" the notary asked one last time.

Everyone looked at each other.

Chen Shouyi was shocked inwardly as well.

The last assessment for Martial Artist Apprentices was already quite special, with multiple bone fractures and injuries, even incidents of examinees dying. This real combat assessment was even more brutal and bloody.

Was humanity making preparations?

...

Everyone maintained a tense silence; having come this far, they were mentally prepared, naturally unwilling to withdraw.

"Then let's go!"

The group continued walking on the village's cement road for a few minutes and found that the houses ahead had been completely flattened, replaced by a military installation with over a dozen rapid-fire gun turrets, and seven or eight armored vehicles scattered around.

Besides seeing quite a few soldiers,

there was also a large number of construction workers and engineering vehicles, busily working.

An officer with the rank of major quickly approached, shaking hands firmly with the director of the notary office: "Director Fang, glad you're finally here?"

"Major Liang, that's not fair. As soon as we received your report, we came! Plus, you have plenty of Martial Artists in your military too, right?"

"Alas, there are not enough people! They're all at those frontline passages where tensions are high... Let's not talk about it. These are this session's examinees? I'll call two people to take you there."

"Zhang Youwei, Xie Xiaozhi!"

Two soldiers immediately ran over at a quick pace.

"Yes!"

"Take the leaders to the passage entrance."

"Yes!"

...

The spatial passage was located two meters below ground level and was still open-air, but the foundation had been laid around it and would obviously be sealed off in the future.

"Head on in!" Director Fang said.

The group began to enter one after another.

Chen Shouyi felt the scene shift slightly and instantly felt his body plunge downwards; fortunately, the drop was over twenty centimeters, and he quickly found his footing.

In sight was an endless prairie.

In the distance, a few bizarre creatures could be seen, grazing with their heads lowered.

Seemingly sensing the commotion, the creatures suddenly looked this way nervously, observing the group, seemingly hesitant about whether to flee.

"Feeling nervous?" Lu Weifeng walked over to Chen Shouyi and whispered.

Chen Shouyi checked his weapon, nodding, "A little!"

Of course he was nervous, after all, he was about to face a giant.

He had never seen this terrifying creature, but without exception, they were incredibly powerful. It was said that some giants could be as tall as mountains and crush peaks with a single punch.

"Let's go, once we cross that hill up ahead, we'll reach the Barbarian Tribe. Besides, a reminder: from the moment you set foot here, the real combat assessment for Martial Artists has already begun. All decisions are yours to make, and unless danger arises, we will not intervene." Director Fang said solemnly.

Many people were already breathing heavily, looking nervous.

Most here had never killed a barbarian, nor had they ever seen one; like rookies on the battlefield, regardless of how much they trained, once they were on the battlefield, they couldn't help but feel weak in the hands and feet.

The hill ahead wasn't far, and after walking for a few minutes, the group reached the top and quickly crouched down.

This was a primitive tribe located by a small creek.

They were almost more primitive than the barbarians Chen Shouyi had initially discovered, at least those could build dugouts, but this tribe showed few signs of civilization.

They lived under the open sky, with no buildings in sight.

It was nearing dusk, and the men who had gone out to hunt were returning.

Those proudly carrying prey were showered with adoring glances from the women, while those returning empty-handed looked dejected and were ignored.

Some were draped in animal hides; others wore nothing at all, their bodies mostly thin and weak, appearing malnourished.

Chen Shouyi glanced at them before quickly shifting his gaze to the large figure in the distance.

A naked black-yellow giant lay in the grass a few hundred meters away from the tribe, surrounded by piles of excrement and white bones.

It was sleeping soundly now, its thunderous snores rising and falling, faintly audible even from here.

Chapter 86: Chapter 86: The Terrifying Giant

The atmosphere was quiet and oppressive, everyone was lying on the ground, breathing rapidly.

It was a long time before a middle-aged man with a horse face broke the silent atmosphere and asked, "Should we kill the giant first, or the tribe, or split up and go?"

"Kill the giant. It's the biggest threat, and it's currently asleep. As long as we're careful, there's no risk. If we kill the barbarians, it might alert the giant, which would be more dangerous," said a short young man.

"I agree."

"I agree too!"

...

Everyone chimed in with agreement.

As for splitting up, no one mentioned it.

Combining forces can boost courage, and with three auditors present, it's naturally much safer. But splitting up would exponentially increase the risk for any group.

The terrain was open at the slope, everything in view, coupled with daylight, making any strategic maneuvers impractical.

Fortunately, the weeds here grew thickly, nearly half a meter high, enough to cover the figures.

A group of people crouched, using the weeds as cover, slowly approaching the direction of the giant.

No one spoke throughout the way, only heavy breathing could be heard.

Occasionally, small animals would dart quickly from the grass, startling everyone.

Everything in this alien world made one extra cautious, even a bizarrely colored beetle was enough to be avoided.

The three auditors walked at the rear, having not uttered a word since entering the passage.

Eighteen people participated in this combat test, three women and fifteen men.

Their ages were generally in the twenties and thirties, the oldest approaching forty, the youngest was Chen Shouyi, only seventeen.

But in terms of experience and composure, Chen Shouyi was the most seasoned.

At least, more than twenty barbarians had died by his hand.

After walking slowly for about ten minutes, the giant's snores became clearer, as if vibrations faintly echoed through the eardrums, while a stench of rotting corpses mixed with feces grew increasingly pungent.

At this moment, a woman suddenly gasped, immediately covering her mouth, turning her head away, avoiding any further gaze.

The team, like startled birds, halted quickly by her gasp.

It was a head crushed by a heavy object, the inside already void of brain matter, with a large portion of the face showing rotted skin. Two cloudy, festering eyes had several fat maggots squirming in and out.

Despite the head being heavily decayed, Chen Shouyi immediately identified it as a human head.

Aside from the face shape, the person's exposed teeth clearly showed signs of dental work.

"Everyone, no matter what you see, keep your mouth shut. If you can't, stay here and don't put us in danger," someone said, breathing heavily, with a low, grim voice.

"Correct, if you lack this mental resilience, don't partake in the martial artist combat test!" someone immediately agreed quietly.

The woman's gasp earlier had frightened many.

The woman, looking embarrassed, changed color, opening her mouth as if wanting to say something but eventually remained silent.

After a brief pause, the team continued forward, encountering more and more bones, some of which were bodies not entirely decayed.

Most were human.

During that "meal," clearly there was too much "food" for the giant and it killed too quickly, leaving leftovers to rot.

Besides the skeletal remains, excrement was scattered everywhere here.

Every pile was over half a meter tall, attracting countless insect-like flies.

The crowd hid in the grass, being constantly bumped by these bugs, covering their heads and faces.

Despite his tense state, Chen Shouyi couldn't help but be shocked by the giant's squalor and laziness, living among heaps of excrement and decaying food scraps.

But soon, he had no time to dwell on these thoughts.

The thunderous snores permeated the air with a faint oppressive aura, making it difficult to breathe.

One person dared to stand up, taking a quick glance, then squatted back down, whispering:

"Everyone, let's discuss, we're only sixty to seventy meters away, should we attack now?"

"Too far, no certainty. Advance a bit more, at least within fifty meters," for the first time since entering the alien world, Chen Shouyi spoke up.

Everyone looked at Chen Shouyi, then at the giant bow in his hand. It was a six-hundred-pound war bow, the heaviest bow besides the director's.

Though Chen Shouyi was the youngest in the group, strength brought the greatest authority.

"This young brother is right, advance a bit more, aim for a fatal blow."

"It should be fine, the giant is still asleep."

After a brief discussion, everyone agreed.

The group cautiously walked a bit further and finally stopped.

Everyone slowly stood up.

In the distance, the Giant lay sprawled on the grass, its massive figure creating a strong visual impact.

Six to seven meters might not sound like much, but if this Giant stood up, its head could reach the third-floor ceiling, and it could easily touch the fourth floor by stretching out its hand.

Its head alone was as large as a basket.

Disheveled and filthy, its body was so dirty that its original color was no longer visible. Its toenails were curled on its large feet, indicating it never considered clipping them.

The surroundings were very quiet, causing many to swallow nervously and sweat to stream down their foreheads.

Chen Shouyi felt his heart racing as he quickly pulled out an arrow, nocked it, and aimed at the Giant's head. Noticing the clumsy movements of those nearby from the corner of his eye, he turned and whispered, "This won't do, who will command us?"

"Let me do it!" The middle-aged man with a horse face from earlier stepped forward.

"Watch my hand signals, this is three, this is two, this is one, this is attack—unify the rhythm then."

His gestures were common and clear, understood by everyone at a glance. He set down his bow and stepped aside.

Chen Shouyi took a deep breath, nocked another arrow, and aimed at the side of the Giant's temple, drawing the 600-pound heavy bow with all his might.

"3"

"2"

"1"

In the interim, no one attacked prematurely due to nervousness; after all, as prospective Martial Artists, their basic psychological quality far surpassed ordinary people.

At the wave of the commander's hand, Chen Shouyi instantly released the bowstring.

The arrow shot out swiftly with a sharp whistle.

Thirty to forty meters was an instantaneous leap for the supersonic arrow from the heavy bow.

Unfortunately, his aim was slightly off, striking only the Giant's cheekbone.

Archery is a fundamental skill for every Martial Artist Apprentice, and although many were nervous, none missed their shot.

In an instant, the Giant's head was bristling with arrows.

However, these arrows penetrated too shallowly, mostly only embedding into the surface flesh of the Giant's face. A few archers with precise aim hit the temple, but the arrows lodged mere inches as if getting stuck.

Chen Shouyi began feeling uneasy.

The next moment, the Giant let out a terrifying howl and suddenly stood up. At that moment, faint yellow glimmers rose from the surface of its body.

Enraged, the Giant's face twisted into a snarl, revealing sharp, yellowed fangs like intersecting daggers. A giant hand brushed its face, knocking away most of the arrows embedded there.

It plucked out the remaining arrows one by one, and the bleeding from the wounds stopped quickly.

Several more arrows flew towards its head or chest, but either they were easily deflected by its large hand, or the light surrounding it blocked them.

A powerful fear seized their hearts, and some began slowly retreating. If not for the three dignified officials backing them up, many people might have already turned and fled in terror.

The Giant was far stronger than imagined; the mystical yellow light on its body indicated it was a supernatural being.

"Foolish mortals, daring to offend the mighty Giant. As a price, I shall eat you," its angry voice rumbled like distant thunder.

As the words fell, an arrow, long aimed, swiftly pierced through its waving hand, slicing through the faint glowing light on the surface, but after penetrating the light, its momentum faltered, embedding shallowly into the Giant's cheek.

Chen Shouyi's mind was alert as he began slowly retreating, rapidly drawing another arrow.

The Giant, after yanking out the arrow from its face, looked abruptly towards Chen Shouyi with eyes burning with something like fire. Stooping to pick up a massive log at its feet, it started charging towards Chen Shouyi, the ground trembling lightly with each step.

The speed of the Giant was indescribable, like a forty-five-meter truck barreling towards him at high speed, with the rushing wind already upon them before the Giant arrived.

Some turned pale with fright, immediately turning to flee.

Others froze, utterly stiff, seeming mentally overawed.

Chen Shouyi barely managed to fire one arrow before dropping the war bow and swiftly drawing his Long Sword.

Watching the rapidly approaching Giant, his heart pounded like a drum, making his scalp tingle!

Damn, why are you coming after me?

I'm not the only one who shot at you.

He could clearly tell the Giant was targeting him.

At this point, it was too late to run; even if he sprinted with all his might, he couldn't outrun this terrifying Giant.

As he was about to give it his all, a sharp arrow flashed like lightning, instantly piercing the air and embedding deeply in the Giant's eye socket.

The next moment, the Giant shuddered, staggered a few more steps, and fell heavily to the ground, causing a slight tremor upon impact.

Chen Shouyi turned his head to see Director Fang not far away, holding a Giant Bow in a shooting stance, the bowstring still vigorously vibrating.

Chapter 87: Chapter 87: Baptism

What incredible archery!

A perfect shot, straight into the giant's eye, lethal in one strike.

Compared to this great martial artist, my archery is like a grade-schooler against a college student, not even worth mentioning.

Chen Shouyi marveled in his heart, while letting out a long breath.

During the previous battle, his nerves were tense, and he was fully focused to the point he nearly forgot there were three notaries behind him.

After all, this was not a real life-and-death battle but an assessment, so naturally, they wouldn't just let these prospective martial artists die in vain.

If they allowed this giant to charge forward, the number of deaths wouldn't just be one or two; a total annihilation was possible.

For this group of individuals, the giant was simply an insurmountable existence.

With formidable defenses, immune to almost any attack, the ordinary martial artist's arrows couldn't penetrate its defenses, and even he could only inflict minimal damage.

Meanwhile, the giant's terrifying strength, with just a light hit, could easily crush a martial artist's fragile body into mince.

Seeing the giant fall, everyone breathed a sigh of relief, panting heavily.

Some simply didn't care, plopping down on the ground, faces ashen as if utterly exhausted.

This scene was overwhelmingly stimulating for these fledgling martial artist apprentices.

It was akin to walking through hell's gate, narrowly escaping death.

Chen Shouyi noticed a notary, who had been holding a folder all along, making marks on it—clearly recording everyone's performance.

...

Just then, someone exclaimed:

"The giant's not dead yet!"

Everyone immediately went on guard, even those seated scrambled to stand up.

The giant emitted a flickering yellow glow, with muscles bulging, exuding a stifling and oppressive aura in the air.

Gradually, he braced himself with his arms to get up, staggering like a drunk as he stood.

With his remaining eye, he swept an angry gaze over everyone, mumbling indistinct roars, seemingly preparing to charge again.

But after stumbling just a few steps, he toppled to the ground again.

An arrow was deeply embedded in his eye, nearly swallowing the fletching, clearly piercing his brain, yet he was still not dead.

Chen Shouyi turned to see that Director Fang had already lowered his bow, seemingly deciding not to act further, seeing the giant posed no threat.

Seems like it's up to us!

Immediately, Chen Shouyi drew an arrow, nocking and drawing the bow.

Aiming at the giant's other intact eye, he carefully took aim for a long while.

Then, he released the bowstring.

The arrow shot like a swift lightning bolt, disappearing in an instant.

At this moment, Chen Shouyi was just twenty to thirty meters away from the giant, a distance where any martial artist apprentice could easily hit the bullseye with an arrow, so there was no chance of missing.

The next moment, the arrow pierced through the faint yellow glow, hitting the eyeball, bursting out with a splash of liquid.

The giant howled in agony again, struggling to rise. Having damaged its brain, the giant appeared somewhat dazed, showing no intention to shield its eyes, merely attempting to stand repeatedly.

Seizing the opportunity, Chen Shouyi quickly drew another arrow, nocking, drawing, and shooting in one swift motion, in less than 0.3 seconds, firing another arrow, which penetrated the eyeball a bit deeper.

"Quick, attack!"

At this moment, everyone else reacted and hurriedly opened their bows to shoot.

Half a minute later, Chen Shouyi and several others boldly walked up to the giant. By now, the giant was lifeless, and the pale yellow glow on its body had completely dissipated.

His enormous body lay on the ground; the skin was as rough as sandpaper, exuding a strong and peculiar stench, nauseating anyone near.

This creature seemed naturally able to invoke fear.

Even in death, standing before its corpse, Chen Shouyi felt a heavy sense of oppression, his breathing becoming somewhat labored.

Suddenly, he drew his sword and swung it mightily at the giant head.

As soon as the sword cut into the flesh, he felt massive resistance, very cumbersome. When hitting the neck bones, it could go no further.

He forcefully pulled out the embedded sword, this time aiming between the neck vertebrae gaps, and chopped down hard again.

This time, slicing over twenty centimeters, the entire neck vertebra was severed.

After hacking more than a dozen times, breathless, he finally chopped off the entire head, the size of a basket. Blood sprayed like high-pressure water, splattering everywhere, and Chen Shouyi was splashed quite a bit in the dodging.

Lu Weifeng seemingly wanted to say something sarcastic, but as he approached, he covered his nose and said, "So fishy."

The giant's blood was intensely fishy, and Chen Shouyi also found it pungent and unpleasant, but said, "Fishy? I don't feel that at all?"

"People who defecate never think their own shit smells."

"Quick, wipe off the blood, some terrifying supernatural creatures' blood is highly corrosive or even aggressive, very dangerous, avoid contact easily in the future." Director Fang suddenly warned out loud.

Chen Shouyi was startled, quickly taking off the bloody clothes, wiping the blood off his body, only to find nothing happened, not even skin redness.

In fact, from a certain perspective, he was already a supernatural being.

Aside from the faint atmospheric control power, the World Tree provided him with natural healing, enough to withstand most damage. If it wasn't for this ability not being a combat power, just by the strength of ability, he wouldn't lose to this underage giant.

...

"There are barbarians coming, three of them."

Someone warned at that moment.

From the battle start until now, more than three minutes had passed.

It wasn't until now that a few bold barbarians came over to investigate the situation.

It must be said that the barbarians' fear of the giant had penetrated into their bones.

But for them, it was undoubtedly a good thing.

The battle quickly commenced.

Compared to the giant, the barbarians were much easier to deal with, the mood relaxed, even before approaching, seven or eight arrows impatiently struck the three barbarians.

The ensuing battle was purely a massacre.

The barbarian's attack methods were limited, with only throwing spears for long-range weaponry. Neither the range nor accuracy compared favorably to these prospective martial artists who spent most of their time training.

Moreover, within the entire tribe, there weren't any strong individuals to speak of.

As a group of slaves that had to support a giant, the tribe evidently often suffered food shortages, even some warriors were thin and frail, clearly malnourished. In such an environment, naturally, no strong warriors were born.

By the end of the war, Chen Shouyi's arrows ran out. He simply discarded the war bow and drew his long sword, charging into the tribe. Some barbarians who tried to escape were caught up by him, begging for mercy, and mercilessly slain with a sword.

...

On the way back, the atmosphere was silent and oppressive.

Some had a cold expression, some looked pained, others were in a daze.

No one was seriously injured in this battle, the only injured one merely tripped, scraping his skin a bit, but slaughtering an entire barbarian tribe, including men, women, the elderly, and children, some even nursing infants.

This created a huge conflict with the humanitarian values held by modern society, a psychological shock not easily relieved short-term.

"Among races, there's no sentimentality, only survival. I hope you remember and stay alert!" Director Fang said solemnly: "Upon review, those who passed this time include: Chen Shouyi, Wan Shaochun... Lu Weifeng, Qin Guokai, twelve in total, the exact list will be posted on the official website. Congratulations on passing the assessment to become a martial artist."

Chapter 88: Chapter 88: Going Home

Inside the car, there was a commotion. Those who heard their names were beaming with joy, while those who didn't were filled with regret and disappointment.

Out of eighteen people, twelve passed, two-thirds of them passed the assessment.

Compared to the Martial Artist Apprentice test or the Martial Artist physical assessment, this ratio is undeniably high.

The Martial Artist practical assessment focuses more on the mindset during combat and the will to fight, rather than skills. As long as one is not afraid of battle and performs decently, they usually pass.

Chen Shouyi always thought he'd remain calm.

But upon hearing his name, he couldn't help but feel a wave of excitement.

A Martial Artist!

He truly became a Martial Artist.

...

Back at the Martial Arts Assessment Center.

Those who didn't pass left with a look of disappointment.

The remaining twelve people proceeded with the oath and receiving their certificates.

But it wasn't over.

Seven days later, there's a meeting for Martial Artists to confirm everyone's intentions.

...

Chen Shouyi took his certificate and walked back to the hotel with Lu Weifeng.

"I'm planning to go home for a bit," Chen Shouyi said.

"Me too! Returning after achieving success is a must, can't let it go unnoticed," Lu Weifeng said excitedly.

Chen Shouyi smiled, without saying anything. It's human nature, he was no different.

He opened the room door, checked the Shell Lady in his briefcase, took his backpack, and checked out of the hotel, heading straight to the high-speed rail station.

...

Ping Hill City's Changmen Town.

"Your brother too, he's been gone for seven days, and there's no news, I wonder how he's doing. Before, at least we could call him, but now we can't even do that," Mrs. Chen muttered while mopping the floor.

Nearby, Chen Xingyue was collecting clothes on the balcony, she said, "Mom, don't worry, my brother's skills are definitely good enough to pass."

"I'm not worried about him passing the assessment, it's just that public safety isn't great now and it's been so long since he left..."

"You're worrying for no reason!" Chen Dawei lowered his newspaper and glanced at her, snorted, "Your son has the strength of a Martial Artist, and you're worried about that?"

Seeing how your son can take on challenges effortlessly, it's foolish for anyone to provoke him, truly a maternal worry.

Of course, he can mutter this in his heart.

"What's wrong with me saying a few words? Huh? I find your temper's been rising recently, maybe I've been too easygoing lately!" Mrs. Chen put down the mop angrily, "Look at you, reading the newspaper as if it's interesting. Come over and mop the floor!"

Chen Dawei's belly fat jiggled as he put down the newspaper. He stood up reluctantly and said:

"Did I say anything? If you want the floor mopped, I'll mop it, you think you're so impressive, yet I cook the meals every day."

"I buy the groceries, don't I?"

Just then, there was a knock on the door.

Mrs. Chen quickly went to open it.

It was the landlady, holding a bowl of mulberries, smiling, "Wow, things are lively here!"

"Oh, my husband is getting lazier and lazier, he doesn't even look for work, he just stays at home all day. It's so frustrating, he's gained another circle around his waist," Mrs. Chen feigned complaint.

Chen Dawei chuckled as he held the mop, "Please come in, have a seat."

"Men like Brother Chen who care about their families are good, it's hard to find work these days, no need to rush. Today, I bought too many mulberries, please give them a try."

"That's very kind of you!"

"Last time, it was your son who helped my daughter pass the assessment. By the way, has your son returned from Hedong yet?"

"Ah, I was just mentioning it! This troublesome boy, don't know what he's been up to all these days."

"By the way, I didn't ask, why did your son go to Hedong?"

Mrs. Chen was about to answer.

At that moment!

"Dad, Mom, I'm back!"

A cheerful voice sounded, and a figure walked into the living room, "Auntie, you're here too?"

Chen Xingyue looked at Chen Shouyi and eagerly asked:

"Brother, are you back? Did you pass?"

"Of course I did," Chen Shouyi smiled and showed a certificate.

Chen Dawei put aside the mopping, dropped the broom, and quickly walked over.

But Mrs. Chen was quicker and snatched it: "Let me see!"

The certificate was finely crafted, and after opening it, it had the Jiangnan Province Martial Arts Branch stamp.

The photo and name were accurate; it truly was her son's certificate.

"He really did, really passed." Mrs. Chen's voice trembled with excitement, her eyes slightly moist!

During these days, she endured immense pressure, tossing and turning at night so many times. Just seeing police outside made her anxious, fearful of being noticed, and today, finally, the clouds cleared, and the sun shone brightly.

"Quick, let me see!" Chen Dawei said eagerly.

"What's the hurry? I'm not even done looking." Mrs. Chen turned away, discreetly wiped her eyes, and after a while, finally handed it to Chen Dawei.

Chen Dawei opened the certificate, smiled, and repeatedly said, "Good, good, good! Truly made a mark!"

"Dad, you looked long enough, it's my turn!" Chen Xingyue impatiently said.

The landlady watched this dramatic family scene, and after a long time, couldn't help but ask, "What kind of certificate is this?"

"Martial Artist Certificate, my brother is now a Martial Artist!" Chen Xingyue proudly replied.

After the accident, her personality became much calmer, rarely smiling, but at this moment, she finally smiled.

The landlady's eyes widened slightly, studying Chen Shouyi, full of disbelief, "Is this really... is this really... are you really a Martial Artist?"

...

The landlady left soon after, still looking bewildered.

It took quite a while for everyone's excitement to gradually settle down.

"By the way, son, have you eaten yet?" Mrs. Chen suddenly thought, asking.

"Mom, no need to prepare anything, I already ate at the train station!" Chen Shouyi quickly said, feeling a deep sense of fulfillment at seeing his parents' joyful smiles.

"Dad, Mom, there's something I want to discuss with you about future arrangements and relocation."

"We're unfamiliar with these matters, you decide for yourself," Mrs. Chen replied.

Chen Dawei also nodded, "What do you have in mind?"

"Currently, both Ping Hill and Dongning are experiencing power outages, and the security isn't great. I'm thinking of us all relocating to Hedong City or Ningzhou, where life and safety would be more secure."

"Then let's move to Hedong," Chen Dawei decided promptly. Continuing in Dongning feels unsettling, especially with those cults not yet completely eradicated there. If we're leaving Dongning, let's find a place further away.

After experiencing so much, the family had long shed any attachment to their old home; safety and security are the priority.

But Mrs. Chen expressed concern:

"Housing prices in Hedong City are so high, I've heard it's over thirty thousand per square meter, and the money lent out hasn't been fully recovered yet. We only have about twenty thousand in savings now, how will we manage the house?"

"Yes, if the old house can be sold, it might just be enough?"

Real estate prices have already risen to over fifty thousand per square meter, Chen Shouyi thought to himself.

"Dad, Mom, don't worry. There'll be a settlement allowance, which should be a decent amount."

Chapter 89: Chapter 89: Mouse

The landlord placed the freshly cooked dishes on the table one by one, untying her apron while saying:

"I really didn't expect it, that young man looked so fair and refined, who would have thought he'd become a Martial Artist."

"Mom, you've mentioned that several times already," Zhou Xue handed the bowl of rice to her mother and couldn't help but say.

"You silly girl, he's a Martial Artist! I've only ever seen them on TV before now."

"So what? What does that have to do with us?" Zhou Xue responded.

The landlord picked up her chopsticks and said, "What do you mean 'nothing to do with us'? After all, we're neighbors, and having more connections means more paths. Who knows, we might need his help in the future. You should be polite and call him Brother Shouyi when you see him, okay?"

Zhou Xue pursed her lips, "I won't do that, it's better to rely on yourself than on others. Don't worry, Mom, I will become a Martial Artist myself someday."

"You ungrateful child, with such a cold and tough personality, how will you ever get married?"

"I don't want to get married. I'll just live with you, Mom," Zhou Xue snorted coldly.

The landlord felt both relieved and bittersweet in her heart, laughing, "You're still young, that's why you think that way. When you become an old maid, you might be in a hurry then?"

...

After dinner, Chen Shouyi returned to his bedroom.

The weak flame of the candle flickered continuously, occasionally bursting out a spark, making the room alternately bright and dim.

Returning here from Hedong again, he felt as if he'd traveled from civilization back to a Barbaric Wilderness.

He took out the sword of the man in black, gently wiping it with silk, then focused his mind and swung it abruptly. The tip of the sword grazed the candle, instantly cutting it in half with an invisible force. Before the two halves of the candle could topple and fall, he quickly stepped forward, caught one half, and melted a bit of wax from the burning end to stick the candle back together.

Why do I always feel the urge to destroy things?

This habit is really bad.

Chen Shouyi broke out in a sweat at this thought.

Having finished everything, he reflected on the previous sword strike, suddenly feeling that there was something different about his Sword Qi.

He immediately sought out other objects to experiment with, trying a few times, and instantly discovered the change.

The "Sword Qi" had made significant progress, increasing from its previous length of around one centimeter to nearly two centimeters now.

It also became sharper.

He hadn't disposed of the metal spoon he'd experimented on last time.

Judging by the depth of the scratches left on it, today's cut was nearly twice as deep as before leaving Changmen Town. Maybe soon he'd be able to cut the entire spoon.

He was puzzled.

During his time in Hedong, he had experimented with the "Sword Qi" more than once. Just the night before, he'd tried several times on a whim, but the power and length hadn't significantly differed from before.

But in these three days, if any attribute had changed dramatically, it was his willpower.

After the actual combat assessment ended in the morning, his willpower suddenly increased by 0.3 points, reaching 12.5 points.

"Could 'Sword Qi' really be related to willpower?"

He pondered.

All along, he hadn't paid much attention to willpower. While willpower is important, compared to other attributes, having enough was deemed sufficient.

With eleven points of willpower, one could handle most situations without being flustered or embarrassed in social interactions.

A will of twelve points was enough not to let killing weigh on the mind, and in dangerous conditions, one would not be dominated by fear, and consciousness would remain clear. Such a level of willpower already made a competent Warrior.

Moreover, it could not be actively trained or enhanced; it only grew passively through experiences, making progress neither a delight nor a concern.

Never did he expect that willpower could also be a form of power.

A kind of power similar to the mind.

Alas, two centimeters was still a bit short. If it could reach two meters.

The power that would bring!

Chen Shouyi imagined the scene where he draws a sword and everything within four or five meters is severed in half.

Suppressing his inner joy, he held the Long Sword and focused his mind once again. The air at the tip of the sword seemed slightly blurry in the weak candlelight. He cautiously tested it with his finger, approaching it slowly.

"Huh? Nothing happened."

Strangely enough, not to mention being cut by the finger, he didn't even feel a touch, as if there was nothing at the tip of the sword.

This "Sword Qi" could cut a candle and leave scratches on a metal spoon, yet it couldn't break his skin?

He did not think his skin tougher than stainless steel spoons.

Either this power could not harm him!

Or it couldn't harm living things!

Chen Shouyi glanced at the Shell Lady, who was playing with the Crystal Ball on the bed with a bored look, and dismissed the idea of testing it on her.

If he accidentally cut her finger off, it would be terrible.

The Shell Lady remained oblivious to the fact she had avoided danger. After entertaining herself for a while, she tiredly asked, "Giant, why are we living here again?"

She had slept in the briefcase all day and awoke to find they'd returned to the previous place she disliked.

"Isn't it nice here?" Chen Shouyi casually replied. His eyes darted around, looking for an animal or insect to experiment on.

"There's no Prepared here!" The Shell Lady raised her head and said.

"Haven't you seen enough?" Chen Shouyi coaxed, "Prepared is tired now and resting."

"You're lying, I now know they're fake. They never get tired; you just press a button, and they come out," the Shell Lady excitedly stood up, making a pressing motion.

Chen Shouyi wasn't surprised. After watching animation for so long, if she hasn't figured it out by now, she'd be a fool.

As fortune would have it, he finally found a little mouse in the corner. He pulled out a tissue and cautiously approached it. But before he could get close, it scurried into the corner of the cabinet.

You little thing, I can't believe I can't catch you?

He immediately moved the cabinet, but before he could act, it ran under the bed again.

Absolutely frustrated, Chen Shouyi's anger flared up; he glanced at the War Bow on the wall, tempted to grab it and shoot the mouse dead with an arrow.

"Giant, what are you doing?" the Shell Lady suddenly asked in confusion.

"Catching a mouse!"

In the common language, there was no word for mouse, so Chen Shouyi used Chinese.

"Mouse, is it the mouse from 'Prepared'?" the Shell Lady's expression changed, and she quickly asked.

Was there a mouse in the animation?

Chen Shouyi nodded with a puzzled expression, disposed of the tissue in the trash bin, and gave up. He decided to check the kitchen later to see if he could find a cockroach or something.

"Let me see!" the Shell Lady's eyes lit up as she spoke, then she ran to the edge of the bed and jumped down.

"Wait, don't!" Before Chen Shouyi could finish speaking, the Shell Lady had already darted under the bed on her quick little legs.

Chapter 90: Chapter 90: An Encounter on the Road

Chen Shouyi was startled.

Mice aren't exactly tame creatures. When they get aggressive, their bites can be quite fierce, and they carry all sorts of germs.

He quickly looked under the bed but realized he had been overthinking things.

He had completely overestimated Shell Lady's courage.

He saw her cautiously eyeing the mouse in the corner, cautiously and sneakily taking steps backward.

When she noticed Chen Shouyi's feet, she seemed to see a lifeline, quickly retreated a few steps, and grabbed Chen Shouyi's pant leg tightly, her body trembling.

Chen Shouyi grabbed Shell Lady and placed her back on the bed, teasingly saying, "Weren't you interested in seeing the mouse just now?"

"You liar, isn't this a mouse?" She looked frightened and on the verge of tears.

"Mice aren't like this!"

Chen Shouyi was taken aback.

Realizing the situation, he couldn't help but find it amusing.

Are the cute and harmless mice from cartoons the same as the real mice?

...

Early the next morning, the family packed their belongings and prepared to visit Dongning.

Firstly, to retrieve the money invested in the underground loan company; secondly, to see if they could sell the old house.

Originally, Chen Shouyi disagreed, but his parents insisted on going. Considering that Dongning was under martial law and security had not deteriorated, he went along with them.

As they reached the door, he once again saw Zhou Xue.

She was practicing swordplay in the courtyard.

"Uncle, Auntie, you're going out!" Zhou Xue stopped and called, then glanced at Chen Shouyi.

Chen Shouyi smiled and nodded.

"It's Xiaoxue. We are going home for a bit. Please inform your mom we might not stay here for a few days." Mrs. Chen said with a smile.

"Oh!" Zhou Xue responded.

The group quickly walked past her as she continued practicing swordplay, slightly distracted.

She stopped again and turned her head, only to see the people had already walked out of the gate and disappeared.

...

The bus had very few passengers.

Just a sparse dozen or so people.

Chen Shouyi sat behind his parents, placing the sword case and briefcase on his lap.

He placed a backpack on the seat next to him, which contained bow components and arrows, to avoid encountering the same situation as last time.

The bus quickly started moving.

The journey was desolate.

The industrial areas on both sides, except for the occasional factory spewing white smoke, were mostly shut down.

"Brother, how's Hedong City?" Chen Xingyue from the backseat asked.

"It's much like before. After all, it's the provincial capital; resources are prioritized, and security is pretty good. We can open a restaurant just like before." Chen Shouyi thought for a moment and said.

Even though he wanted to go back to Dongning, he couldn't be selfish and only think about himself.

...

Time passed quickly with idle chatter.

Soon, the bus was approaching Dongning City.

He noticed a checkpoint ahead, with a dozen fully armed soldiers standing by the roadside, spike strips laid across the opposite lane.

All vehicles leaving Dongning City had to be checked. Fortunately, due to the scarcity of vehicles, there wasn't much congestion.

"Why has Dongning become so strict now?" a passenger said.

"No choice, I heard they caught a big fish. Probably trying to prevent the cult from escaping!" the driver said.

"These people should be executed."

"Exactly, it's been nerve-wracking every day."

...

At this moment, Chen Shouyi suddenly sensed something was wrong with the two sedans in the opposite lane. Their windows were slowly rolling down, and the next instant, his pupils contracted.

"Damn!"

Several hands holding guns swiftly extended out.

"Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!"

Suddenly, there was a burst of gunfire,

as gunshots echoed from a distance.

Several soldiers fell to the ground.

The remaining soldiers quickly started returning fire at the two sedans.

Inside the bus came a series of screams; the driver, terrified by the frightening scene, slammed hard on the brakes.

Chen Shouyi's body swayed slightly, but he quickly steadied himself and hurriedly looked at his parents in front of him.

"Dad! Mom, are you okay?"

"We're fine!"

"Where's Xing Yue?" Chen Shouyi asked again.

"I'm fine too."

...

Chen Shouyi glanced out the window. Fortunately, the crossfire location was a good fifty or sixty meters from the bus, making it barely safe.

The gunfire lasted for more than twenty seconds before it stopped.

Eight soldiers died.

Then, the remaining soldiers, armed with guns, slowly surrounded those two cars.

Just before approaching three meters, the car door suddenly exploded with a "bang," and a sword-wielding silhouette swiftly shot out from inside the car. He was already stained with red, though it was unclear if it was his own blood or someone else's.

One soldier was barely raising his gun.

The figure brushed past him.

His movement halted instantly.

The gun fell!

The hand fell!

And half of his shoulder fell too.

His actions were ghostly and unreal, merciless and ruthless. As soon as he approached, a soldier would be killed in a blink, and within a few short moments, three

soldiers had died. The remaining soldiers immediately retreated frantically while shooting back.

But it was utterly useless, as he dodged quickly left and right, not a single shot hit him.

Instead, he closed the distance further and killed two more.

Chen Shouyi understood that it wasn't that his speed surpassed bullets, but rather his reaction was faster than the soldiers' trigger-pulling speed.

"Mom and Dad, stay here!" Chen Shouyi said coldly, quickly drawing the long sword from the sword box. Before his parents could react, he swiftly slipped out the window like a swimming fish.

As a martial artist, enjoying high status and power, he also had the duty to assist in maintaining law and order. Naturally, he couldn't allow such things to happen right under his nose.

Moreover, he held a deep-seated hatred against those cultists.

If he weren't strong enough, the entire family would have been slaughtered.

"Come back!" Mrs. Chen shouted anxiously from behind.

"Don't worry, it's okay!" Chen Shouyi waved his hand and started running, his feet like the wind, his body like a lingering shadow, the momentum bringing a gust of force akin to a level-four or five whirlwind, kicking up dust that formed a cloud of sand behind him.

By then, the man in blood-stained clothes had killed one more soldier, leaving only two remaining.

The soldiers made the mistake of being too close initially. If they had kept their distance, they wouldn't be so embarrassed; seven or eight guns could easily kill a martial artist with adequate training.

"Stop!" Chen Shouyi shouted loudly, simultaneously drawing his sword.

"Another one seeking death!" The blood-clothed man spoke as he flickered, lightly moving over four or five meters, and instantly slashed a sword through another soldier's throat, causing blood to spray like a fountain.

"Damn it!" Anger surged within Chen Shouyi, and he powered forward with his feet, slashing fiercely at the blood-clothed man.

The blood-clothed man took a step back, his long sword blocked.

"Clang!" A loud noise erupted, sparks flying.

"If you want to die, I'll fulfill your wish." The blood-clothed man roared, his muscles bulging all over, and he pressed down with his long sword, his strength unexpectedly superior to Chen Shouyi's, easily suppressing his long sword, and fiercely slashing at Chen Shouyi's throat.

Chen Shouyi abruptly stepped back, deftly circling to the right, and drew his sword towards his neck: "You're far from killing me!"

The remaining soldier, seeing the situation, quickly retreated, widening the distance, then raised his rifle.

He was breathing heavily, aimed for a long time, and helplessly put it down.

The two in front were like phantoms intertwined, constantly changing positions at high speed, making it impossible for him to aim.

The blood-clothed man appeared to be in his twenties, with a face full of rage. He stepped aside, avoiding Chen Shouyi's horizontal slash, but his clothes tore invisibly, seeping out a blood stain.

Chen Shouyi's Sword Qi was only two centimeters, seemingly insignificant, but for expert fighters accustomed to dodging in mere millimeters, it seemed to have a miraculous effect, already inflicting injury invisibly.

In just a few seconds of combat, the blood-clothed man accumulated more bloody wounds, his face growing increasingly unsightly: "I don't have time to waste on you, it's over."

"Fanaticism Art!"

He called out softly.

"Divine Art?" Chen Shouyi was slightly taken aback.

In the next moment, he noticed the opponent's speed seemed to increase slightly, and his strength grew a bit more.

Fortunately, the growth was minimal. In numerical terms, both increased by only about 0.1 points.

After all, this is Earth. Transmitting Divine Art here requires consuming a thousandfold more energy, and the effect is almost negligible.

"Is that all?" Chen Shouyi sneered coldly.

He no longer cautiously probed and dodged, his sword speed suddenly accelerating.

His agility explosively unleashed, a full point higher than ordinary martial artists, he swept aside his diagonal cut with a single stroke, advanced a step, his form as light as a nimble cat, while simultaneously, the long sword in his hand pierced through the blood-clothed man's forehead like an immortal sword from the heavens, exiting through the back of his head.

He extracted the long sword, its blade still pristine, untouched by any blood.

He turned around and sheathed the sword!

A heavy thud from a corpse hitting the ground echoed from behind.