

High Martial 1

Chapter 1 No Prey

The sky grew increasingly darker, and before long, nightfall would completely envelop the land.

Chen Fan stood among the crowd, like most of them, standing on tiptoe to peer into the distant horizon.

From the depths of the wilderness, the roar of fierce beasts echoed intermittently.

If the Hunting Team couldn't return to the Earth Castle before complete darkness, they would face boundless blackness and the constant threat of fierce beast attacks.

Suddenly, Chen Fan felt a tight grip on his arm. Looking down, he saw his mother grabbing him with a pale face, eyes filled with helplessness.

"Mom, don't worry. Dad and the others will be back soon, any moment now."

He comforted her gently.

The woman nodded, then lifted her head, anxiously looking into the distance.

Chen Fan glanced around. The faces of over a hundred people were filled with anxiety and panic.

He sighed internally. He didn't understand why he had woken up in this world after just a nap on the subway. Today was his second day here.

This world was similar to his previous one, except that ten years ago, there was a change in nature. Birds and beasts, even flora and trees, mutated — became larger, more ferocious, and bloodthirsty.

Among humans, Awakeners emerged, possessing spiritual power far beyond ordinary people. They could control the elements, and some top-level Awakeners were invulnerable to hot weapons, able to destroy a pre-apocalyptic town with a single strike.

Of course, Awakeners were rare. Their presence formed cities that attracted survivors. It was said that in some large cities, life was as it had been ten years ago, with electricity, internet, delicious food, and clean water. People commuted by subway, working nine to five.

Resources were ultimately limited, and most ordinary people had no right to enter cities, not even small ones. They could only form camps for protection against fierce beasts.

Forget about electricity — even basic safety was not guaranteed. They lacked food, medicine, energy, and daily necessities, constantly walking the edge between life and death.

The original owner of this body had starved till he could bear it no more, sneaking out to eat unknown wild fruits, which gave him a high fever for three days before he died, leaving the body to Chen Fan.

"Could it really be that something's happened?"

He couldn't help but clench his fists.

At that moment, excited shouts came from the seven or eight-meter-tall wooden watchtower nearby,
"They're coming! They're coming!"

"Really?"

"Where? Where? I can't see them!"

"They have a better view from up high. We'll see them soon."

"Great! They finally made it back."

The crowd erupted in cheers. Squinting into the distance, they saw small black dots on the horizon, getting closer and closer. As everyone heaved a sigh of relief, smiles grew broader on their faces.

However, as the team approached, the smiles on the crowd's faces gradually froze.

A dozen or so people came into view, wielding bows and spears, looking utterly bedraggled. Some were being helped along, others carried on backs. Even those able to walk bore injuries.

There were no hunted animals to be seen.

Some sharp-eyed people noticed that a few members were missing.

The team gradually approached and stopped in front of the drawbridge. At the forefront was a square-faced man with a stern expression, his right arm bearing several bloody wounds, but his face showed only guilt.

Time seemed to freeze at that moment.

The man licked his chapped lips and said softly, "I'm sorry. This time, we ran into two mid-level fierce beasts. They attacked us suddenly. Not only did we lose our original prey, but Zhuzi, Ah Hua, and Xiaogao... they..."

Before he finished speaking, several people in the crowd felt the world spin and collapsed.

The crowd erupted in chaos as people hurriedly carried the fainted ones back home.

The other members of the Hunting Team bowed their heads in shame, unable to meet the eyes of the elderly, women, and children.

Chen Fan's body trembled slightly.

Three people dead?

Killed in one outing.

From the original owner's memories, this was the largest loss they had ever suffered.

The square-faced man was Chen's father, the leader who had established this Earth Castle.

Soft sobs and sighs were heard among the sparse sounds as some tried to comfort the bereaved.

As the Hunting Team slowly entered, the drawbridge was raised, the whole campsite enclosed by over three-meter-high walls, giving a rare sense of security.

The wives and children of the injured men were heartbroken, yet also felt a covert relief that, at least, their loved ones had returned alive.

Those with minor injuries left with their families. Soon, darkness fully enveloped the camp, now visible only by the faint moonlight.

"Guodong, your arm."

The woman grabbed the square-faced man's right arm, tears streaming down her face.

Chen Fan approached; it had only been a few days since he transmigrated, and he was still unaccustomed to his new identity.

"I'm fine."

Chen Guodong shook his head, full of guilt, "It's all my fault. If I had spotted those two beasts earlier, Zhuzi and the others wouldn't... wouldn't..."

"Bang!"

A strong hand landed on his shoulder, and a bald man spoke to comfort him, "Guodong, it's not your fault. Blame it on this damned world. Sooner or later, it will claim us all."

"Go rest."

He patted Chen Guodong again, then gave Chen Fan a grin before leaving with his family.

"Dad, let's go home,"

Chen Fan said, "Brother is waiting there."

Chen Guodong paused and nodded.

The entire Earth Castle was dead silent. In the nearby houses, the flickering of flames was accompanied by occasional crackles and low voices.

"Mom, I'm hungry. I want some more to eat."

"Sleep, dear. You won't feel hungry when you're asleep."

"But I'm really hungry."

"Be good. We have no more food left."

The voices gradually faded.

Guilt deepened on Chen Guodong's face.

Chen Fan's heart sank at the sight. The father of this body's previous owner was a man of few words but was honest and kind.

Every time they had prey, he would distribute it evenly among the people in the camp, taking care of the old, the weak, women, and children, even if it meant his own family had to tighten their belts, causing resentment among some.

In recent times, their luck with hunting had been poor, resulting in scarce food. Everyone was starving.

With winter fast approaching, if things didn't improve, a scene of cannibalism might really come to pass.