

High Martial 191

Chapter 191: That's How Alchemists Are

"Brother Gao, do you mean that your leg technique only broke through after receiving Brother Chen's guidance?" Xu Jie was dumbfounded.

"Yes."

Gao Shan nodded, and with a wry smile said, "Actually, it's quite ironic. When I first started sparring with Brother Chen, he was deliberately holding back. I thought his skill level was limited and wondered if we would gain anything tonight.

But then, Brother Chen's leg techniques became increasingly formidable. I couldn't defend against him at all with my leg techniques. To be honest, without last night's sparring, I wouldn't know how long it would have taken me to reach the Perfection Realm of the Twelve Stages of Tan Legs."

Saying this, he felt fortunate.

He was glad he saw the message last night immediately, otherwise, he might have missed the opportunity.

"So that's how it is. Brother Chen was probably testing your strength at first?"

"Yes, step by step. If he had used his full strength from the beginning, there wouldn't have been any point in sparring."

Xu Jie and the others sighed, their eyes filled with envy.

"I didn't expect Brother Chen to be not only skilled in archery but also in leg techniques, even guiding Brother Gao, who is proficient in leg techniques."

"Yes, no wonder he became a powerful Martial Artist at such a young age. His talent is terrifyingly high."

"It's a pity I practice fist techniques; otherwise, I could also receive Brother Chen's guidance like Brother Gao."

"Who wouldn't want that?"

The few of them sighed wistfully.

At that moment, a sound of footsteps approached.

"Brother Chen!"

"Brother Chen, you're here!"

Some even stood up excitedly from their seats,

"?"

Chen Fan was taken aback, slightly bewildered, "What's going on here?"

"Uh..."

They exchanged glances and then silently sat back down.

From Gao Shan's words, it seemed that Chen Fan was proficient in leg techniques.

They all practiced fist techniques or palm techniques, so asking for guidance would be somewhat inappropriate.

"Brother Chen,"

Gao Shan stepped forward and bowed.

"Brother Gao, what are you doing?"

Chen Fan hurriedly helped him up, wondering why such a grand gesture.

Gao Shan waved his hand, "Brother Chen, you don't know, for years my leg technique stagnated at the Great Success Realm, never reaching the brink of Perfection. After sparring with you last night, I went back, and my leg technique finally reached the Perfection Realm."

"Is that so? That's wonderful to hear."

Chen Fan smiled.

Actually, he didn't mind giving him a few pointers.

It's just that he learned Twelve Stages of Tan Legs after the other left.

"Indeed, Brother Chen's guidance was invaluable. Gao Shan doesn't know how to repay you. If there is anything in the future that Brother Chen needs help with, Gao Shan will give his all!"

"You're too kind, Brother Gao."

Chen Fan waved his hand and looked at the others.

He vaguely understood why Xu Jie and the others were so excited to see him.

Since that was the case, he wouldn't be polite either.

"Is there anyone here proficient in fist techniques or palm techniques?"

His words left everyone, including Gao Shan, shocked, staring at Chen Fan in amazement.

What did this mean?

Did Brother Chen not only excel in leg techniques but also in fist techniques and palm techniques?

"Brother Chen, I practice palm techniques."

Tu Yue was the first to respond, raising her hand.

"I practice palm techniques too!"

"I practice fist techniques."

"I also practice fist techniques."

The remaining people quickly spoke up one after another.

"Great, then shall we spar later?"

Chen Fan asked with a smile.

The medicinal materials would take at least half a day to arrive.

During this time, improving one's level in Basic Fist Technique and Basic Palm Technique would be beneficial.

The few of them nodded like pecking chickens, feeling deeply grateful in their hearts.

Brother Chen called it sparring, but it was actually guidance.

The entire day quickly passed.

Xu Jie and the others were thoroughly convinced and seemed to benefit greatly.

Initially, it was indeed as Gao Shan said;

Chen Fan's Basic Martial Arts were formidable but understandable.

However, later on, even using their proficient fist and palm techniques, they couldn't defend against him.

Of course, Chen Fan also gained immensely.

In one day, he raised his Basic Fist Technique and Basic Palm Technique to about Level 25.

To improve further, though, he encountered the same problem as with Basic Leg Technique; the progress slowed significantly, taking several hours to rise a single level.

To continue improving,

he could either spend more time, from several hours to a day, then to several days,

or seek out stronger opponents.

Chen Fan decided on the latter and planned to find Meridian Refining Martial Artists in the association for sparring after passing the assessment, and even True Essence Realm Martial Artists!

After bidding them farewell, Chen Fan went to the front desk and collected two packages.

Carrying one in each hand, he returned to the resting room.

He first opened the package with the bow inside.

It was similar in size to his previous bow but heavier, with thicker limbs, and the bowstring was as thick as two fingers.

He then took out the arrows, each over two meters long and as thick as an adult's forearm, weighing nearly ten pounds each.

"Perhaps without even using True Qi, these arrows can kill Elite-level Fierce Beasts with a single shot if they hit the vitals."

Chen Fan muttered to himself.

As for the range, he had to test it.

A bow with a 200-pound draw weight could reach five to six hundred meters.

But a bow with a 10,000-pound draw weight's maximum range was only 1,500 meters.

Estimating range by multiplying draw weight wasn't accurate, though the power was considerable.

"Next."

Chen Fan carefully set the bow and arrows aside and opened the other package.

Inside were various medicinal materials, each labeled with their weights, exactly 125 portions.

He took the medicinal materials to the Alchemy Room.

The room was spacious, lined with experimental stations and various containers.

In the center stood a tall alchemy furnace, with electronic controls for temperature and timing.

With machine assistance, it indeed saved a lot of trouble, but it didn't mean one could relax completely.

The preliminary preparation still required manual effort from the alchemist. Moreover, in case of unexpected issues during the process, the alchemist needed to address them.

Chen Fan separated the 13 types of medicinal materials, measuring them with a balance scale.

Refining top-grade Qi Blood Pill required similar materials as top-grade Qi Blood Pill, but with subtle differences in the proportions.

Moreover, the refining steps and the control of flame temperatures had slight differences.

As the saying goes, a miss by a millimeter, a fall of a thousand miles, especially with numerous tiny discrepancies accumulating.

After dividing 125 portions, he began the preparation, which was tedious and time-consuming. It took over three hours for Chen Fan to complete the preparations and begin the formal alchemy process.

A pot of elixirs took nearly a quarter of an hour, during which he constantly adjusted the flame.

When a crisp sound emanated from the alchemy furnace, Chen Fan knew the elixirs were formed.

He turned off the equipment and opened the lid.

A rich aroma of elixirs instantly filled the room, invigorating one's blood just by smelling it.

Chen Fan took out the elixirs and counted them.

There were six top-grade Qi Blood Pills and four top-grade Qi Blood Pills.

Based on probability, there should be at most three top-grade Qi Blood Pills, but there was an extra one this time.

"It must be my luck."

Chen Fan smiled, picked up a top-grade elixir, and swallowed it.

Then the second,

and the third.

In less than half a minute, he finished all ten Qi Blood Pills.

His Potential Points instantly rose to nearly 400,000 points.

"Not bad, enough for a meridian breakthrough."

Chen Fan glanced at the points.

It was a bit low but manageable.

After all, the cost was only 20,000 yuan for these ten pills, excluding electricity costs.

If buying from the association, top-grade Qi Blood Pills would cost 660,000 contribution points.

However, every advantage has its drawbacks; while saving costs, the time couldn't be saved.

With each batch taking a quarter of an hour,

portions would take 1,860 minutes or 30 hours!

Chen Fan took a deep breath, nothing to say, just go for it.

A quarter of an hour,

half an hour,

an hour,

over ten hours passed.

"Strange, why didn't I see Brother Chen this morning?"

Xu Jie, carrying breakfast, glanced around.

"He'll probably come soon, right?"

Gao Shan chuckled.

"Yes, he'll be here soon."

Tu Yue smiled.

After sparring with Chen Fan yesterday, she gained a lot of insights.

Of course, it couldn't compare to Gao Shan's progress, which also depended on personal destiny.

However, after waiting for a long time, Chen Fan still didn't show up in the dining hall.

"Strange, is Brother Chen still not awake?"

They exchanged puzzled glances.

"Let me ask in the group chat."

Xu Jie took out his phone and asked in the branch office group chat, but no one replied.

"Maybe he's just exhausted?"

Tu Yue guessed, "He hunted so many High-level Fierce Beasts the day before alone, sparred with us all yesterday, it's normal for him to be tired. Let's go train ourselves first."

"True."

The others nodded.

Although slightly disappointed, they figured they'd see him by noon.

But as noon arrived, they still hadn't seen Chen Fan.

"What's going on? Brother Chen still hasn't woken up by now?"

Xu Jie couldn't help but ask.

"Could he be training in the training room?"

"Doesn't seem like it? I saw that all ten training room doors were open."

"Could he have gone out?" Zhao Xuewen suddenly suggested.

This made the others' faces change instantly.

The president had specifically told them two days ago to stay in the base for a few days, without specifying the exact reasons.

Chen Fan had killed many from the other faction, and they'd surely seek revenge.

If Chen Fan went out now...

"Should we ask the president?"

Tu Yue worried, "If Chen Fan really went out, the consequences could be dire."

"Yes, let's ask the president."

Xu Jie immediately made a call.

"What? You're asking if Chen Fan went out?"

Sun Wei found it funny, "No, he's been in the base the whole time, not gone out."

"Hasn't gone out."

They all sighed in relief.

"President, why haven't we seen him all morning? Is he still resting in his room?"

"Not sure, but he might be in the alchemy room refining elixirs?"

Sun Wei guessed.

Chen Fan had gotten the key from him last night and hadn't returned it yet, probably still in the alchemy room.

Alchemy often required giving up sleep and food, working day and night.

"Alchemy?!!"

They were shocked, their minds buzzing, feeling completely stunned.

Chapter 192: The Secret is Out

Night falls.

Song Family Castle.

Hundreds of people stood in front of a residential building like quails, their expressions fearful.

Around them, more than twenty armed guards stood watch.

Upon closer inspection, it wasn't just the people within the perimeter who were frightened; even the guards encircling them were anxious.

Captain Guan is dead.

He died in this ordinary residential building.

It is said that the manner of his death was horrific, most likely a murder.

He was a member of the Guan Family, which speaks volumes. If that Awakener noble knew that his younger brother died under mysterious circumstances here...

What would happen then?

Wouldn't he bury the whole Song Family Castle with him? Who would dare to say anything against it?

On the third floor, in a room, lay two corpses, one male and one female. The bodies were already decayed, the stench so strong it could make someone vomit bile.

Cheng Lei looked at the male corpse's face, his own visage pale.

Although the body had decayed, he could still recognize at a glance that this was Guan Dexi.

Two or three days ago, a subordinate came with documents for his signature, mentioning that Captain Guan was missing. Cheng Lei had inquired a bit and learned that after Guan Dexi returned, he went to the residential area and allowed no followers. He didn't think much of it.

He assumed Guan might be engaging in some personal activities, which was normal.

But as the second day passed, and then the third, without any sight of Guan Dexi, his unease grew. He began sending people to search the fortress.

Just then, news came from a residential building about the stench of corpses. He immediately led a team there, and upon seeing the scene, felt the world spinning.

Guan Dexi, dead?

And died in such a bizarre manner.

It was like the scene before them: a man and a woman, alone in a room, both dead.

Who could the killer be?

Why did he or she do this?

"Captain."

At this moment, a man wearing rectangular glasses and white gloves walked over, pointing at the woman's corpse on the ground. "She was likely killed by Captain Guan; there are Guan's fingerprints on her neck. As for Captain Guan, he must have been killed by a third party.

Before killing Captain Guan, the murderer likely interrogated him. This can be concluded from Guan's broken leg and severed fingers. Finally, the murderer must have gotten the answers they wanted before silencing him."

"Moreover, Captain Guan's belongings are all missing. From the few marks on the table, it seems the murderer placed the items there first, then took everything away. It must be said, the murderer was very cautious."

"So, you're saying the murderer's motive was robbery?" Cheng Lei's pupils contracted.

But something about it didn't sit right with him.

"From the scene, it appears that way. But we can't rule out other possibilities."

The man replied cautiously.

Those around them were both angry and terrified.

Angry because: why target Guan Dexi of all people?

Terrified because: The Awakener in Anshan City, if he learns of his younger brother's gruesome death, who knows how furious he would be.

"Thud, thud, thud."

A series of footsteps sounded.

"Captain," another guard entered, holding some papers, with a strange expression. "The family information for this household is out, take a look."

Cheng Lei took the file.

Instantly, his pupils dilated.

Head: Yang Mu.

Younger Brother: Yang Xiaochun

Wife: Chang Juan

These names sounded vaguely familiar, as if he had heard them somewhere before.

Yes!

This Yang Xiaochun was a member of the Guard Team, wasn't he? It was said he witnessed a group killing bandits and, desiring those mounts, called some men to rob them. He left and never returned.

Memories flashed through Cheng Lei's mind like a slide show.

The person who informed him was Wang Xin. He said a woman told him about it. This woman?

He suddenly looked at the female corpse, a flash of inspiration in his mind.

"It's her!"

"Captain, what's wrong?"

"Did you find something?"

Those around him, seeing this, eagerly asked.

At this point, only by finding the murderer could they calm that person's fury.

If the captain knew something, that would be ideal.

Cheng Lei furrowed his brows, as if he hadn't heard them.

Even though he figured out these people's identities, what did this have to do with Guan Dexi? Why was he here?

"Could it be?"

A hypothesis formed in his mind.

What if, after being rejected by Cheng Lei, Wang Xin turned to Guan Dexi?

Considering his greedy nature, it was possible.

"Bring Wang Xin to me."

He ordered.

"Yes."

The man with the file ran out. Shortly after, he returned, looking confused. "Captain, Wang Xin has already left the Guard Team."

"What?"

Cheng Lei was stunned.

"When did this happen?"

"Two or three days ago."

"Do you know where he lives? Bring him to me."

"Yes."

The man left again.

"Captain, have you discovered something?"

Someone nearby couldn't help but ask.

"Not clear yet."

Cheng Lei shook his head.

The whole situation felt increasingly mysterious.

The atmosphere in the room was tense.

Until a series of urgent footsteps approached.

Cheng Lei quickly turned his head toward the door, expecting news from his earlier dispatched team, but it wasn't them. Another group appeared at the door.

"Cousin."

Cheng Lei immediately walked over.

The short, slightly plump man leading them was the Fortress Lord of Song Family Castle, Song Hailong.

Song Hailong's eyes were also filled with panic as he asked, "Cousin, the dead person, is it really?"

"Yes."

Cheng Lei nodded reluctantly.

Song Hailong's face turned pale. He walked into the room, up to a body, and suddenly froze. Then, he began trembling uncontrollably.

"Who! Who did this!"

His teeth clenched so hard they made a sound.

Rather than anger, it was mostly fear.

He could imagine; if he took this body to Guan Dehua, the latter might rip his heart out.

"Useless, a bunch of useless people!"

Song Hailong turned, glaring at the others, cursing, "What were you doing? How could you let a murderer kill within the fortress? And kill Guan Dexi, of all people? Today! You must find the murderer today, or none of you will go back home!"

The people in the room all lowered their heads, not daring to breathe loudly.

Find the killer? Where to even start?

No one would be stupid enough to stay here after committing murder; the killer was probably long gone.

The world is so vast, where would they even begin to search?

"This is so infuriating, you useless people."

Song Hailong kept cursing.

Cheng Lei furrowed his brow, feeling increasingly agitated.

He couldn't comprehend why Guan Dexi would be there.

He had a feeling that understanding this point might unravel the whole mystery.

At this moment, more footsteps sounded from outside.

The room fell silent.

"Captain, Fortress Lord!"

The newcomer was startled to see Song Hailong.

Song was about to explode, but Cheng Lei motioned for him to stop, then asked, "Well, did you find him?"

The man swallowed and shook his head, "We went to Wang Xin's house, but no one was there. The neighbors said he hadn't been seen for two or three days."

"What?"

Cheng Lei was stunned.

"Two or three days ago? That's when he left the Guard Team. Where did he go after that?"

The man looked puzzled.

"Wait." Cheng Lei realized something. "Who processed Wang Xin's departure from the Guard Team?"

As he spoke, he already knew the answer.

"It was Captain Guan." The man glanced at the corpse on the ground. "Captain Guan processed it."

Cheng Lei's eyes widened.

"Cousin, did you discover something?" Song Hailong asked urgently, noticing Cheng's reaction.

Those around them looked expectant too.

Cheng Lei took a deep breath.

"Cousin, I think I know what happened." Cheng Lei began.

"Oh? Tell me quickly!"

Song Hailong was anxious. "If we don't find the murderer, I can't answer to Anshan City. Not only me, but you will be implicated too."

"I understand, Cousin."

Cheng Lei said, noting the crowd around them. "You all, step out first."

"Didn't you hear? Get out!"

Song Hailong roared.

The crowd hurriedly left.

Only Cheng Lei, Song Hailong, and the two corpses remained.

"Cousin," Cheng Lei glanced at the female corpse. "If I'm not mistaken, Wang Xin didn't leave the stronghold but was killed by Guan Dexi, just like this woman."

"???"

Song Hailong was perplexed.

"Cousin, don't worry. Let me explain."

Cheng Lei recounted the entire series of events.

Song Hailong grew increasingly alarmed as he listened.

"Cousin, did you notice? All the deceased share a common factor."

"What common factor?"

Song Hailong asked, astonished.

"They all knew about the bandits."

Cheng Lei's eyes gleamed with a cold light.

"Yang Mu and Yang Xiaochun learned about the bandits and went to the Chen Family Stronghold, where they disappeared. Likely, they died.

Chang Juan and Wang Xin also knew about the bandits and died. Guan Dexi killed them. If Guan Dexi hadn't died, I would think he killed Yang Mu and Yang Xiaochun too. But Guan died, so who killed him?"

Chapter 193: True Qi, 1000 Points!

"Are you saying that the one who killed Guan Dexi was from Chen Family Stronghold?"

Song Hailong blurted out.

Cheng Lei nodded and said, "It's possible."

"You mean the killer could be someone other than Chen Family Stronghold?" The smile that had just appeared on Song Hailong's face instantly froze.

"Hmm."

Cheng Lei furrowed his brow and said, "Because I can't figure out one thing. If Guan Dexi was killed by someone from Chen Family Stronghold to keep a secret, how did they know that Guan Dexi was also aware that the bandits were in their stronghold?"

After all, judging by the sequence of events, Guan Dexi should have learned this after them, by which time Yang Xiaochun and the others likely already faced misfortune. This woman named Chang Juan, and Wang Xin, certainly wouldn't have left.

"Cousin! You're usually so smart, how come you're confused now? This isn't hard to explain."

Song Hailong's lips curled up, "The people from Chen Family Stronghold captured Yang Xiaochun and the others alive and learned from them that there was another woman who knew about this incident. They infiltrated with the intention to silence them and coincidentally ran into Guan Dexi killing the woman. Taking advantage of Guan Dexi's unguarded moment, they launched a successful surprise attack. Doesn't it all make sense now?"

"!"

Cheng Lei shivered slightly.

It really seems to be the case.

Although it's somewhat coincidental, it's like when Yang Xiaochun saw the people from Chen Family Stronghold leading the horse herd away from the city wall.

But does Chen Family Stronghold really have such experts?

Guan Dexi was indeed a Muscle Refining Martial Artist. In Anshan City, Entry Force Martial Artists were as numerous as dogs and Muscle Refining Martial Artists were everywhere.

In a small stronghold, even having a Body Tempering Third Layer Martial Artist was a rarity. A Muscle Refining Martial Artist was simply a fantasy, let alone one that could easily kill Guan Dexi.

"Alright, cousin, don't think too much about it."

Song Hailong exhaled deeply, patted Cheng Lei's shoulder, and said, "The motive is so clear; the murderer is definitely from Chen Family Stronghold."

A cold glint flashed in his eyes, "Tomorrow morning, we'll set off with everyone, capture all the people of Chen Family Stronghold, break their legs, and send them to Anshan City to await judgment by that lord."

"Hmm."

Cheng Lei nodded.

Though he still felt that some things were unclear,

it was hard to find a more suitable suspect than Chen Family Stronghold.

If it was indeed Chen Family Stronghold, could it be that Divine Shooter? To kill Guan Dexi, it would at least require someone at the Mid Stage, or even Late Stage, of Muscle Refining.

But even a Late Stage Muscle Refining Martial Artist, or an Entry Force Martial Artist, could not withstand the firepower net of heavy machine guns, let alone a few 75mm howitzers.

Let's hope that the lord of Anshan City is satisfied with the answer we present.

Next to him, Song Hailong clenched his fists. If it weren't for the dark of night, he would have taken heavy weaponry and stormed in right away!

Those bastards from Chen Family Stronghold dared to kill Guan Dexi? They deserve to die!

...

Night gradually deepened.

The wilderness resounded now and then with the roars of fierce beasts.

In Anshan City, many places were still brightly lit, with men and women in colorful clothing shuttling back and forth, as if it were a different world from the outside of the city.

In the alchemy room, along with a crisp sound, the last batch of Qi Blood Pills was finally refined.

Chen Fan closed the instrument, opened the lid of the furnace, and retrieved the elixirs.

The freshly refined Qi Blood Pills were steaming hot and exuded a rich fragrance.

Three top-grade Qi Blood Pills and seven high-grade Qi Blood Pills, a performance within the normal range.

Chen Fan popped the pills into his mouth like candies.

Afterward, he looked at the panel.

units of medicinal materials, 30 hours of time spent, and the potential points had increased to 88 million!

Not as much as imagined, surpassing a hundred million, but still exceeding expectations. Based on the calculation of ten Qi Blood Pills—seven high-grade and three top-grade—the total potential points provided by 2500 Qi Blood Pills would be only 81 million.

Perhaps due to his high spiritual power,

despite the long duration of alchemy, he didn't feel the least bit fatigued, still full of energy.

"It's time to continue breaking through."

Chen Fan looked at the realm bar,

He planned to keep ten million potential points as a safety net and use the remaining 78 million to impact the meridians.

After all, the requirement for the use of [Cloud-piercing Arrow Technique] was right there; without a thousand points of True Qi, its secret techniques couldn't be used.

By analogy, fist techniques, saber techniques, and other martial arts were similar.

Of course, he didn't rush to consume the potential points immediately. Over the past day, the True Qi in his body had already been fully restored.

He first used the True Qi in his body to impact a few acupoints, then consumed the potential points.

After opening the Brain Void Acupoint and Fengchi Acupoint one after another, Chen Fan felt that the True Qi in his body was almost depleted.

With a thought, he consumed 420,000 potential points, and a massive amount of True Qi instantly appeared in the dantian, breaking through the next acupoint, Fengfu Acupoint, like an unstoppable force.

Suddenly, his body contained even more True Qi.

Chen Fan glanced at the improvements and saw a 15-point increase in True Qi.

"I've already reached the Fengfu Acupoint?"

Chen Fan muttered to himself.

While refining pills, he also searched the association's forum for information about the Meridian Refining Realm.

There were details on the forum, but the truly valuable information required a fee to view.

He spent tens of thousands of contribution points and learned a lot of useful information.

For instance, the Yangwei Meridian is the first meridian that martial artists in the Eight Extraordinary Meridians usually attack, and its difficulty in the eight meridians is the lowest.

The entire meridian has 16 acupoints, and when an acupoint is opened, the True Qi in the body increases, and all physical attributes are enhanced to a certain extent.

If the entire meridian is fully opened, the True Qi would increase further.

If four meridians are opened, the Primordial True Qi in a martial artist's body would exceed 100 points, marking the martial artist's entry into the Mid Stage of Meridian Refining.

If six meridians are cleared, leaving only the Ren and Du Meridians, the martial artist would be in the Late Stage of Meridian Refining.

When all eight meridians are connected and the Sea of Qi is developed in the dantian, transforming True Qi into True Essence, then one steps into the True Essence Realm.

The difficulty in opening the eight meridians increases with each one.

Without exceptional martial talent and abundant resources, it's impossible to do.

"The next acupoint will complete the Yangwei Meridian."

Chen Fan was a bit expectant,

[Consume 440,000 potential points to open the Yamen Acupoint of the Yangwei Meridian]

[True Qi value +16]

[Constitution +7]

[Strength +8]

[Fully open the Yangwei Meridian]

[True Qi +20]

[Constitution +8]

[Strength +9]

[Agility +9]

Chen Fan's eyes first brightened, then he let out a wry smile.

Damn, he thought fully opening a meridian would provide a huge boost.

In the end, the True Qi value only increased by 20 points...

There wasn't much change in the three basic attributes either.

However, improving physical attributes while refining Qi was a pleasant surprise.

Chen Fan looked at the panel,

Realm: Early Stage of Meridian Refining (0/600,000)

True Qi: 58/236 (+30%)

The potential points needed for the next meridian breakthrough are 600,000, over 100,000 more than the last acupoint.

Chen Fan glanced at his potential points, 87 million. It seemed not hard to clear four meridians. As for the potential points needed for the later meridians, he would deal with that later.

He looked down.

After opening the first meridian, his Primordial True Qi had increased from over 150 to 236 points, an increase of over 80.

However, the total increase in True Qi in his body reached 101 points.

"Let's continue then."

With a thought, a million potential points vanished immediately.

Although the difficulty of the second meridian was double that of the first, the massive amount of True Qi made it easy to break through.

[Consume 1,000,000 potential points to open the Zhubin Acupoint of the Yinwei Meridian]

[True Qi value +17]

[Constitution +9]

[Strength +9]

"Only 17 points of True Qi value?"

Chen Fan scratched his head.

Seems a bit low.

But according to what those Meridian Refining Martial Artists of the association said, the Primordial True Qi from opening four meridians was only over a thousand points.

Shaking his head, he decided to continue enhancing.

[Consume 2,000,000 potential points to open the Fushe Acupoint of the Yinwei Meridian]

[True Qi value +18]

[Constitution +9]

[Strength +7]

...

[Consume 1,800,000 potential points to open the Zhubin Acupoint of the Yinwei Meridian]

[True Qi value +25]

[Constitution +10]

[Strength +9]

[Agility +8]

[Fully open the Yinwei Meridian]

[True Qi +30]

[Constitution +9]

[Strength +10]

[Agility +10]

The second meridian was opened.

As the effect of opening the whole meridian, the True Qi value increased by 30 points.

But the attributes of Constitution, Strength, and Agility remained around 10 points.

Opening a whole meridian increased the three attributes by around 100 points each.

Chen Fan looked at the panel,

Realm: Early Stage of Meridian Refining (0/3,000,000)

True Qi: 247/425 (+30%)

The potential points needed for the next breakthrough increased from 1,800,000 to 3,000,000, making Chen Fan feel great pressure.

He glanced at his remaining potential points, only about 70 million.

"I wonder if I can open the third meridian; the fourth one seems less likely."

He sighed, but there was good news.

The Primordial True Qi had reached 425 points, and with a 30% True Qi bonus, the total True Qi in his body was 552 points.

If he managed to open the third meridian, his total True Qi, including the inner strength bonus, should exceed 1,000 points, matching the Mid Stage of Meridian Refining.

"Let's open the Yang Qiao Meridian then."

The Yang Qiao and Yin Qiao Meridians are the other two meridians for the Early Stage of Meridian Refining,

The former has more acupoints, 14, while the latter has fewer, only 9.

[Consume 3,000,000 potential points to open the Shenmai Acupoint of the Yang Qiao Meridian]

[True Qi value +26]

[Constitution +9]

[Agility +8]

...

[Consume 4,300,000 potential points to open the Fengchi Acupoint of the Yang Qiao Meridian]

[True Qi value +39]

[Constitution +9]

[Strength +10]

[Agility +8]

With the Fengchi Acupoint broken, the entire Yang Qiao Meridian was opened.

[Fully open the Yang Qiao Meridian]

[True Qi +50]

[Constitution +9]

[Strength +10]

[Agility +10]

True Qi kept increasing, but the three basic attributes were clearly reaching their limit.

"My total True Qi should exceed a thousand points now, right?"

Chen Fan apprehensively looked at the panel.

Chapter 194: Blow Up Chen Family Stronghold for Me!

True Qi: 752/930 (+30%)

Seeing these numbers, Chen Fan heaved a sigh of relief.

With 930 points of Primordial True Qi, and an extra 30% True Qi bonus, the total True Qi in his body had already reached 1209 points.

The requirement to use the Wind-Chasing Arrow was met.

Of course, it could only be used once.

Thus, he planned to use this move as a trump card.

Glancing upwards,

Realm: Early Stage of Meridian Refining (0/6,000,000)

The potential points needed for the next Chong Meridian had increased from 4,300,000 to 6,000,000.

And there were nine acupoints in the Yin Qiao Meridian; to fully clear them would require at least 54,000,000 potential points.

Chen Fan frowned.

The amount of potential points required was indeed quite high.

One must know that ten million potential points were enough to enhance his body once.

On the other hand, breaking through the meridians was inherently difficult.

Not only did the amount of True Qi required double, but one would also encounter True Qi disorder, and even the risk of energy deviation, which could range from wasted True Qi at best to damaged meridians with life-threatening consequences at worst.

Therefore, when the newly promoted Meridian Refining Martial Artists within the association attempted to break through their meridians, they would often be accompanied by mid-stage Meridian Refining Martial Artists to provide immediate assistance in case of danger.

Those mid-stage and late-stage Meridian Refining Martial Artists had to be even more cautious when breaking through, and even with someone accompanying them, the helper would not dare to intervene rashly if something went wrong, for fear that both would suffer severe internal injuries.

Thinking from this perspective, although the consumption of potential points was high, being able to ensure one-time success was quite worth it.

"I still have twenty million contribution points left. If I use them all to purchase materials for refining Qi Blood Pills, I can buy 1000 portions. If each portion provides 300,000 potential points, that will be 300 million potential points."

Chen Fan pondered for a while.

million potential points, spending 50 million to clear the fourth meridian.

Then there would still be 250 million left. At ten million potential points per Chong Meridian, clearing the fifth should not be a problem.

The sixth meridian, though, would probably be challenging.

"I should still save them to refine True Qi Pills."

Chen Fan thought to himself.

The price of materials for True Qi Pills would certainly be higher than that for Qi Blood Pills, but the cost-performance ratio would definitely be better than that of top-grade Qi Blood Pills.

"Tomorrow, I'll take some time to participate in the assessment for Meridian Refining Martial Artists. If I pass, I'll be eligible to purchase the True Qi Pill formula and the martial arts at the Meridian Refining Realm."

Chen Fan clenched his fist.

According to Uncle Zhang, a few years ago, the awakeners in Anshan City avoid clashing with elite-level Fierce Beasts unless necessary.

Now, he had the ability to kill elite-level Fierce Beasts, and if he went all out, he could retreat safely.

However, to be on the safe side, he wanted to improve his strength as much as possible.

Glancing at the time, it was already eight or nine in the evening. Chen Fan tidied up the Alchemy Room, locked the door, and headed towards the president's office.

He knocked twice. After hearing Sun Wei's invitation to enter, he pushed the door open.

"Brother Chen, how's it going? Was the alchemy process smooth? I heard you've been in there since last night and haven't come out at all."

Sun Wei asked with a smile.

"Not too well."

Chen Fan returned the access card to him with a wry smile, "I used up about ten portions of materials and didn't produce even a single pill."

He could only explain it this way, after all, the pills he refined had already been consumed on the spot.

"Hahaha."

Sun Wei laughed heartily, "That's normal. It was the same for my friend. For the first month or two, he couldn't refine a single pill, but it got better later."

"Hmm."

Chen Fan nodded, hesitated for a moment, then said, "President, besides this, there's one more thing I'd like to discuss with you."

"Go ahead."

"President, I'd like to take the assessment for the Meridian Refining Martial Artist."

Upon hearing this, Sun Wei was stunned, his mouth agape, "You... you want to take the Meridian Refining Martial Artist assessment? Does that mean you... you've already become a Meridian Refining Martial Artist?"

"I think so."

Chen Fan scratched his head, "I feel an energy flowing inside me, which is completely different from the feeling of Power."

"An energy flowing? True Qi!"

Sun Wei exclaimed.

"Hmm."

Chen Fan nodded.

"..."

Sun Wei was momentarily speechless.

One must know, within the entire association, there were only about twenty or thirty Meridian Refining Martial Artists, and most were in medium to large cities.

In a small city like Anshan City, the number of Meridian Refining Martial Artists could be counted on one hand.

But Chen Fan?

He suddenly stood up from his chair, "Brother Chen, you're not joking, are you? You really have Qi Sensing inside you?"

"President, do you think I'd joke about something like this?"

Chen Fan smiled wryly.

"Right, right."

Sun Wei, taken aback at first, then showed a look of excitement, muttering to himself, "I never expected our Anshan City branch to produce a Meridian Refining Martial Artist. The Meridian Refining Realm, the Meridian Refining Realm."

His expression looked even more excited than Chen Fan's.

"Alright, I'll contact the headquarters immediately. At most, in two or three days, they'll send someone over to assess you."

"Two or three days?"

Chen Fan frowned slightly.

Isn't that a bit too long?

Sun Wei noticed Chen Fan's concern and smiled wryly, "The assessment for Meridian Refining Martial Artists is different from that for Entry Force Martial Artists. For Entry Force Martial Artists, the heads of each branch can make decisions. However, for the assessment of Meridian Refining Martial Artists, the headquarters' approval is required.

It's the same in Qing City nearby."

"I see."

Chen Fan nodded, somewhat helpless but understanding.

After all, Meridian Refining Martial Artists were the core strength of the association, and stricter requirements were understandable.

For the assessment of True Essence Realm Martial Artists, the examiner would likely be the head of the main association.

"Brother Chen, your progress is indeed fast."

Sun Wei sighed.

He still remembered that Chen Fan was a Dark Power Martial Artist when he joined the branch a few days ago, and the next day, he advanced to the Transforming Force.

Now, he had become a Meridian Refining Martial Artist.

However, considering the combat power Chen Fan showed during his time in the Transforming Force, it was indeed unmatched by other Martial Artists in the same realm.

Breaking through so quickly seemed to have its reasons.

After bidding farewell to Sun Wei, Chen Fan walked while pondering.

With a two to three days wait to unlock the purchase permission, he couldn't rely on the True Qi Pills.

Tomorrow's gold is not as good as today's copper, so it's better to continue buying materials to refine Qi Blood Pills.

Buying 200 portions, he could refine them within two days, providing 60 million potential points, just enough to break through to mid-stage Meridian Refining.

In the meantime, he could enhance his Basic Body Technique.

Additionally, he could return home. It had been nearly three days since he left the stronghold, and according to the agreement, the old man should have a remnant cultivation technique for him.

As for now, he planned to practice his Body Technique.

In the training room.

In the northern cabinets, there were many weight vests.

These vests were made of special materials, highly dense, with the weights of a single vest ranging from hundreds to ten thousand pounds.

Chen Fan looked at his Physical Attributes, nearly 7000 points, with a maximum load of 70,000 pounds.

He walked to a vest weighing 10,000 pounds and easily put it on.

The last time he trained his Body Technique was in Chen Family Fortress, and his load then was around 5,000 pounds; this time, it was directly doubled.

When he tried to take another one, he realized the 10,000-pound vest was the only one.

It made him smile wryly. Even the early stage Meridian Refining Martial Artists had around 1,000 in Physical Attributes, with a load of about 10,000 pounds.

Fortunately, after discussing with Sun Wei, he brought in all the 10,000-pound vests from the remaining training rooms.

After wearing about four vests, he finally felt the pressure, as if several mountains were weighing down on him.

"Let's go with this for now."

Chen Fan thought to himself, once accustomed to this weight, he could slowly increase it when the growth of his Basic Body Technique's skill level slowed down.

...

Early the next morning, before dawn, nearly a hundred guards and seven or eight military vehicles had assembled at Song Family Castle.

There were even two vehicles carrying two pieces of heavy artillery at the back.

Fully armed, everyone looked ahead at the Fortress Lord Song Hailong.

"Cousin, everyone is here; we can depart anytime."

Cheng Lei walked over and said.

"Hmm."

Song Hailong nodded, his eyes cold and sweeping across everyone present. He said loudly, "You all know what happened. The people of Chen Family Stronghold dared to come to Song Family Castle to kill. They even dared to kill Captain Guan! Should we seek revenge!"

"Revenge!"

Nearly a hundred people roared in unison.

"Should we kill the people of Chen Family Stronghold?"

"Kill!"

"Good! Follow my order, and depart immediately!"

As the city gates opened, one after another, the military vehicles roared out towards Chen Family Stronghold.

In less than a quarter of an hour, the outline of Chen Family Stronghold appeared in everyone's sight.

From a distance, the gates were closed, and inside was silent like the grave.

"These bastards are sleeping soundly."

Song Hailong looked at the scene with rage, his teeth almost grinding.

He hadn't closed his eyes since last night.

"Cousin, should we have our men rush in and capture them?"

"No rush."

Song Hailong sneered, "What about the heavy artillery? Shoot a few rounds first. Blow up these bastards before capturing them."

Cheng Lei nodded.

Indeed, doing so would weaken the enemy's fighting force and reduce their own losses.

Soon, two 75mm howitzers were pushed by over a dozen guards to aim at the gates of Chen Family Stronghold.

The weight of these cannons was 800 kilograms each, and the shells were nearly 5 kilograms. When fired, they could blast a one-meter-wide, half-meter-deep crater in the ground. The killing radius of the dense shrapnel rain around the explosion was up to 75 meters.

With just a few rounds, the small Chen Family Stronghold would certainly suffer heavy casualties.

"Open fire! Blow up Chen Family Stronghold!"

Song Hailong shouted.

"Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!"

The deafening sound of the cannons spread far and wide, and people in Anshan City, a hundred miles away, were awakened from their sleep, looking around with confusion, wondering if there was an earthquake.

With the dense shells falling, countless houses were blown to pieces. Shrapnel and debris flew in all directions, and before long, the entire Chen Family Stronghold was engulfed in a sea of flames.

"Damn it, these beasts!"

With the flickering flames, Song Hailong looked at the scene, a ferocious smile on his face.

Cheng Lei also showed a sense of appreciation.

This was the power of heavy artillery.

Not to mention Muscle Refining Martial Artists, even Entry Force Martial Artists would be blown to pieces under such firepower.

But gradually, he felt something was off.

Silence,

It was too quiet.

Chapter 195: You Dare to Bomb My Village?

"What happened? Was it an earthquake?"

Chen Guodong suddenly woke up, eyes staring ahead.

The next moment.

"Boom!"

Another loud noise, the whole house seemed to be shaking.

"Guodong, what's going on?"

Yin Fang also woke up, instinctively hugging Chen Guodong's arm, asking with a face full of panic.

"Not sure."

Chen Guodong shook his head and said, "From the sound, it seems like a cannon shot."

"Cannon shot?"

Before Yin Fang could finish her words, another loud noise came from outside.

"Let's go out and take a look."

Chen Guodong said, quickly put on his clothes and shoes, and ran outside.

Upon stepping out, he found that many people had already been awakened, standing at the door, looking towards the direction of the sound.

"What exactly is that sound? So loud?"

"Sounds like a cannon."

"A cannon sound?"

Many people around showed stunned expressions upon hearing this.

Around here, the only place equipped with cannons is the Song Family Castle, right? Is it possible that people from the Song Family Castle are firing cannons?

But under normal circumstances, why would they fire cannons?

Could it be? Fierce Beasts?

Everyone instantly felt a chilling sensation up their backs.

Generally, Fierce Beasts don't attack human camps even at night, as the possibility is quite low, considering the tall walls block their view.

However, there's an exception, which is a Beast Tide!

When a Beast Tide occurs, these Fierce Beasts will crazily attack human camps, whether it is day or night.

Could it be, that a Beast Tide has erupted?

"Guodong."

At this moment, Zhang Ren, Wei Tianyuan, and Gu Jianghai also walked over.

Chen Guodong nodded towards them, then with a grim expression, said, "From the sound, it should be cannon fire, could it be that something happened at Song Family Castle?"

Gu Jianghai and the others exchanged glances, their faces also looking grim.

If that's the case, the Chen Family Fortress being attacked by Fierce Beasts wouldn't be far-fetched.

"No, something doesn't feel right."

Zhang Ren shook his head, "The Song Family Castle is nearly forty miles from here, if the cannon fire came from there, it wouldn't be such a big commotion."

"?"

Chen Guodong and the others flinched.

Some of them were also puzzled if the noise was too intense, even making the ground tremble.

"Zhang Ren, are you saying that the cannon is likely close by?"

"Yes."

Zhang Ren said with a serious expression, "It's likely within twenty miles."

"What! Twenty miles?"

Everyone's faces showed surprise.

The Song Family Castle is thirty to forty miles away from here, how could the cannon fire be from twenty miles away?

Zhang Ren frowned deeply.

There's no mistake.

He had participated in several guard battles in Anshan City, very familiar with cannon fire.

From the sound alone, one could tell it was a 75mm howitzer, likely two cannons.

"Twenty miles away," Gu Ze frowned and said, "Isn't that the place we stayed before?"

As his words fell, everyone's faces changed instantly.

Yes, the direction and distance, seem to be the Chen Family Stronghold, right?

But how could there be cannon fire from there?

Could someone be using cannons to attack the Chen Family Stronghold?

"Something's not right, I need to go out and check."

Zhang Ren spoke, "Guodong, get everyone to the basement as quickly as possible."

Chen Guodong hesitated a moment, nodded, "Alright, I'll go notify everyone, be careful."

"Old Zhang, we'll go with you?"

"Yes, the more people, the better."

The Wei Brothers hurriedly said.

"No need."

Zhang Ren shook his head, "I'm just probing the situation, more people means more risk of exposure."

"Be careful then."

"Stay safe."

With everyone's tense gazes, Zhang Ren grabbed the telescope and quickly headed to the village gate.

A strong feeling of unease was rising within him, far more intense than three years ago.

Could it be that someone is truly using cannons to attack the Chen Family Stronghold?

If that's the case, if they hadn't moved here earlier, what would the outcome be now?

He dared not think more, only hastened his steps towards the front.

Chen Fan was not there, the stronghold's safety fell on him, he had promised Chen Fan to protect the Chen Family Fortress.

...

At the Chen Family Stronghold, it was already a ruin, flames were raging, smoke rising everywhere.

A hundred meters away, two cannon barrels looked like red-hot irons, the temperature horrifying.

The accompanying guards showed expressions of delight at the sight.

The Chen Family Stronghold, this is the consequence of opposing our Song Family Castle! Dare to kill Captain Guan? All of you will be buried here.

However, there was no trace of excitement on Song Hailong's face, his brows tightly furrowed, his expression dark enough to drip water.

Something's not right,

This isn't right.

Although the two cannons had tremendous power, a few rounds of shelling should have left the Chen Family Stronghold in ruins, but how could there not be a single survivor?

Even if they were buried in the rubble, there should be some screams, right?

But from start to finish, this stronghold was eerily quiet.

"Cousin, you also sense something's wrong?"

Cheng Lei's voice sounded.

"After the second round of cannon fire, I felt something was amiss, too quiet, not a hint of human voice, and after the third and fourth rounds... until the cannon fire ceased, I still didn't hear any sound from the stronghold."

Song Hailong licked his lips, "Are you saying that this stronghold is empty?"

Cheng Lei was silent.

If it's empty, then it's not just a wasted trip, they also won't be able to account in Anshan City.

"Cousin, I'll take people inside and see, maybe they were all knocked unconscious, hence no sound."

"Hmm, be careful."

Song Hailong warned.

"Okay."

Cheng Lei led three or four heavily armed teams, stepping over the collapsed walls, entering the stronghold.

"Crackle."

Fire burned around them, constant popping sounds.

Cheng Lei sniffed the air, besides the scorched smell, there wasn't any other scent, deepening his frown.

Under such firepower, surely some would die, but why isn't there a trace of blood in the air?

In the surrounding ruins, neither broken limbs nor fragments, not even a drop of blood.

"Could they all have hidden in the basement? No, that's impossible, unless they had foresight, and in such a short time, how could they manage?"

Thinking this, Cheng Lei shouted, "Everyone, search thoroughly, don't leave any corner unchecked!"

"Yes!"

Everyone responded, searching through the rubble.

"Captain, I found nothing here."

"Captain, me neither."

"Captain, I discovered a basement, but there's no one inside."

"Nothing on my end either."

Soon, reports echoed from all directions.

With each report, Cheng Lei's expression grew darker.

Evidence showed his intuition might be correct, the place was indeed empty!

"Captain, we've searched everywhere, not even survivors, and the walls and debris are clean, not a spot of blood."

Three or four teams gathered.

Their eyes carried confusion and fear.

One emboldened person asked, "Captain, could it be there was never anyone here?"

The atmosphere fell silent.

Everyone cautiously watched Cheng Lei's face.

It sounded absurd, but the fact seemed to be so.

Otherwise, why haven't they found anything after searching so long?

"Let's go outside and discuss."

Cheng Lei glanced at the speaker, who shivered, wishing to hide his head in his belly.

"Cousin, any findings?"

Outside the stronghold, seeing Cheng Lei return empty-handed, Song Hailong had a vague guess, but still held a glimmer of hope.

Cheng Lei shook his head, face grim, "Cousin, it's an empty stronghold."

"!"

Song Hailong's eyes widened.

"We've checked everywhere, not even a speck of blood," Cheng Lei took a deep breath, "likely they've evacuated long ago."

Silence fell around.

No one expected this result.

"Cousin, it's not all bad news," Cheng Lei hesitated, "at least it proves Guan Dexi was killed by the Chen Family Stronghold, otherwise, they wouldn't have fled in guilt, taking everyone with them."

"Those bastards!"

Song Hailong gritted his teeth in anger.

At this point, what good would saying this do?

He couldn't present these words to that person, right?

Without capturing the killer, he couldn't account for it.

Suddenly, a bright idea crossed his mind, bringing a hint of joy, "Cousin, where do you think such a large group would move to?"

Cheng Lei flinched, "Cousin, you mean they might not have gone far?"

"Of course."

Song Hailong sneered.

In this world, even small groups find shelter difficult, let alone a hundred people, probably still nearby!

Cheng Lei breathed deeply.

Cousin's right, the group must be nearby, and there are only a few places capable of accommodating them, it's not hard to search one by one.

"Cousin, the nearest large stronghold is Zhao Family Castle, if the Chen Family Stronghold people moved, they likely chose there, even if they aren't, we can get clues from the Zhao Brothers."

"Alright, start with Zhao Family Castle."

Song Hailong took a deep breath, checking his watch.

Time was running out, they must catch the culprits today, or it would be too late.

"Did you bomb this stronghold?"

Suddenly, a cold voice came from behind them.

Chapter 196: It's Time, to Confront the Awakener

Upon hearing the voice, Song Hailong's eyebrows instantly furrowed.

What kind of question was that?

If they didn't cause the explosion, then who did?

The key point was, when did it become someone else's turn to butt into their conversation? The tone was even stiff, showing no respect at all!

Cheng Lei, however, felt a chill down his back.

That voice?

He turned around instinctively, and what he saw before him left him completely stunned.

Corpses, corpses everywhere.

The nearly one hundred guards who had come with them were all lying on the ground haphazardly.

Each of their necks had a horrifying wound, and blood was still flowing continuously.

Nearly a hundred people, all dead!

So quiet in death, not a single shot or explosion.

An unprecedented sense of fear washed over him like the sea, drowning him entirely.

Cheng Lei widened his eyes, looking at the person wearing the Evil Ghost Mask before him, his mind completely blank, unable to think.

In his mind, only one sentence echoed repeatedly,

When did this guy get here?

"Cousin?"

Song Hailong also sensed something was off.

He tried calling out, but getting no response, turned around, instantly falling into a daze.

Chen Fan looked at the two of them.

He was also awakened by the sound of cannons; after hearing two shots, he confirmed the direction—it was from the Chen Family Stronghold.

He didn't know what had happened, why cannon sounds were coming from the direction of the Chen Family Stronghold, but just sitting idly in the base was not his style, so he spent some effort to slip out of Anshan City without alerting others and hurried over.

Then he saw the scene of fire blazing into the sky, dozens of figures searching through the desolated Chen Family Stronghold, and a surge of rage welled up in his heart.

Undoubtedly,

If the people from the stronghold hadn't moved to the Chen Family Fortress, there would be massive casualties by now, with only a handful lucky to survive.

Thus, as soon as those people from the stronghold came out, he slaughtered them all, leaving only these two who seemed like the leaders.

At this moment, the atmosphere was frighteningly quiet.

"You guys blew up the stronghold, right? Answer me."

Chen Fan asked again.

"Yes, yes!"

Song Hailong stammered.

The man before them, who had killed nearly a hundred people without them noticing, could easily kill them too.

His instinct told him this was a deadly question; admitting would mean death, but denying would lead to a quicker death, especially with those two cannons right there.

"Why did you blow up the stronghold?"

Song Hailong was stunned.

Cheng Lei's gaze fell upon the bow behind Chen Fan and blurted out, "You, you are from the Chen Family Stronghold?"

"Pff!"

A clear sound.

Cheng Lei clutched his neck, his body slowly collapsing to the ground.

His eyes were filled with shock as he looked at Chen Fan.

Yes, this person wearing the mask must be the Divine Shooter from the Chen Family Stronghold!

But according to Wang Xin, wasn't this guy supposed to be at the Early Stage of Muscle Refining?

In fact, this power, was it Muscle Refining? At least Entry Force, maybe even a powerful Martial Artist!

"Thud!"

Cheng Lei's body hit the ground heavily, soon losing its breath.

"I'm the one asking you, understand?" Chen Fan withdrew his gaze from Cheng Lei's corpse and fixed it on Song Hailong.

"Yes, yes, I understand."

Song Hailong nodded hastily, trembling like a leaf.

The killer of Guan Dexi had been found, right in front of him.

But he felt no joy, only endless regret.

If he had known, he wouldn't have come himself; now that he knew the killer was from the Chen Family Stronghold, he should have let the Awakeners handle it, right?

"Speak, why did you blow up my stronghold?"

With his identity exposed, Chen Fan decided to lay it all out.

Song Hailong's pupils contracted, then he bitterly smiled and said, "If I'm not mistaken, it was you who killed Guan Dexi, right?"

Chen Fan did not respond.

Song Hailong sighed, "Guan Dexi was from the Guan Family. I don't know what grievances you had with him, but killing him put us in a very awkward position,

If we returned to Anshan City with his body, we'd have no way to explain. Worse, we'd risk getting killed by his brother. So, I brought people here to catch you.

Unfortunately, we underestimated your strength, kid. Since I'm at your mercy now, do as you will."

"Why did you think I killed Guan Dexi?" Chen Fan asked.

Could there be survivors?

Song Hailong gave a bitter smile and recounted the events.

"Kid, that's the whole story. We didn't have a grudge against you. My cousin—yes, the one you just killed—knew you had taken the bandits' mounts but was unmoved, showing how upright he was. I don't claim to be noble, but knowing about this, I would've chosen the same. However,"

He sighed deeply, his eyes brimming with tears, "But you killed Guan Dexi. We had no more options. Without the killer, we'd be doomed. Sigh, if you decide to kill me, do it. I won't hate you."

Song Hailong closed his eyes, tears streaming down his face.

He didn't want to die.

Yet the man before him was so ruthless; begging for mercy wouldn't work, so retreating while advancing emotionally seemed better.

What if he survived?

Chen Fan furrowed his brows.

Such is the unpredictability of life.

He hadn't expected Wang Xin's information to reach Cheng Lei.

Even if Meng Yu knew, he couldn't target Cheng Lei immediately; Cheng Lei wasn't a bad person considering some perspectives.

But their stances were different.

Killing Guan Dexi was to ensure survival for himself and those around him.

The people from Song Family Castle shelled the stronghold to capture him so they could survive.

There was no right or wrong.

Thus, he wouldn't be merciful.

But the troubling part was that many in Song Family Castle knew about it. Even if he silenced everyone there, the Guan Family would find out.

You can't keep fire wrapped in paper; the Guan Family would know sooner or later.

Moreover, he couldn't do such an inhumane thing.

The Awakeners would eventually come.

If that was the case.

Chen Fan's eyes flashed with determination. If that was the case, he would confront those Awakeners head-on.

He wanted to see how he now compared to those C-level Awakeners.

Starting with the guy named Guan.

"I can let you go."

"!"

Song Hailong's eyes snapped open, a mixed expression of joy and apprehension, "Kid, really? You really will let me go?

Don't worry, after I go back, I won't tell anyone what happened here. I'll leave Song Family Castle and live in obscurity,

But you, kid, this will get to Guan Dehua eventually; he won't let you off, you'd better prepare."

Chen Fan coldly laughed inside, this guy's acting was indeed impressive.

But he firmly believed in one thing: mercy to the enemy is cruelty to oneself!

"My business is none of your concern. You should have the contact information of that Awakener, right?"

Song Hailong froze, then nodded, "Yes, how come?"

"Call him now and say his brother is dead, tell him to come to Song Family Castle quickly, and don't mention me, or else you know the consequences."

Chen Fan waved the dagger in his hand, "Do it, leave the phone, and you can go."

"!"

Song Hailong's eyes nearly bulged out.

He quickly understood Chen Fan's intent.

He wanted to ambush Guan Dehua and kill him?

It was clever to turn the tables, but had he considered it was an Awakener?

No matter how strong a Martial Artist is, can they be stronger than an Awakener?

Of course, he wouldn't remind Chen Fan, instead wishing Guan Dehua would come soon. After all, to find the killer, he'd lost his cousin, Song Family Castle was severely damaged, and Guan Dehua wouldn't punish him much.

"Alright, kid, I'll do it, but will you keep your word and let me go?"

He asked uneasily.

"You said it yourself, we just have different stands. Even if I let you go, what harm can you do to me?"
Chen Fan sneered.

"Yes, yes."

Song Hailong was overjoyed.

Yes, I can't harm you. After you're killed by the Awakener, I'll bring people to annihilate your kin!

"Call him, remember, no tricks." Chen Fan said.

"No tricks, no tricks."

Song Hailong took out his phone, trembling, found Guan Dehua's number, and called, putting it on speaker.

"Ring... ring... ring..."

The sound made Song Hailong's heart race.

If not for the killer's gaze, he wouldn't have made the call.

Chen Fan took a deep breath.

"Ring... ring..."

After a few seconds, the call connected, and a stern voice came through, "Song Hailong, my time is valuable. Your next words better be worthwhile, or I might just rename Song Family Castle."

The voice made Song Hailong turn pale and sweat profusely.

What to say? It was indeed valuable information but he worried it might be too shocking for him.

Chapter 197: Waiting for My Good News

The next moment, Song Hailong felt a cold gaze fall upon him.

Trapped between a wolf in front and a tiger behind.

Following the words of this masked man might give a slim chance of survival, but violating them would spell doom immediately.

He gritted his teeth, hardened his heart, and mustered the courage to say, "Lord Guan, I, I have some very bad news to tell you. You, you'd better be prepared."

"What?"

The middle-aged man's voice dropped, spitting out a single word.

"Speak."

"Your, your brother, Captain Guan Dexi, he, he's dead."

The atmosphere suddenly fell silent.

Time seemed to freeze at that moment.

But Chen Fan knew it was the calm before the storm.

Song Hailong's body trembled uncontrollably, but he still managed to cast a bitter smile at Chen Fan, as if to say, Little brother, I am really walking on a knife's edge for you, you better let me go afterwards.

"What did you say?"

After a brief silence, a voice filled with anger erupted from the other end of the phone, "Song Hailong, do you know what you just said? I'll give you one more chance to organize your words."

Song Hailong was so scared that snot and tears overflowed. A dead person couldn't come back to life, so no matter how many chances he got to organize his words, it was useless.

"Hmm?"

"Lord, Lord Guan, I didn't want to tell you this either, but this morning, someone found Captain Guan's body in a residential building. I confirmed multiple times, it is indeed Captain Guan's body. Lord Guan, every word I say is true, I dare not tell a lie."

He said, crying and snuffling.

"This guy, his acting is truly remarkable. The body was obviously found last night, but his lies sound as real as the truth." A cold glint flashed in Chen Fan's eyes, strengthening his resolve to eliminate the problem completely.

"Song! Hai! Long!"

The man on the phone roared, giving the impression of a volcanic eruption.

"Tell me again!!! Whose body is it!!!"

With a "thud,"

Song Hailong knelt on the ground in fear, continuously kowtowing and pleading for mercy, "Lord Guan, I didn't want this to happen either, I really didn't, Lord Guan, spare my life, spare my life!"

He was truly terrified.

One can imagine, if he had directly brought the body over early this morning, he might have been torn apart in a fit of rage by Guan Dehua.

"Lord Guan, every word I say is true, Lord Guan..."

The other side suddenly fell silent. After a moment, a voice filled with bone-chilling coldness rang out again.

"Fine, I understand. Now, tell me, who killed him? Where is the murderer? Have you captured them?"

"N-no."

Song Hailong stammered, "The body has already decomposed. It's been three days since he was murdered. The killer has long since escaped, and the scene left no traces. Lord Guan, I've really tried my best, Lord Guan."

"Good, good, Song Hailong, you did a fantastic job."

Guan Dehua said, laughing in rage, "My brother, my own brother, died in your place, three days ago, the body already decomposed by the time you found it,

now three days have passed, and you still don't know who the killer is, fine, I get it. I will come over now, you better stay put. If I find you're not there when I arrive, even if you escape to the ends of the earth, I'll find you and tear you limb from limb!"

After he finished speaking, the line went dead.

Song Hailong was drenched in sweat, as if he had just come out of the water.

He gave a miserable smile to Chen Fan and said, "Little brother, you have ruined me. Did you hear what he just said? Even if I escape to the ends of the earth, he won't let me go; he will tear me limb from limb."

"Sorry."

Chen Fan sighed softly,

then a flash of the knife.

"You, you..."

Song Hailong covered his neck, his eyes filled with disbelief.

Why, why?

It was agreed that if he got the job done, he'd be let go.

"Dying by my hand is better than being captured by Guan Dehua and being torn limb from limb. At least, it's not as painful," said Chen Fan slowly.

"Splurt!"

Blood spurted out of Song Hailong's mouth as he fell to the ground, motionless. It was unclear whether he died from suffocation or rage.

Chen Fan put away his dagger and looked into the distance.

Soon, a limping figure approached.

"Xiaofan, are you okay?"

The person was none other than Zhang Ren.

He had arrived earlier than Chen Fan, and thus had witnessed the events unfold. Although he wanted to intervene, when he saw Chen Fan subtly shaking his head, he stayed put.

"I'm fine, Uncle Zhang."

Chen Fan took off his mask.

Zhang Ren breathed a sigh of relief.

He then looked at Chen Fan with a complicated expression.

Instinct told him that in just a few days, Chen Fan had become even stronger, especially judging by the way he dealt with the guards earlier, with a speed so fast that Zhang Ren couldn't even see clearly.

One could imagine if they fought in earnest, he wouldn't be able to last a single round against Chen Fan.

"Xiaofan, what exactly is going on? Are these people from Song Family Castle? What about them?"

"Uncle Zhang, to make a long story short, the fact that I killed Guan Dexi has been exposed. These people from Song Family Castle came because of that. Many people in Song Family Castle know about this, and it's only a matter of time before the Awakened in Anshan City find out too,

So, I had this guy call Guan Dexi's brother, Guan Dehua. If all goes well, it won't be long before he comes to Song Family Castle with his people."

Chen Fan quickly explained.

"Xiaofan, you, you?"

Zhang Ren's heart jumped to his throat.

So, what was Chen Fan planning to do next?

"Yes, I plan to face him head-on."

Chen Fan gave him a small smile, "Don't worry, I am now a Meridian Refining Martial Artist."

"Mer, Meridian Refining!"

Zhang Ren's mouth dropped open. Although he had been somewhat prepared, hearing these words from Chen Fan still left him utterly shocked.

He had witnessed Chen Fan's meteoric rise from the Body Tempering Realm to becoming a Meridian Refining Martial Artist.

"That's all for now. There isn't much time left."

Chen Fan put his mask back on, picked up his longbow, and said, "Don't worry about me, Uncle Zhang. Since I am doing this, I am absolutely confident. Go back and wait for my good news. By the way, keep what happened here a secret from my father and the others."

With that, he vanished from sight.

"Xiaofan, be careful."

Zhang Ren's eyes moistened as he looked in the direction where Chen Fan had disappeared, filled with reluctance.

C-level Awakened were the most formidable beings in Anshan City, each extremely difficult to deal with, especially Guan Dexi, who controlled martial artists as if it was child's play.

Therefore, besides himself, he had a loyal following of Entry Force Martial Artists.

Was Chen Fan alone really a match for him?

He clenched his fist, contemplating whether he should follow. After a moment, he released it, realizing that he would only be a burden if he went along.

Perhaps, he could only pray for success.

In the Chen Family Fortress.

On the watchtower, two or three figures peered into the distance through a telescope without blinking.

Unfortunately, the telescope's range was limited; beyond the endless wilderness, there was nothing else.

"Zhang Ren has been gone for so long; do you think something happened to him?" someone asked worriedly from behind the door.

"No, Old Zhang is the best among us. He's so cautious; how could anything happen to him?"

"Exactly, just wait here a bit, he'll be back soon."

They comforted each other.

"I see him! He's back!"

Just then, a joyful voice rang out from the watchtower.

"Is Zhang Ren okay? Is he injured?" Chen Guodong asked anxiously.

"No, he looks the same as before, heading to the gate now."

As soon as these words fell, a figure appeared at the gate.

Upon seeing Zhang Ren return safely, Chen Guodong, Gu Jianghai, and the others breathed a sigh of relief and gathered around.

"Old Zhang, what about it? Was the cannon fire from our old village?"

Seeing the concern in their eyes, Zhang Ren recalled Chen Fan's words before he left, and shook his head with a smile, "I heard it wrong earlier. The cannon was fired by the guards at Song Family Castle during target practice. The targets were close to us, so it sounded louder."

"So that's how it is."

"Thank goodness, I thought someone was using cannons to attack our Chen Family Stronghold."

"Exactly, what kind of grudge would lead to that? We were just discussing that if we hadn't moved, we'd be doomed now."

"Ha ha ha, turns out it was a false alarm. I'll go call everyone back," Wei Tianyuan said eagerly.

"Everyone, let's go together," Wei Tiangong laughed.

"Hmm."

Zhang Ren nodded, sighing inwardly.

Actually, whether he called everyone out or not, the result would be the same.

If Chen Fan won, everyone would be happy. If Chen Fan lost, and the Awakened came to investigate, hiding wouldn't help anyone.

Of course, there was no need to tell the people in the stronghold about this; it would only cause unnecessary panic.

"Old Zhang, are you hiding something from us?" Wei Tiangong suddenly asked on the way back.

Chen Guodong and the others were taken aback.

"Brother, how did you notice?" Wei Tianyuan asked in confusion.

"Didn't you notice his red eyes?"

Wei Tiangong turned around and asked.

"It does seem like it," Gu Jianghai frowned.

"Does that mean, it's not as he said?"

"What's really going on? Why would he hide it from us? We're all close here, is there anything he can't tell us?" They couldn't help but ask.

"I don't know, maybe he has his reasons."

Wei Tiangong smiled bitterly, "But no matter what, he definitely won't harm us. Let's just do as he said."

"..."

They were stunned for a moment but eventually nodded.

Chapter 198: Are You an Awakener?

"Crack!"

A sudden sound echoed in the quiet room.

A square-faced man crushed the phone in his hand, rage erupting from his eyes.

Song Hailong, a calculating schemer, thought that a simple phone call could dissipate his anger and save his life once he reached the Song Family Castle?

Not a chance!

If his brother was truly dead, then everyone in the Song Family Castle would be buried with him!

With this thought, he lifted his head and shouted towards the outside.

"Someone, come!"

The moment he finished speaking, a respectful voice was heard from outside the door.

"Sir, what can I do for you?"

"Gather everyone and assemble in the courtyard with weapons."

"Understood."

In less than a minute, six men were standing in the courtyard, among them was Qin Ye, who had met Chen Fan once before.

The six of them looked ahead with anticipation in their eyes.

Soon, the sound of footsteps approached, and Guan Dehua stepped out.

"Sir, everyone is here. Do you have any orders for us?" The leading man said, with a glint of excitement in his eyes.

Not only him, but the other five also had the same look, like fanatical followers seeing their idol.

Guan Dehua glanced over the six people present and nodded slightly.

Although he was also an Awakener, strictly speaking, he wasn't the combat type. However, he was luckier than those non-combat Awakeners; his superpower was Mind Control.

The six men were martial artists he had carefully trained, each one a Meridian Refining Martial Artist, and some were even at the Mid Stage of Meridian Refining, all proficient in cold weapons and formidable in combat.

Even other C-level Awakeners in Anshan City would be at considerable risk if one of these got close.

But these men were utterly loyal to him, willing to die at his command without hesitation, considering it an honor.

"Good."

He uttered a word, then glanced at a distant villa, his pupils contracting.

He couldn't believe his brother was dead. However, not even if Song Hailong had ten guts would he dare lie about such a thing.

So, he had to move immediately, the faster, the better. If he found Dexi dead upon reaching the Song Family Castle, he would undoubtedly kill Song Hailong and his group and then seek out Meng Xue to extract the identity of the murderer.

Then, the guy who killed his brother would be found at any cost and made to live in agony!

"Set off for the Song Family Castle."

"Yes!"

The six men responded in unison.

No one asked what they were going to do because they knew their only duty was to obey the orders of their lord unconditionally.

The six figures surrounded Guan Dehua and flew down the mountain path.

Meanwhile, atop the mountain, in a tightly guarded villa that even blocked electronic signals,

On the second floor, an old lady with white hair watched through a large floor-to-ceiling window, a mocking smile on her lips.

Those guys had no idea what they were walking into.

Soon, her eyes revealed anticipation. Perhaps within a short time, she might regain her freedom.

The figures of Guan Dehua and his men moved incredibly fast, in the blink of an eye, they had charged out of the city gate, heading into the distance.

At the rear of the group, Qin Ye glanced back before refocusing.

Alright, let that guy live a while longer, soon, he would be back.

In less than a minute, the group had covered nearly half the distance.

Seeing they were almost at the Song Family Castle, Guan Dehua's heart grew more apprehensive.

He felt a trace of hope, what if Song Hailong had been lying to him? Though unlikely, what if?

What if...

Just then, his whole body tensed up, a sense of extreme danger surged within him.

"Whoosh!"

The air on the left side shifted.

A nearly two-meter-long, two-finger-thick arrow shot towards him, a black streak carrying the momentum of thunder.

"Crack!"

A crisp sound.

A thick protective shield appeared on the contact surface between the arrow and Guan Dehua's body, holding the arrow back.

"What is that?"

In the distance, Chen Fan watched in surprise.

He vaguely guessed that the person Qin Ye and the others were protecting in the middle must be Guan Dehua, and aimed at him first.

However, the seemingly sure-hit arrow was blocked by a protective shield-like item?

"Sir!"

"Lord Guan!"

The people around noticed this scene, their faces showing shock and panic.

They hadn't detected where or when the arrow had been shot, only noticing it as it neared.

"Kill the archer!"

Guan Dehua gritted his teeth, grabbed the rapidly spinning arrow at his chest, and hurled it aside with a roar.

"To think he has such means."

Chen Fan sneered, drawing three more arrows and aiming them at Guan Dehua.

He wanted to see how many arrows the opponent could block.

With a loud crack, the arrows traversed the thousand-meter distance in an instant.

"Sir!"

The two men in front saw Chen Fan's movement, but before they could finish speaking, the arrows were upon them.

"What!"

Guan Dehua's eyelids twitched furiously, a strong sense of impending crisis rising within him.

He hesitated no longer, silently mouthing two words, and the next moment, he vanished from the spot.

"Whoosh!"

The arrows pierced the air, shooting into the distance.

"Gone?"

Chen Fan frowned.

Uncle Zhang had said Awakeners might have teleportation items, meaning.

"Lord Guan?"

Someone exclaimed.

"Don't panic, the lord has only temporarily retreated to a safe place. Now it's our turn to act and kill that guy," the leading man said.

"Brother Rui is right, that guy deserves to die!"

The six men focused on Chen Fan in the distance, their eyes filled with overwhelming hatred.

Thanks to Lord Guan's trump card, otherwise, the consequences would have been unthinkable.

"That guy must be nearby, hasn't gone far."

Chen Fan thought.

Judging by the speed of the opponent's earlier reaction, it wasn't much stronger than those Meridian Refining Martial Artists, but he had some extraordinary items.

He had to find him quickly, otherwise, today's plan would fail; as for those Meridian Refining Martial Artists, they could be ignored for now.

He moved towards the north first because that direction led to Anshan City; typically, when retreating from danger, this would be the choice.

"Kill him!"

The six Meridian Refining Martial Artists saw Chen Fan daring to come towards them, anger surged, and they crazily exerted their True Qi, giving chase.

But to their surprise, Chen Fan's speed was astonishingly fast, and in the blink of an eye, he had vanished.

In the north, five kilometers away, Guan Dehua stood alone on a plain, still in shock.

He had almost been shot by the arrow.

After catching his breath, he reached out, holding a white pendant at his chest, a pained expression on his face.

This pendant, already half broken and dim, wasn't an ordinary one but a Protective Talisman made by a guardian-element Awakener. When the wearer was attacked, it would produce a shield to ward off attacks.

This pendant could originally withstand five elite-level fierce beast attacks, bought at a high price from the Association, unused until now.

But that one arrow damaged it by more than half!

If another arrow had hit?

Cold sweat broke out on his back.

Luckily, he still had a teleportation pendant, or else he would have been done for.

"Who is that guy, appearing as if waiting for me? Could it be?"

As Guan Dehua pondered, he suddenly looked up, seeing a figure rushing towards him.

"What!"

Fear flashed in his eyes.

Impossible! He had teleported five kilometers, yet this guy found him in under three seconds?

"Go!"

The next moment, he mouthed 'teleport' again.

Appearing five kilometers away, he then gritted his teeth and teleported once more.

His second pendant crumbled into powder, dispersing in the wind.

"Trying to run?"

Chen Fan was furious too. Teleport five kilometers, huh?

The next moment, he consumed a large amount of True Qi and Spiritual Power, tripling his agility.

From 5000 agility points to 15000, he burst forward at nearly 9000 meters per second.

In almost an instant, he caught up.

"What!"

Guan Dehua glanced back, his shock beyond words.

He had teleported ten kilometers!

Why had this guy found him faster than before?

The next moment,

Chen Fan appeared beside him, readying to slash his neck.

He was tired of this cat-and-mouse game.

Fear flashed in Guan Dehua's eyes, but then his face showed a weird smile.

He knew he was about to be struck, but his jade pendant could still block two elite-level fierce beast attacks.

However powerful this person was, could they be stronger than those mighty elite-level fierce beasts?

So, this strike would surely be blocked, and even if it only delayed for 0.1 seconds, it would be enough for him to pierce the opponent's weak Spiritual Power and kill him!

This was an opportunity given by the opponent, for he had no more teleportation; if the latter continued using arrows, he would not hold out long.

A moment later, with a clink,

Chen Fan's strike hit the shield, sparks flying.

However, at the same time, an invisible force surged toward his mind.

"?"

Chen Fan felt something, frowning as he looked at the opponent.

The other's smile froze, then with a splutter, he spat blood, his face pale.

"Spiritual backlash, you, you are an Awakener?"

His eyes widened, unable to believe it.

Chapter 199: True Qi Pill!

The spirit backlash varies in severity, and this time, it's a major energy depletion!

Obviously, the spiritual power of the guy in front of him is far above his own!

But how is this possible?

"No."

Chen Fan said and exerted more force. This time, the dagger finally cut through the protective shield, slashing across the opponent's throat.

"Cough, cough..."

Guan Dehua clutched his spraying neck, his eyes fiercely staring at Chen Fan.

Not an awakener?

Not an awakener, and your spiritual power is this high? Do you take me for a fool?

But, damn it.

He felt his consciousness gradually becoming blurry, the world spinning.

He was unwilling, he was an awakener! How could he die here so inexplicably?

Without even knowing who killed him.

With a heavy thud, Guan Dehua's body hit the ground.

"Finally killed him."

Chen Fan let out a long breath.

This guy named Guan, his strength was average, but he had too many means to save his life, especially instant teleportation.

Will all awakeners I meet in the future have these things?

He frowned.

It was very likely. This guy's superpower was mind control, which was useless against him. But if he encountered a combat-type awakener with these items, it would be incredibly troublesome.

"Take it one step at a time."

Chen Fan thought to himself.

His eyes fell on Guan Dexi's body. Undoubtedly, this guy must have space items, and there would definitely be many good things inside.

But here comes the problem. He didn't know which one was the space item and how to open it.

"I'll ask Meng Yu when I get back and see if she has any solutions."

Meanwhile, just a few kilometers away, six people led by Qin Ye were hurrying towards this place.

"What's the situation? How did that guy suddenly disappear?"

"Yeah, I clearly saw him coming our way. Could it be that he also has instant teleportation items?"

"What? Then, wouldn't Lord Guan be in trouble?"

"Don't talk nonsense!"

Wang Rui glared at the person who spoke, saying, "Instant teleportation items aren't something ordinary people can own. Besides, the trump cards Lord Guan has on him are beyond your imagination. Even if that guy caught up, what could he do to Lord Guan?"

"That's right."

Qin Ye spoke up, "Speaking of which, I know that guy. He absolutely couldn't have any instant teleportation items."

"What, you know him?"

"Qin Ye, you know the guy who uses a bow and arrow?"

"How do you know?" The others hurriedly asked.

"He's from the Anshan City Martial Arts Branch Association."

Qin Ye sneered, "If I'm not mistaken, he should only be an Entry Force Martial Artist, just more skilled with a bow and arrow."

"I see."

Hearing this, the others felt much relieved.

So, he's from the Martial Arts Branch Association.

Actually, without Qin Ye emphasizing, they also knew that the other party was an Entry Force Martial Artist. After all, could the Anshan City Branch produce a Meridian Refining Martial Artist?

Even producing one Transforming Force Martial Artist was unlikely.

But how did that guy disappear?

A shadow loomed over their hearts.

At that moment, a figure appeared in the distance.

"Who is that?" The group widened their eyes.

"It's that guy!"

"And next to him?"

"It's Lord Guan! He killed Lord Guan!"

The group watched this scene, their eyes bloodshot, and each popped an elixir into their mouths, then their speed surged as they charged toward Chen Fan.

Wang Rui, being a Mid-stage Meridian Refining Martial Artist, was the fastest.

"I was just looking for you."

Chen Fan sneered, standing his ground, and drew his bow, shooting an arrow at him.

"What!"

Wang Rui was shocked.

He had already used a secret technique, doubling both his speed and power, yet he still couldn't see the arrow's speed.

Moreover, he felt locked on, unable to dodge no matter what.

"You want to kill me? Impossible!"

He roared inwardly, frantically mobilizing his True Qi to cover his chest, his eyes blood-red, staring ahead.

He was a Mid-stage Meridian Refining Martial Artist!

The black streak of light arrived in an instant, and the violent air currents made his face sting.

In the next moment, with a "puff," the arrow pierced through the True Qi, tearing through flesh, and the enormous kinetic energy carried his whole body flying.

"Wang Rui!"

"Wang Rui!"

Seeing this, the remaining five were dumbfounded.

Wang Rui was the strongest among them, a Mid-stage Meridian Refining Martial Artist!

And he was killed with one arrow by this guy?

"Ah!"

A scream came from one of the Meridian Refining Martial Artists as if he had been hit by a truck, flying backward!

Another scream followed.

"!!!"

The two remaining Meridian Refining Martial Artists looked at Qin Ye as if to ask, with such fast archery skills, are you sure he's an Entry Force Martial Artist?

Qin Ye's forehead was covered in cold sweat.

He had felt something was off for a long time.

How could a Martial Artist nowadays kill a Meridian Refining Martial Artist with one arrow?

But if the other was also a Meridian Refining Martial Artist, it didn't make sense. How could there be a Meridian Refining Martial Artist in the Anshan City Branch?

Unfortunately, Chen Fan didn't intend to give them much time. With two arrows shot out, except for Qin Ye, the remaining two were also sent flying.

Chen Fan aimed his arrow at Qin Ye.

Time seemed to freeze at that moment.

Qin Ye clenched his fists. He knew the other did it on purpose to embarrass him.

Beg for mercy?

This guy dared to kill awakeners; he certainly wouldn't spare him.

But, run, how could he run?

After hesitating for a moment, he gritted his teeth and charged at Chen Fan.

"A man indeed."

Chen Fan muttered, shooting an arrow, and Qin Ye's body flew backward, dead in the air.

Scanning the surroundings to confirm no survivors, Chen Fan finally looked towards Anshan City.

The matter here seemed over, but it was likely just beginning.

Fortunately, through this battle, he figured out some things.

These awakeners' physical constitution might not be as strong as imagined. Of course, it was also possible that Guan Dehua was not a combat-type awakener.

The main thing was they had various items, defensive and teleporting types. It was very difficult to kill them instantly, not to mention there could be offensive items as well.

"No wonder it's called the Awakened Association."

He sighed, walking towards the bodies on the ground.

These people were genuine Mid-stage Meridian Refining Martial Artists. Although their items might not be as valuable as those on Guan Dehua, he could use whatever he could get.

He moved to the nearest body, reaching into the pocket and pulling out two bottles of elixirs.

"True Qi Pills?"

Chen Fan looked at the three characters on the bottles, somewhat surprised.

He recalled that when those people found him, they had all popped an elixir into their mouths, and their strength increased, most likely due to these True Qi Pills replenishing their True Qi.

"They just took it, so it mustn't be poisoned."

Chen Fan poured one out.

The True Qi Pill, similar in size to the Top-grade Qi Blood Pill, was golden yellow and lustrous.

He swallowed it.

Unlike the Qi Blood Pill, the True Qi Pill brought a cool sensation to his stomach, with signs of his depleted True Qi being restored.

But then, all signs disappeared.

[Consumed Low-grade True Qi Pill, Potential Points increased by 100,000]

A message flashed in his mind.

"100,000 Potential Points?"

Chen Fan breathed a sigh of relief.

The price of a Top-grade Qi Blood Pill was 100,000 each, and a Low-grade True Qi Pill also cost 100,000. The former provided 80,000 Potential Points, and the latter 100,000, a difference of 20,000, which was acceptable.

Of course, if it were a Middle-grade True Qi Pill, the gap would be much larger, starting at least three times more.

He pocketed the two bottles of True Qi Pills and began to search the bodies, finding some miscellaneous items, including a secret manual.

[Primordial Skill]

"A Heart Method?"

Chen Fan was overjoyed.

Currently, there were only two known ways to increase internal True Qi: breaking through the Eight Extraordinary Meridians and cultivating with an Inner Power Heart Method.

He had already practiced one, intending to verify if different Inner Power Heart Methods could stack for Martial Artists' internal True Qi.

With this, he could test that once he got back.

If they can't stack, there's nothing to be done.

If they can stack...

Chen Fan licked his lips. His internal True Qi could reach a terrifying level.

Storing the cultivation technique, he continued searching and confirmed nothing was missed, then moved to the second body.

Soon, he found another bottle of True Qi Pills and two more secret manuals!

Chen Fan was thrilled and looked at the first one.

It was a lightweight skill named [Gale Step].

Chen Fan nodded. He had raised his body technique significantly yesterday, which could now be put to use.

"Saved me some contribution points."

He glanced at the next one.

"What's this?"

He was surprised.

Because it wasn't a martial arts manual but an alchemy pill formula, a Qi Blood Pill formula.

"I already have this."

Chen Fan frowned but opened it out of curiosity.

"It seems somewhat different from what I know?"

Chen Fan flipped a few more pages. Indeed, there were similarities but also differences.

He looked at his skill bar and was surprised to see a new skill, exactly this Qi Blood Pill refining technique.

"Maybe I should try to learn it?"

Chen Fan thought, perhaps like explosive martial arts techniques, these could merge once perfected?

If that were possible, the chance of producing Top-grade Qi Blood Pills should increase significantly.

One Top-grade Qi Blood Pill in a furnace is worth five or six Middle-grade ones.

With two days left before the headquarters' assessment personnel arrive, if he can refine more Top-grade Qi Blood Pills during this time, it would be a significant gain.

Chapter 200: Anshan City, The Four Great Awakeners

Chen Fan carefully stored the two secret manuals and walked to the next person in line.

After feeling around for a bit, he found a bottle of True Qi Pills and another bottle of Qi Blood Pills?

This was somewhat unexpected, but Qi Blood Pills were helpful to martial artists of any realm, to varying degrees.

Opening the stopper to smell them, he found that it was a bottle of Top-grade Qi Blood Pills.

"I'll give this bottle of Top-grade Qi Blood Pills to Uncle Zhang when I get back."

He felt somewhat ashamed. He had long intended to give a few bottles of Top-grade Qi Blood Pills to Uncle Zhang. After all, even Top-grade Qi Blood Pills were easy for him to acquire, yet he ended up consuming all of them himself.

He continued walking forward.

"Oh, another Inner Power Heart Method?"

Chen Fan looked at the three characters on the secret manual.

[One Breathing Technique].

"I wonder if the True Qi ratio can be stacked. If not, that would be a huge loss."

He muttered to himself and put the secret manual, along with the two bottles of True Qi Pills he found, into a space item.

It seemed his luck had run out. The next few corpses had no martial arts secret manuals or True Qi Pills, only some trivial items.

"That's normal."

Chen Fan thought to himself.

After all, breaking through the Chong Meridian consumes a lot of True Qi.

If it were him, the first thing he'd do upon obtaining True Qi Pills would be to consume them all immediately; penetrating an additional acupoint slightly increases one's strength.

Of course, for typical Meridian Refining Martial Artists, True Qi disturbances would occur, often requiring several hours to a full day of recovery time.

This also gave him a bit of an advantage.

"These corpses..."

After a moment's consideration, Chen Fan decided to take all of them and place them with the bodies at the Chen Family Stronghold's entrance, then burn them all at once.

Of course, he would keep Guan Dehua's body for now, in case they needed to unlock space items with fingerprints or face recognition.

He retrieved the scattered arrows around and tied the corpses together with a rope, then quickly headed towards the Chen Family Stronghold after confirming no one was around.

Moments later, he appeared in front of the now-ruined stronghold, where flames were still blazing fiercely.

With a soft sigh, Chen Fan piled the bodies together and retrieved some gasoline from a military truck, throwing a burning piece of wood onto the pile.

With a "whoosh," the flames shot up several meters high.

He then carried Guan Dehua's body and headed towards the Chen Family Fortress.

He didn't take the main entrance, as the fewer people who knew about this, the better.

Finding an empty house, he placed Guan Dehua's body there and then walked towards the training ground.

"Hah!"

The sound of exhalation and exertion came from the direction, along with the clashing of weapons.

As soon as Chen Fan appeared, everyone stopped what they were doing, their faces filled with a mix of surprise and delight.

"Xiaofan is back! Look, Xiaofan is back!"

"Really, it is Xiaofan!"

"Oh my god, I must be dreaming. I felt like I hadn't seen Xiaofan in days."

"At least four to five days."

"Nonsense, it's only been two or three days."

Chen Guodong's eyes also showed excitement, but he quickly hid it, walked over with a smile and said, "Xiaofan, how have you been in Anshan City these past few days? Are you safe?"

Chen Fan shook his head with a smile and asked, "Dad, how are things here in the stronghold? Is everything okay?"

"Everything's fine."

Chen Guodong nodded.

Soon, Liu Yong and the others gathered around, each asking about Anshan City.

It was clear that everyone was very curious about life in the city.

Chen Fan answered each question with a smile; he didn't feel annoyed at all.

Of course, Anshan City was better than the Chen Family Fortress, ten times, even a hundred times better. But the warmth here couldn't be found in Anshan City.

"Ahem."

Just then, a very familiar cough sounded,

"What are you all doing here? Shouldn't you be training?"

Everyone's body trembled and they reluctantly dispersed.

"Uncle Zhang."

Chen Fan smiled slightly at the figure ahead.

"Mm."

Zhang Ren nodded, his eyes filled with gratification.

Seeing Chen Fan return safely, a weight was finally lifted off his shoulders.

Moreover, since Chen Fan was here, did it mean that the Awakened person surnamed Guan was already...?

He didn't dare to think further.

If that were the case, how powerful must Chen Fan be?

"Dad, I need to talk to Uncle Zhang for a bit."

Chen Fan smiled.

"Mm, go ahead."

Chen Guodong smiled knowingly. He had a faint idea of what was going on.

If he wasn't mistaken, Zhang Ren probably met Xiaofan when he went out this morning?

Looking at the seemingly calm days, who knew how many hardships had been endured.

He took a deep breath and walked back with his weapon.

Not far off, Gu Ze watched Chen Fan's back, silently making up his mind.

Inside the house, with the door closed,

Zhang Ren could no longer contain his eagerness and asked, "How did it go, Xiaofan? Did that guy surnamed Guan come?"

Chen Fan nodded and recounted the events in detail.

After listening, Zhang Ren was beyond shocked.

A protective shield?

Instant Teleportation?

Spiritual attack?

Any one of these was formidable.

No, if it were him, he probably wouldn't even have a chance to force out Guan Dehua's trump cards.

Because the six Meridian Refining realm martial artists with Guan Dehua would be enough to kill him hundreds of times.

But Chen Fan, alone, took on seven and killed them all. How terrifyingly powerful was that?

Besides shock, he also felt gratified.

He had seen Chen Fan grow step by step. They were not master and disciple, but their bond was stronger than that. There's no greater joy for a teacher than to see their student surpass them.

"Tap."

A soft sound.

"What's this?"

Zhang Ren was suddenly snapped out of his thoughts, puzzled as he looked at the small bottle on the table.

"Sorry Uncle Zhang, I was in a rush this time and only brought this bottle of Top-grade Qi Blood Pills. Next time I return, I'll bring even better elixirs."

Chen Fan smiled.

"No need,"

Zhang Ren chuckled bitterly. "Top-grade Qi Blood Pills are already great."

After all, a bottle costs two hundred thousand. Even when he was in the Martial Arts Association, buying one was quite painful.

Certainly, he didn't decline any further.

Since Chen Fan became a Meridian Refining Martial Artist, Top-grade Qi Blood Pills weren't of much use to him.

"Xiaofan, thank you."

Zhang Ren was grateful.

"Uncle Zhang, there's no need for such courtesy between us, right?" Chen Fan shook his head.

Hearing this, Zhang Ren burst into laughter.

However, his eyebrows soon furrowed as he looked at Chen Fan. "Xiaofan, I know this might not be the right time, but I feel I must say it."

"Uncle Zhang, you want to remind me not to be arrogant and complacent just because I killed an Awakened today, right?"

Zhang Ren breathed a sigh of relief. "I know you aren't that kind of person, but it's still necessary to remind you. Guan Dehua was strong, much stronger than a Meridian Refining Martial Artist, but he still couldn't compare to the other few C-level Awakened in Anshan City."

"Uncle Zhang, that's one of the reasons I was looking for you."

Chen Fan nodded. "What are the abilities of those other Awakened?"

Guan Dehua's death couldn't be hidden for long. To rescue Meng Yu's sister, he would inevitably have to fight these people eventually. The question was whether they would find him first, or he would go to them.

Zhang Ren took a deep breath. "Among the top C-level Awakened in Anshan City, there are four. The most formidable is Yan Ming, the city lord, who awakened the Flame Superpower. He can launch rapid-

fire fireballs and firebombs for long-range attacks and cloak his body in flame armor or his fists, incinerating high-level fierce beasts to ashes with a single punch."

"I see."

Chen Fan narrowed his eyes at this information.

If Yan Ming also had various rare items, he would be even harder to deal with.

"The second is Fang Yun. He awakened a Body Superpower, allowing him to turn his entire body into metal. It's said that he can withstand a direct hit from a 75mm howitzer without a scratch. Even high-level fierce beast attacks merely tickle him. Moreover,"

Zhang Ren recalled, "He can hold his ground against Yan Ming for dozens of rounds without falling behind."

"So Yan Ming is still stronger." Chen Fan thought to himself.

"The third is an awakened with the Gravity Superpower."

"Gravity?"

Chen Fan was taken aback.

This superpower sounded uncommon, but definitely not weak.

"Yes."

"Three years ago, during the beast tide, I stood on the city wall and saw him raise and lower his right hand, crushing a high-level fierce beast into pulp. Yan Ming seemed wary of him too."

Chen Fan nodded.

It seemed that this gravity awakened's power was on par with Yan Ming, the city lord.

And Fang Yun, despite his strength, was somewhat weaker than these two.

"The fourth."

Chen Fan quickly refocused and paid close attention.

"The fourth,"

Zhang Ren knitted his brows, "No one knows his superpower. I haven't heard it from anyone either; he's very mysterious."

"Oh?"

Chen Fan was surprised. "There's no one in Anshan City who knows his power?"

"No."

Zhang Ren nodded.

"I even asked the association head, and he didn't know."

"Not even the association head."

Chen Fan was taken aback.

That was information from three years ago. The head might know now, but it's uncertain.

One thing was for sure: this mysterious person must be formidable to be on par with those three.

And the fact that no one knew his power after so long implied most who saw it might be dead.