

Menu 1211

Chapter 1211: Like a Ham, Hanging from the Ceiling Beam

Without any hesitation.

Jason chose [Cheese and Ham].

The strange transformation of the black notebook always left him uneasy, and corresponding vigilance naturally arose.

Fortunately, the black notebook still adhered to its proper rules, which gave him room to maneuver.

Use the rules, seek the benefit.

For someone like Jason who lived in the 'Nightless City,' he learned this within his first month.

Those who didn't learn?

Their corpses had already rotted away.

Of course, some might have ended up in the processing plants on the neighboring streets.

After all, canned meat was still quite valuable.

[A side dish is the prelude to the main course.]

[But now it has changed!]

[It retains everything it originally had.]

[Yet it is different, especially once you've already chosen a side dish.]

[Remember: Ham is salty. Drink more water.]

...

The same usual text.

But it was very similar to [Seafood Puff Box], except for one additional line at the end and some variation in the [Remember] section; otherwise, it was almost word for word.

"A side dish is the prelude to the main course?"

Jason squinted at this line.

Then, his focus shifted to the word 'change.'

"Describing change, yet with no change in the wording."

"Is it a textual trap?"

"Or just an attempt to numb me?"

Jason instinctively wondered, his gaze lowering to see a checkmark (✓) already appearing next to [Cheese and Ham].

Then, the text began to reveal itself rapidly—

[Background: The Empire has long since declined, a pack of wolves eyes it greedily, wanting to tear into its flesh. At this critical moment, a group of ardent visionaries surged into the tide of the era. Is this the Empire's last glory, or just a final flicker before extinction? And you, as the owner of a small martial arts school, didn't think about all this—you only wanted to claim the top spot on Martial Arts Street...]

[Main Quest: Gain 3,000 Reputation (0)]

[Temporary access to the language. Disappears upon leaving the instance.]

[Clothing, appearance, and equipment temporarily altered. Restores upon leaving the instance.]

[Detection confirms no gunpowder-based weapons carried.]

(Hint: Are your utensils ready?)

...

A martial arts school owner?

Martial skills?

Jason frowned, instinctively recalling some sayings.

Kung fu, two characters: one horizontal, one vertical. If you're right, stand; if you're wrong, fall. Only those who stand have the right to speak.

This punch, twenty years of training—can you withstand it?

Moves that are too flashy aren't always effective. You can't blindly train martial arts.

Could it be like this?

Or... Remember, never trust a woman, especially a beautiful one—those are the best at deceiving you.

Jason couldn't help but shake his head.

Then, his brows furrowed again.

In a world like this, was there anything he could eat?

If there was, what would it look like?

Or in what form would it appear?

Jason thought, as the world before his eyes began to clarify.

Sunlight filtered in from the window outside—not a glass window, but one made of something like gauze and paper, allowing light to dimly pass through but without ventilation.

Below the beam was a small ventilation hole.

The thick beam was as wide as an adult's waist, spanning five meters across the room.

A rope hung down from above, tied into a noose.

At this moment, Jason's neck was inside the noose.

The slight sensation of suffocation came from his neck. Raising his hand, Jason snapped the rope.

For someone with nine times the strength of an ordinary person like Jason, doing so was not difficult.

In fact, it was exceedingly easy.

However, after landing on the ground, Jason looked at the half-hanging rope with a peculiar expression.

Because I chose [Cheese and Ham], I was hung on the beam like a ham.

If I had chosen [Tomato Cheese Chicken Cutlet], would I have been deep-fried?

Jason internally mocked.

Then, he quickly refocused his thoughts.

I' am dead."

"Or was it suicide?"

"Committed suicide right when trying to win the top spot on Martial Arts Street?"

Jason's lips curled into a smirk.

Though it was merely part of the [Background] description, Jason was certain 'he' would never commit suicide.

It's like someone buying lamb slices, thick-cut beef, fish balls, crab sticks, shrimp paste, potato slices, lettuce, vermicelli, sesame sauce, and a dual-flavor hot pot base of spicy butter and tomato—ready to eat hot pot—would never choose to kill themselves.

Since an extraordinary goal already exists, how could one end their own life?

He wouldn't commit suicide, but he was 'suicided.'

Now that was interesting.

"Martial Arts Street?"

"Or something else?"

Looking at the [Background] description, Jason's first suspect was the so-called Martial Arts Street—it was, after all, a competitive setting.

Then again, there could always be other unexpected factors.

As Jason mused, his gaze turned to the 'suicide note' on the ground in front of him.

The 'suicide note' was placed on the floor, conveniently on a square tile directly in front of where 'he' had been hanging.

Anyone who saw 'his' body and then glanced at the 'suicide note' on the ground would immediately imagine Jason writing the note and then hanging himself.

As for the utterly empty room with no ink, paper, or brushes and no extra furniture?

That didn't matter.

Couldn't it have been written in advance?

When someone raised such a question, Jason was certain there'd be others ready to answer with this explanation.

Jason picked up the 'suicide note' in front of him.

Though he figured there likely wasn't any poison or similar traps, he still carefully inspected it first.

After confirming there was no issue, Jason opened the envelope, taking out the letter and unfolding it—

To all:

By the time you read this letter, I, Mu Bai, am surely no longer among the living.

For a Martial Artist to commit suicide, it's naturally something disgraceful.

Chapter 1212: Hanging on the Beam Like a Ham (2)

But I have no choice but to do this.

Previously, in order to open my martial arts school on Martial Arts Street, I used despicable means to defeat Peng, Zhang, Li, and Zhao, the four schoolmasters. Although I was elated at the time, I have since been tormented with guilt and unable to eat or sleep.

After much deliberation, I've decided to end it all.

Throw my corpse in the mass grave.

This is my self-inflicted retribution.

Mu Bai's final words.

Yuanfeng Year 2, November

...

Looking at the awkwardly written letter, Jason's lips curled into a smirk.

Calling it a will would be inaccurate; it's more like a confession note.

"Interesting."

Jason murmured to himself.

Though he couldn't be certain just yet, Jason was highly confident that Peng, Zhang, Li, and Zhao, the four schoolmasters mentioned in the letter, had a significant link to "his" death.

As for framing someone?

If "he" hadn't died, then perhaps. It could have been a ploy to provoke conflicts on both sides.

But since "he" was already dead, there was no need for that anymore.

Moreover, the mention of 'opening a school on Martial Arts Street' in the letter was enough to explain everything.

Such an opening must have been predicated on superiority in martial strength.

The one with the biggest fists calls the shots.

It was only after "he" defeated the so-called Peng, Zhang, Li, and Zhao that he earned the right to open a school on Martial Arts Street.

Naturally, Peng, Zhang, Li, and Zhao's reputations took a hit.

Could tarnished reputations lead to murder?

Of course!

Sometimes, reputation far outweighs life itself.

Especially when reputation is tied to honor and traditions.

What does a martial arts school rely on to survive?

The schoolmaster's strength?

The schoolmaster's management skills?

Both, but not entirely.

Because the foundation of everything lies in the school's reputation!

Only with a strong reputation will people come to learn martial arts!

And only then can the school sustain itself!

But if the reputation is damaged...

"Ruining someone's livelihood is akin to killing their parents."

Jason silently thought, instinctively glancing at [Main Mission: Accumulate 3000 Reputation (0)].

Clearly, reputation in this world was far more critical than he had anticipated.

Or rather, it is the 'theme'!

Every parallel world seems to have a unique 'theme' of its own.

It may not encompass the entire world, but it plays a pivotal role.

And the starting point offered by his black notebook was invariably linked to these 'themes.'

To be precise, it was tied to a particular aspect of the 'theme.'

It could be events.

It could be objects.

It could even be people.

But no matter what it was, attention was crucial.

Even if it was just for better survival in this parallel world.

After reading through the letter once more, Jason walked to the corner of the room and tossed the letter into the charcoal brazier.

The dormant embers in the brazier immediately ignited into flames, reducing the letter to ashes within moments.

"Mu Bai, Mu Bai."

Jason muttered under his breath.

Unlike the previous parallel worlds.

In this world, he not only had an assumed identity but also a brand-new name.

At the moment, he wasn't sure if this new name held any additional significance, but Jason was certain that the difficulty had been ramped up a notch.

At the very least, he now needed to commit this new name to memory.

Otherwise, unnecessary trouble might arise.

And one more thing.

The story behind this new name.

Aside from knowing that he was called Mu Bai, he knew nothing else.

If he ran into someone familiar...

"That could be troublesome."

Jason massaged his temples and picked up the meditation mat from the room—besides the charcoal brazier, it was the only visible item in the space. The room lacked a bed, wardrobe, or any other expected furniture.

The meditation mat was spacious, with a diameter of over a meter—large enough to function as a small bed.

When Jason flipped it over, he saw his mask and his short-handled Broad Blade Cleaver embedded inside the mat in an intricate manner.

"Not bad."

Jason assessed.

His two prized possessions were hidden under the large mat—unless someone deliberately flipped it over, they wouldn't be discovered.

And most of the time, no one would randomly decide to flip a mat like this.

He only did so because he knew his cherished items had to be nearby.

In others' cases, they wouldn't do this without reason.

If they actually did?

Then, of course, they'd be enemies!

Peng, Zhang, Li, and Zhao were undoubtedly enemies. There was no question about that.

But Jason was sure that these four weren't his only adversaries.

Take a look at the room. Despite its emptiness, there were no signs of a struggle. Jason was convinced that "he" couldn't have been strung up and hung from a beam without resistance.

Moreover, during the Martial Arts Street school opening conflict, "he" had already defeated Peng, Zhang, Li, and Zhao.

Although it was unclear whether it was a gauntlet match or a 1v4, "his" skills must have been formidable.

To lift "him" silently onto a beam was nearly impossible.

Unless...

There was an inside accomplice or a sudden ambush.

Or perhaps poison!

If that were the case, someone should show up now to “recover the body.”

Tap, tap, tap.

Jason was contemplating when he suddenly heard footsteps.

Light and full of energy.

Neither heavy nor rushed.

The next moment, there was a knock at the door—

Knock, knock, knock!

"Master, Master, it's time to eat."

A crisp voice carried an inexplicable cheerfulness.

It wasn't schadenfreude, but a natural sense of joy.

This kind of voice wasn't something a "corpse collector" would have.

"They've timed the routine, using unrelated individuals to make an approach?"

Jason instantly deduced Peng, Zhang, Li, and Zhao's tactics.

"Master, hurry up!"

"Or the buns and soy milk I made will get cold."

"They're pork buns

The girl outside continued chattering, and the door was suddenly pulled open. A tall and muscular figure appeared in the doorway.

The oppressive shadow cast was intimidating, enough to startle normal people. But the girl in front of him showed no sign of fear. Instead, she clasped her hands together and leapt with excitement, exclaiming, "I knew it, Master, you're always most enthusiastic about food!"

Then, the girl winked at Jason gleefully.

Her bright smile was full of youthful vitality.

There was also a sense of warmth and approachability, like the girl next door.

Especially with her plain outfit of coarse cloth and trousers, she seemed even more relatable.

At this moment, the girl continued to grin, her crescent-like eyes fixed on Jason.

Clearly, she was waiting for a response from him.

Jason wasn't sure about "his" dynamic with the girl, so he merely nodded ambiguously.

"Mm."

Jason's reply didn't seem to arouse the girl's suspicion.

In fact, as soon as Jason nodded, the girl had already turned and skipped away, cheerfully muttering—

"If you're not enthusiastic about eating, there's something wrong with your thinking."

"Devotion to food! Soul of foodies! Real foodies use bowls!"

Her crisp voice carried a certain melody, almost like she was singing.

Though it wasn't melodious, it was bursting with liveliness.

Following the girl, Jason stepped out of the room and headed in one direction, his eyes scanning his surroundings.

Besides the room he exited, there were side rooms to his left and right. Ahead lay a main hall, which had a Moon Gate on one side. Through the Moon Gate, Jason could clearly see a stone-paved courtyard, weapon racks, and wooden training dummies.

"The front is the martial arts school, and the back is the living quarters. The kitchen should be... here."

Without needing further searching, Jason followed the aroma and pinpointed the kitchen.

It was next to the left side room, separated by a single wall.

A small square table stood inside the kitchen.

On the table were one large bowl, one small bowl, and a plate. The milk-white soy milk emitted a strong aroma, while ten palm-sized pork buns were neatly arranged on the porcelain plate.

Two fist-sized dishes held shredded radishes and kelp strips, respectively.

The radish was marinated with chili.

The kelp strips were seasoned with garlic paste.

Though simple, the spread was highly appetizing.

"Master, come, let's eat."

The girl pulled out a small bench for Jason and then sat across from him. As soon as Jason sat, she placed her fingers on the edge of her small bowl, eagerly waiting. When Jason picked up his chopsticks, she pressed her hands against the bowl, and when Jason placed a kelp strip into his mouth, she gulped down her entire bowl of soy milk in one go.

Clearly, the girl was also a food enthusiast.

Just as the girl was about to get up for another bowl of soy milk—

Bang, bang, bang.

The front door of the martial arts school was slammed forcefully.

Chapter 1213: Not a Good Person!

The sudden sound of the door being slammed startled the young girl, causing her to drop the bowl she was holding. The half bowl of soy milk traced a white arc in midair.

"Ah!"

The young girl let out a surprised cry.

But the cry abruptly stopped.

Because Jason caught the bowl.

Not just the bowl, even the soy milk in midair was caught and returned to the bowl without spilling a single drop.

"This?"

The young girl stared at the scene, completely frozen in shock.

"Don't waste food."

Jason said this as he placed the last bun in his mouth and headed towards the front courtyard.

The timing was just as he expected.

Him?

Of course, he couldn't afford to waste time.

After all, it would soon be lunchtime.

...

Outside the martial arts academy, three men stood under the signboard of "Mu-Style Boxing Gym."

Two men were in front, one stood behind.

The two at the front were burly, dressed in black short outfits, with bronze-studded wrist guards on their wrists. Their exposed chests revealed thick black hair. Their faces were full of ferocity, heads completely shaved, standing there exuding an aura of menace.

"Tsk, quite an impressive display."

The man on the left glanced at the brand-new signboard, sneering.

"Exactly!"

"Even making Mr. Chen personally deliver the invitation."

The man on the right nodded and echoed, then suddenly turned around and flashed a sycophantic smile at the man behind them.

The abrupt change in expression was unnervingly natural yet hard to accept.

Especially when the man on the left also broke into the same smile and turned around.

In an instant, the two fierce-looking men transformed into servile lapdogs.

"Indeed, Mr. Chen even hosted a banquet for this country bumpkin last night."

"Truly giving him face."

"Frankly speaking, this country bumpkin only managed to win against Peng, Zhang, Li, and Zhao because he suddenly appeared, catching people off guard. If they fought again, with Peng, Zhang, Li, and Zhao's skills, they'd easily take him down."

The man on the left said.

The man called Mr. Chen simply nodded noncommittally.

He wore a long white robe made of silk, embroidered at the edges with creamy wave-like patterns. A large jade thumb ring glimmered on his right hand under the morning sun, complementing the movements of his folding fan. His gold-rimmed glasses and neatly combed hair gave the man, who appeared in his thirties, a scholarly demeanor.

Yet the occasional flicker of cold light in his triangular eyes behind the glasses betrayed his true nature, far removed from that of a cultured gentleman, despite the carefully curated look.

"This Master Mu does have some skill."

"At the very least, he's not one of those useless braggarts who used to stroll into Martial Arts Street."

"He deserves respect."

The man called Mr. Chen spoke slowly and politely, but his gaze towards the "Mu-Style Boxing Gym" veiled a mocking undertone.

Respect?

Of course, he respected him.

Otherwise, he wouldn't have bothered using poison.

He had painstakingly established Martial Arts Street and would naturally not allow anyone else to interfere.

Perhaps in the future.

But for now?

At such a critical moment, it was only natural to eliminate the problem.

Who knows how Peng Liang handled it?

Did he make it look like suicide?

Or simply slash his throat and toss him into the mass grave?

He didn't know.

After all, to be cautious, he drank the same wine as that country bumpkin, and compared to the bumpkin's physique, he himself had already passed out once the man left.

Thus, everything was handed over to Peng Liang.

But he was quite confident.

After all, Peng Liang wasn't doing this for the first time.

He would surely execute the task flawlessly.

As for what comes next?

That was the very reason he came here today.

To collect the corpse of that country bumpkin.

And incidentally take over this courtyard. Though it wasn't worth much, renting it out would still yield some profit, enough to hire two or three good hands from the alleys.

These would be real helpers who could be put to use immediately.

Just as well, the docks hadn't been peaceful lately, with those destitute laborers stirring up trouble. They needed to be shown some blood.

Oh, yes!

And that bumpkin's maid!

She could be taken in as well!

A maid brought by some country bumpkin, her beauty and figure were even better than the top courtesan at Zui Xiang Lou.

Now she would be his.

Thinking of this pleased him, and Chen Tong couldn't help but let the corners of his mouth curl upwards.

And at that very moment—

Creeaaaak.

The martial arts academy door opened.

Chen Tong froze as he stared at the tall, broad figure emerging from behind the door.

The two sycophantic subordinates were similarly startled, recoiling in surprise.

Each prided themselves on their physique and often enjoyed watching commonfolk tremble in fear before them. Yet here, before this towering and burly figure, they instantly seemed two sizes smaller, if not more.

As the figure stepped forward, shadows enveloped them.

In that instant, the two couldn't help but retreat.

The earlier disdain vanished entirely.

Chen Tong quickly regained his composure and, seeing Jason walk out, promptly showed a warm smile.

"Master Mu, good morning."

"I was supposed to deliver this to you last night, but I overindulged and passed out, my apologies."

As he spoke, Chen Tong clasped his hands in greeting.

One of the followers immediately pulled an invitation from his pocket and extended it to Jason.

Jason received it, but did not open it, instead responding with a smile.

Chapter 1214: Not a Good Person! (2)

"No worries, I was so drunk after returning that I passed out and just woke up. My head still hurts a bit now."

Jason said, deliberately rubbing his temples.

"Then, Master Mu, please get plenty of rest."

"We'll meet at the Martial Arts Street Square in three days."

Chen Tong finished speaking and cupped his hands in farewell.

"See you in three days."

After Jason returned the gesture, Chen Tong and his two companions turned and left.

Jason didn't go back immediately; he watched their backs until they disappeared, then turned to head back to the kitchen.

On the small square table, new soy milk had been prepared, and buns once again filled the plate.

Jason sat down, casually tossed the invitation card on the table, and picked up the soy milk.

"Master, do we have to attend?"

The young girl hesitated as she saw the invitation.

"Yes."

Jason nodded.

"Then you must be careful."

"That Chen Tong harbors ill intentions."

The girl said.

"How do you know?"

Jason looked at the girl curiously, wanting to know this skillful girl's unique insight or whether she had any clues.

"When he looks at people, he's smiling, but his eyes seem like they want to devour someone—as I escaped from famine, I met many such people, none of whom leave anything behind. Daling, who fled with me before, was deceived by such a person, resulting in him and his siblings being misled into an abandoned temple, never to come out."

"That person even tried to trick me, but fortunately, I was clever enough to pretend to agree, then ran to a crowded place when he wasn't looking, and quietly slipped out of the gathering."

"Otherwise, Master, you wouldn't have met Dou Bao."

The girl spoke in a hushed voice.

Even at this point, she still looked as if she had lingering fears.

"Dou Bao?"

Jason was taken aback.

"Ah, what's the matter, Master?"

"Not enough soy milk? Or not enough buns?"

"I prepared a tub of soy milk and fifty buns, even the Master couldn't finish all that."

As she spoke, the girl proudly lifted her head.

Jason quietly memorized this distinctive name before opening his mouth to swallow the last bun on the plate and lightly tapped the table.

Dou Bao was instantly attracted.

Then, she was dumbfounded.

"Where are the buns?"

"There were just ten of them!"

Dou Bao muttered foolishly to herself.

Jason smiled without saying a word, pointing to the kitchen.

...

Chen Tong quickly left the 'Mu-style Martial Arts School', gripping his folding fan tightly, his knuckles turning white.

Yet on the surface, he maintained a smile.

Inwardly, he was cursing Peng Liang.

"Bastard!"

"Couldn't even handle such a small matter!"

"Absolutely useless!"

The more Chen Tong thought, the angrier he got, but his expression remained unchanged.

As he reached the street side, he raised his hand.

"Rickshaw!"

A follower next to him called out loudly, and immediately, a two-wheeled cart pulled by a single person came running over.

"Mr. Chen, where to?"

The driver clearly recognized Chen Tong and immediately asked with his head bowed and back bent.

"To the Chen Residence."

Chen Tong said.

He didn't specify an exact address, but Chen Tong believed that anyone who knew him would also know where he lived.

And indeed, that was the case.

"Alright, have a seat."

The driver said as he pulled the cart.

"Go find Peng Liang for me."

As the cart started moving, Chen Tong instructed one of the followers.

This follower immediately took a detour back to Martial Arts Street.

Although he didn't know what Chen Tong intended, the follower, well aware of Chen Tong's nature, knew it was definitely not something good, so discretion was necessary.

Another follower gestured, and two brawny men who were standing far by the roadside quickly ran over, following the rickshaw to the Chen Residence.

Obviously, these two brawny men also belonged to Chen Tong.

Unlike the hand-to-hand followers, the two brawny men's waists were bulging, clearly carrying weapons.

The Chen Residence wasn't far from Martial Arts Street.

Two streets later, they reached the Chen Residence.

At the entrance stood stone lions, but no plaque was hung, although four burly men stood in front of the door, making their presence known, so everyone took a detour.

Chen Tong got off the cart and walked straight into the residence.

The driver bowed low in farewell.

Chen Tong didn't pay for the ride.

The driver didn't ask for a fare either.

Everything was just as it should be.

Chen Tong walked all the way back to his room, waved away the servants and followers, and then threw the folding fan in his hand onto the table.

Smack!

With a crisp sound, Chen Tong sat down heavily in a chair, breathing heavily, picked up a tea bowl, took a sip, and in annoyance, smashed the bowl to the ground.

Smash!

Tea splashed, porcelain shards scattered.

Outside the door, the remaining follower and two bodyguards exchanged glances, completely clueless about what had happened.

However, when the other follower arrived with Peng Liang, he kept signaling.

The other follower immediately understood.

"Master Peng, Mr. Chen is not in a good mood today, you'd better be careful."

The follower slowed his pace, warning Peng Liang.

Peng Liang was a stocky middle-aged man, shorter than most by half a head but much more heavily built, walking like a water barrel.

"Thanks for the advice."

Peng Liang's face was full of pockmarks, and he flashed a smile like a toad opening its mouth.

Then, he took out four silver coins, stuffing them into the follower's hand.

"No need, no need."

"You're too kind."

The follower said these words, but his hands didn't hesitate, directly pocketing the four silver coins.

Of course, before pocketing them, he showed them to his colleagues.

Immediately, the other follower and the two bodyguards smiled.

The four watched Peng Liang walk into the room and quickly gathered around.

"One each."

The previous follower took out the silver coins.

"Master Peng isn't stingy."

One of the bodyguards remarked.

"Stingy?"

"Each student pays ten silver coins a month, how many students does he have? Seventy or eighty people, he's hardly short of money."

Another bodyguard added.

"Moreover, he relies on our Mr. Chen, so giving more is only right."

The follower remarked.

"What did Mr. Chen want?"

The bodyguard asked the two followers.

Compared to the bodyguards, these two followers were undoubtedly more trusted.

"No idea, Mr. Chen is busy with something big lately, but whatever it is, Mr. Chen will definitely handle it, we just need to serve him well."

The follower shook his head.

"Exactly."

"With us guarding here, who could possibly harm Mr. Chen?"

The bodyguard said confidently.

Meanwhile, in the room, Chen Tong stared at Peng Liang with a menacing gaze.

The short and stout Peng Liang's forehead was slick with sweat.

"Mr. Chen, what do you need from me?"

Peng Liang asked, bracing himself.

Smack!

As soon as he finished speaking, there was a sharp slap.

Chen Tong hit Peng Liang across the face.

Peng Liang was stunned by the blow.

He held his face, bewildered, looking at Chen Tong.

"You have the nerve to ask me what I need?"

"What about the task I gave you yesterday, how did you handle it?"

Chen Tong lowered his voice, asking fiercely.

The task he gave me?

Which one?

Peng Liang was even more puzzled. He had followed all of Chen Tong's orders and did so flawlessly.

Whether it was collecting protection fees or dealing with that disobedient fellow at the dock by drowning him in the sea, he had done it.

And nobody had found out either.

Chen Tong looked at his subordinate, infuriated.

Such a foolish subordinate, if it wasn't for his skills, he would have been replaced long ago.

"About that country bumpkin."

Chen Tong reminded.

"Didn't that country bumpkin die?"

"I hung him from the rafter to make sure he was dead before I left."

Peng Liang looked astonished.

"Are you sure?"

Chen Tong frowned.

"Absolutely sure!"

"Don't you know how I work? I made sure he was dead before leaving."

Peng Liang replied with certainty.

"Then did I see a ghost? Just now I

Chen Tong said in confusion, his words trailing off as he saw Peng Liang staring in horror behind him. Almost instinctively, Chen Tong ran forward.

Or rather, ran towards behind Peng Liang.

Turning around?

That would be a dead end.

His relatively rich experience told Chen Tong what he should do.

But...

A large hand moved even faster, covering his face, pulling him back.

With his neck bent backward, Chen Tong crashed into the chest of his assailant like hitting steel, sending shakes through his entire body. At the same time, he saw the face of the attacker.

No.

To be precise, he saw the mask the attacker was wearing.

Odd-looking, it was...

An ice hockey mask.

Chapter 1215: Three: Adaptation

Chen Tong had seen an ice hockey mask.

Two years ago, when he and his elder brother traveled north, they saw some foreigners playing on the frozen surface of a lake in the Imperial City, wearing thick protective gear and masks like this.

To this day, Chen Tong couldn't understand the point of a group of people chasing after an iron disc.

On the other hand, the curved courtyards of the Imperial City were quite enjoyable.

You could listen, and you could play, especially the private rooms on the second floor.

The events that took place on the second floor at that time flashed through his mind, and Chen Tong's gaze focused again on the ice hockey mask.

He opened his mouth wide, ready to shout.

But Jason was faster.

The hand gripping his cheek applied force.

Crack.

Chen Tong's neck emitted a sharp snap, breaking cleanly, and his body limply slid to the ground.

Everything occurred in the blink of an eye.

By the time Peng Liang came to his senses, Chen Tong was already dead.

And more importantly, Jason was right in front of him.

Peng Liang didn't hesitate, raising his hand to deliver a punch.

Short and stout, Peng Liang lashed out with a punch, keeping his body steady as he prepared to follow up with a kick after Jason dodged or blocked.

Not just a kick.

Not a stomp either.

It was a step.

A step on the ankle.

A step on the toes.

This was a killing move from the boxing style that Peng Liang had learned, an underhanded trick, one he would never use unless it was crucial.

After all, a special move is special precisely because it's used sparingly, and others know little about it.

The more it's known.

The less special it becomes.

Laying this move on the line, Peng Liang harbored the clear intention to kill Jason.

Chen Tong was dead.

If he couldn't provide the Chen family with an explanation, he wouldn't survive.

Because the Chen family didn't just consist of Chen Tong.

There were also his elder brothers Chen Yin and Chen Jin.

Compared to Chen Tong, those two were the true pillars of the Chen family.

Especially the ruthless methods of Chen Jin, which made Peng Liang's scalp tingle.

So, if he wanted to live, Jason had to fall.

With that resolve in mind, Peng Liang's punches grew faster.

Swoosh!

Strong and heavy.

In an instant, the punch landed squarely on Jason's chest. But to Peng Liang's surprise, Jason neither dodged nor blocked.

Peng Liang froze for a moment.

But he didn't overthink it, following up with another punch.

His fists had been honed with painstaking effort and secret teachings.

Training through the coldest winter days and hottest summer weeks, applying medicinal water diligently, day in and day out.

For a full five years.

One punch could shatter three slabs of green brick.

The average person struck by his punch would suffer broken bones and torn muscles; if hit in a vital spot, they'd meet their demise.

It was thanks to these iron fists that he had managed to establish himself on Martial Arts Street, with a large entourage of disciples paying their respects.

Now, it was the time for these iron fists to prove their value once more.

Peng Liang's eyes widened.

He had already imagined Jason writhing in agony on the ground.

But—

Bam!

Crack!

A muffled sound rang out, along with the crunching of bones breaking. But it wasn't Jason's ribs that broke—it was Peng Liang's fist.

"Horizontal Training!"

Peng Liang stared in shock at the towering, burly figure before him, clad in the mask, instinctually preparing to flee.

Horizontal Training itself wasn't terrifying.

What was terrifying were those who mastered it.

Each one was a Qi-Blood flourisher in the truest sense.

Not someone like him, unable to reach the level of “Bone Tempering,” could possibly contend with.

A moment ago, Peng Liang had been ruthless and aggressive.

This moment, his courage evaporated.

Without any hesitation, Peng Liang was about to scream for help, knowing clearly that only by summoning the Chen family could he hope to escape.

However, just as Peng Liang opened his mouth, Jason delivered a punch.

Swoosh!

The forceful wind of the strike instantly smothered Peng Liang’s attempt to cry out.

As his breathing became disordered, Peng Liang tried to take a step back to shout again, but a sharp pain hit his abdomen. Looking down, he realized, to his shock, that at some unknown moment, a blade had pierced his lower abdomen.

With pain surging, his strength drained away.

He couldn't manage to take a single step back before Jason grabbed him by the throat, squeezing with force.

Crack.

Peng Liang followed Chen Tong's path to death.

Jason reached out to grab a nearby tablecloth, wiping the blood off his short-handled broad blade cleaver, then bent over to search the bodies of Chen Tong and Peng Liang.

This was a habit cultivated in Nightless City.

On Chen Tong, aside from a jade thumb ring, there was nothing of note.

From Peng Liang, however, Jason discovered a torn page sewn into the lining of his jacket.

[Special inheritance item “Iron Fist Vigor” detected, assessing...]

[Barehanded Combat skill at Master level confirmed, assessment successful!]

[Consume 30 points of satiety to add this to additional options? Yes/No]

...

"Additional options?"

Jason paused.

He was familiar with additional options—both [Grappling Mastery] and [Apprehension Master] had been extra options he acquired before. He had planned and strategized around them, but the results had been limited by time.

This unexpected benefit was something he hadn’t anticipated.

"An inheritance item, huh?"

It didn't take long for Jason to understand the reason.

The page was written on aged calfskin, clearly created long ago by the developer of the boxing technique. It detailed the training methods for "Iron Fist Vigor," beginning with the fundamentals of "Muscles," progressing to "Bone Tempering," and "Skin Training," though the section on techniques was incomplete.

This didn't concern Jason at all.

To him, technique paled in comparison to the importance of "Vigor."

Stashing the "Iron Fist Vigor" page away.

Jason proceeded to search the room, quickly discovering a chest of gold near the headboard hidden within a concealed compartment.

It wasn't ingots of gold but gold leaves.

No insignias marked them.

Clearly something Chen Tong had prepared for a rainy day.

Without hesitation, Jason pulled down the nearby curtain, wrapped the gold leaves within, and stuffed them into his cloak.

Chapter 1216: Adaptation (2)

The other party was already trying to kill him.

That was an enemy.

Jason would never show mercy to an enemy.

Naturally, this included those outside—the followers and bodyguards.

"Come in."

Jason lowered his voice and spoke toward the outside.

The followers and bodyguards immediately pushed the door open and walked inside.

Facing Chen Tong, they wouldn't dare to disobey at all.

As for the rest?

The four of them didn't even think about it too much.

Inside the room, there were only Chen Tong and Peng Liang. Naturally, it was Chen Tong who spoke.

Peng Liang?

Even if he borrowed someone else's courage, he wouldn't dare act tough in front of Chen Tong.

"Master Chen, do you have

One of the followers pushed the door open, instinctively asking as he stepped in. However, as soon as he spoke, he realized something was wrong.

Jason had dragged the bodies of Chen Tong and Peng Liang into the inner room, but the smell of blood lingered, and there were still traces of blood on the floor.

The two followers and two bodyguards immediately realized that something had happened.

But it was already too late.

The door behind them closed silently.

Jason's tall, burly figure emerged from behind the door, and the Broad Blade Cleaver in his hand swung out directly.

The blade's glimmer was like a shooting star.

It also resembled a streak of white light.

The razor-sharp edge swept across the four men's necks before they could react.

Thud, thud, thud, thud!

Blood sprayed out like a gushing fountain.

The severed heads fell to the floor, grimacing and distorted.

Jason, who had been prepared, swiftly dodged the splattering blood, then bent down to search the bodies. He found four money pouches totaling 21 Silver Coins.

Jason carefully stored everything, turned around, and closed the door as he left the room.

He didn't leave the Chen Residence; instead, he quickly weaved through the shadows.

Taking out Chen Tong wasn't enough.

Although the Chen Family might not suspect him in the short term—and he had been sufficiently cautious—who could say the Chen Family wouldn't have other ways to investigate?

Or worse, they might act out of anger, decide he was at fault, and just eliminate him outright!

The Chen Family was so vast, with enormous influence. If they sought revenge, he would be on his own and unable to withstand it.

Why not use this opportunity to destroy the Chen Family once and for all? Otherwise, he wouldn't be able to sleep soundly.

But to Jason's surprise, apart from a few servants, the sprawling Chen Family seemed to have no key figures at all. There weren't even people who appeared particularly fierce—the guards at the entrance seemed to represent the entirety of their defense.

"Paper tigers?"

Jason speculated but quickly shook his head.

The Chen Family was so large; it couldn't possibly be a paper tiger.

There must have been something that delayed them.

Although Jason didn't know what it was, he chose to leave for the time being.

He did not abandon his original plan.

He planned to come back at night.

For now?

He would head back and prepare to eat lunch.

...

He put away the ice mask and Broad Blade Cleaver.

No longer hidden under the meditation mat but in another discrete location.

The hundred Gold Leaves were also stashed there.

The money pouch containing 21 Silver Coins was casually hung by a beam on one side—this pouch belonged to Jason himself, sewn by Dou Bao. It was black, with a stitched Dou Bao on it.

A steamed bun Dou Bao, not Dou Bao herself.

Hanging the money pouch on the beam was also Mu Bai's habit.

'Master, the money pouch should be kept on you, not hung on the beam.'

Dou Bao had reminded him of this more than once during meals.

After tidying up and confirming that he hadn't been stained with blood or carried any lingering smell, Jason pulled open the door and walked toward the front courtyard.

By this time, the disciples of the martial arts school had already gathered—about seven or eight of them.

Dou Bao stood below the steps in the front courtyard, facing all the disciples. With a serious expression, she spoke.

"Master Mu Bai's style derives from Tiger Fist, which evolved from Shape Boxing."

"This set of moves emphasizes momentum, ferocity, and sharpness. It uses the waist to guide movement and energy to amplify strength. It is solid and powerful, with an unwavering focus on fundamentals."

"Therefore, everyone must first practice the first sequence of punches thoroughly, then proceed to develop strength and endurance."

Dou Bao took a deep breath as she finished speaking.

"Begin the routine!"

As her words fell, Dou Bao adjusted her stance, launching herself forward with aggressive movements. Her momentum was fierce, and her eyes took on a predatory gleam, almost like a real tiger preparing to strike.

Jason stood on the steps, observing Dou Bao's form, and couldn't help but nod silently.

Dou Bao appeared harmless on the surface, but in actual combat, with such a stance, one or two large men wouldn't stand a chance.

However, her speed and strength were still somewhat lacking.

Was it because she was a girl?

If she added steel claws to her hands, would it be better?

And what if those claws were dipped in poison? Would that make them even more effective?

Oh, right.

Lime powder too.

Keep a handful of lime powder hidden in her sleeve, and at a crucial moment, a sudden throw would be a killing move.

Jason couldn't help but think about all this in his mind.

He had considerable affection for this young girl who managed all his meals and daily needs. Even with just one meal, her soy milk and buns had impressed him.

He didn't want her replaced.

As these thoughts ran through Jason's mind, his gaze shifted toward the so-called disciples.

He immediately shook his head.

Although each of them was taller and stronger than Dou Bao, their punches were weak, lacking power, and they couldn't focus their attention. Their eyes constantly drifted toward Dou Bao.

Their intent was unmistakable.

'He' had been a martial arts fanatic previously—apart from the one fight during the opening of the school, when he went against Peng, Zhang, Li, and Zhao, all other affairs in the school were left to Dou Bao.

Simply put, Dou Bao not only managed his personal affairs but also handled everything related to the martial arts school.

And he?

Most of the time, he was practicing in seclusion in his room.

Dou Bao was an industrious, smart, and kind girl.

Chapter 1217: Adaptation (3)

This is a fact, beyond doubt.

But some things are always hard to avoid.

Jason took slow steps down the stairs, walking toward his disciples.

The absent-minded apprentices immediately felt a heavy weight over them.

When they saw Jason's expressionless face, their hearts trembled even more.

Especially when they met Jason's eyes, it was as if the wailing of someone about to die echoed in their ears.

Sweat instantly poured out.

Two of them directly collapsed to the ground.

Thump! Thump!

The sound was loud, and everyone stopped what they were doing, looking at the two apprentices enveloped by Jason's tall, burly figure.

"Tiger Fist is all about momentum."

"Cowards cannot train."

"You don't need to come back tomorrow."

Jason finished speaking and turned to leave.

The two apprentices, paralyzed with fear, opened their mouths to say something, but in the end, their faces turned ashen and they said nothing, slinking away in disgrace.

Getting expelled from a martial arts school on Martial Arts Street was no small matter.

Even if their families were well-off, they'd be laughed at for a good while.

In fact, their standing in their families might plummet.

Watching the two leave, the remaining apprentices felt a chill in their hearts and suddenly became more focused than ever before.

Dou Bao finished a round of forms and couldn't help but smile as he watched the apprentices train with newfound effort, then turned toward the kitchen—the martial arts school had hired two rough-handed maids, each paid three Silver Coins per month. Besides handling cleaning and tidying up, they were also responsible for buying vegetables, grains, and miscellaneous goods. However, the main cooking responsibilities still fell on Dou Bao, with the maids merely assisting.

Lunch consisted of steamed rice, braised fish, ribs, and scrambled eggs.

The fish was crucian carp, plump and full of meat, cooked with garlic, chili, and scallions to produce an aromatic braise that was irresistibly appetizing.

The ribs were stewed in soup, with winter melon added, filling a whole bucket. The soup was bright and clear, garnished with chopped scallions and cilantro.

The scrambled eggs were simply egg pancakes—five eggs per pancake, and Dou Bao made ten of them.

The rice was steamed in a large iron pot—big enough to fit a whole sheep.

"In the morning I lost face, but for lunch, I must make sure the schoolmaster eats his fill!"

With this simple thought in mind, Dou Bao worked briskly, setting the table and serving the dishes.

However, after Jason sat down, Dou Bao began to grumble quietly.

"Master, an apprentice costs ten Silver Coins a month!"

"We only have eleven apprentices now, and you kicked out two. That's twenty Silver Coins less a month!"

"Think of how much meat we're losing out on!"

Dou Bao muttered.

Still, the corners of her mouth turned upward.

"The apprentices will come."

Jason, already holding his bowl, spoke vaguely.

For now, he wasn't familiar with the economics of this world, so he didn't know what to say, merely voicing an ambiguous reply.

Nonetheless, he did notice Dou Bao's upward-curved lips.

Hah, a woman saying what she doesn't really mean.

The two maids went home for lunch, and so did the apprentices. They would return at three in the afternoon, leaving Jason and Dou Bao to eat alone.

With fewer people around, Jason didn't mind at all.

In fact, to a certain extent, he preferred it this way.

Dou Bao was the same.

For Dou Bao, a refugee, the happiest moments of her day were the ones she spent with the schoolmaster.

Especially when they ate together.

At the dining table, Jason and Dou Bao devoured their food like a storm sweeping through the fields.

From time to time, Dou Bao would talk about the happenings in the area.

Jason ate while listening attentively.

He knew too little about this world and needed to learn as much as he could, as quickly as possible.

However, Dou Bao's accounts were scattered and superficial, often missing the key points.

Mostly, it was about how pork had gotten more expensive, fish wasn't fresh, or how Madam Wang had been ambushed in a sack and left crippled, and also how the tea shop had been smashed.

Finally, after finishing an entire pot of rice, Jason spoke

"Dou Bao, has anything strange happened recently?"

Chapter 1218: Four: A Visit

"Something strange?"

Dou Bao froze, clearly not understanding what Jason meant.

"Like ghosts, supernatural occurrences."

"Or perhaps

"Hauntings?"

Jason carefully chose his words, phrasing it in a way Dou Bao could understand, while harboring a sense of anticipation in his heart.

At this moment, Jason, having spent his satiety points to enter this dungeon world, only had 92 satiety left.

Unusually, the Excitement of Feast had surpassed his remaining satiety.

Thus, Jason urgently needed more satiety.

Being accustomed to living with “a thousand lives,” Jason always felt insecure when his satiety wasn’t at 3000. Even with the newly acquired fragment of the ‘Iron Fist Vigor,’ he hadn’t rushed to learn it.

Without finding a stable “food source” in this dungeon world, Jason wasn’t planning to touch his current satiety.

"Hauntings?"

"They existed in the countryside before, but not here in Mountain City."

"Supernatural occurrences?"

"Well, there were some, all related to that darned Transmigration Cult—those people are always up to strange things. Back in my hometown, life was peaceful until they showed up. Afterward, it all changed. Uncle Wang next door sold off his own wife and kids to join that Transmigration Cult, only to end up hanging himself at home."

When mentioning the “Transmigration Cult,” Dou Bao’s face was filled with dread.

"Transmigration Cult?"

Jason raised an eyebrow.

"Yeah, lots of people in my hometown joined."

"There's also another cult rumored to be connected to the Transmigration Cult, but that's just hearsay."

Dou Bao nodded, his fear unabated as he scooted his small stool closer to Jason.

It was as if he could only feel safe when near Jason.

"Anything else?"

Jason pressed on.

"Dou Bao knows no more than that."

"But I did overhear something at the market. Someone outside the city encountered a critically injured martial arts master who passed on their entire life's skills."

"Also!"

"A dropout from the Peng family martial arts school fell off a cliff and found a martial arts manual."

"And not just that! Not just that!"

"The butcher from Eastern City who sells pork claimed he dreamed of meeting an immortal who gave him a chest full of gold."

As Dou Bao spoke, his eyes lit up, and his tone turned visibly excited.

Especially when mentioning "a lifetime's skills," "martial arts manual," and "a chest full of gold," he looked as though he wished he could take their place.

Jason, however, merely nodded, remaining silent.

He didn't believe any of it.

Perhaps there really were fortunate people in the world.

But no truly lucky person would let such matters spread to the point where even the marketplace knew about it.

It was more likely just rumors spreading wildly.

Or perhaps...

Someone was exploiting these stories to lay a trap.

Greedy people existed everywhere.

If the opportunity seemed good, a hunter could become the prey, and similarly, those looking to “strike it rich” could end up being someone else’s fortune.

What concerned Jason more than these tales was the “Transmigration Cult.”

Or more precisely, whether the “Transmigration Cult” had food.

Of course, there was also the matter of the “Chen Residence.”

If that matter wasn't resolved, he wouldn't have the energy to focus on anything else.

By his calculations, the time should be about right, shouldn't it?

As Jason pondered, he shuffled his stool slightly, resting his body against the wall. Immediately, the warm afternoon sunlight bathed him.

Comfortable, satisfying.

Dou Bao, after resting briefly, began clearing the dishes and tidying up.

He moved swiftly and with practiced efficiency.

Once finished, Dou Bao resumed martial arts practice in the courtyard.

It was different from his earlier boxing exercises.

The earlier moves were just routines, but this time, the practice was a true "secret tradition," something that could train the very "muscle sinews."

Jason wasn't surprised by this.

From their earlier conversation, he already knew that "he" was a martial arts fanatic, uninterested in anything except training.

The martial arts school was opened not for profit, but to support "his" own journey in martial arts.

After all, the herbs needed for training weren't cheap, and without family wealth, sustaining such a practice was impossible.

So, "he" opened a martial arts school, earned money, and kept training.

To ensure a steady income, "he" passed on the Mu family boxing techniques up to the "muscle training" level to Dou Bao.

Moreover, "he" promised that once Dou Bao mastered the "muscle training," he would teach him the "Bone Tempering" phase.

Dou Bao fully believed this.

And so, he trained diligently.

His moves, carefully executed, started generating faint breezes between his fists and legs.

Although faint, they were real.

Jason nodded silently to himself.

"He" wasn't lying to Dou Bao; "he" had genuinely taught him, and Dou Bao had sincerely put in the effort to learn.

But it still felt somewhat shallow.

What should have been "a tiger descending the mountain" seemed, in Dou Bao's hands, more like "a kitten stretching lazily."

It would require time to refine.

As Jason thought this, his brow furrowed suddenly.

"He" knew the Mu family boxing techniques.

But Jason did not.

Let alone teaching Dou Bao—if he got into the ring, any wrong moves would risk exposing himself.

Those martial artists weren't as gullible as Dou Bao.

They wouldn't be easy to fool.

Thinking of this, Jason straightened up.

He watched Dou Bao closely, and after seeing him steady his breath, gathering his strength with a controlled posture, Jason coughed lightly and said, "Dou Bao, let me test you. What are the key points and secrets of the Mu family boxing technique?"

"A fierce aura!"

"Charge ahead fearlessly!"

"Imagination like a tiger!"

"While moving, keep the body bent, chest hollowed and waist tucked in, resembling a bow. Breathing must be long and steady. When advancing, breathing should be powerful and rhythmic, like thunder. While sitting, keep the back straight, hands never leaving the ribs

Dou Bao began reciting without hesitation.

Chapter 1219: Visiting (2)

These were all taught to her by Jason, she recited them one whole night, and even while training, she constantly chanted them silently, so these crucial points, tricks were already imprinted into her bones.

It was almost without thinking, she recited them immediately.

Jason nodded while listening, then silently remembered.

His requirements were not high, as long as he could muddle through when it came to action.

Using the opportunity of sparring, Jason asked Dou Bao to recite it three times, and when she was about right, he nodded.

"Not bad, keep it up."

After saying so, Jason leaned against the wall and basked in the sun again.

"Yes, Master."

Dou Bao happily nodded her head and practiced even more diligently.

She only thought she passed the test and didn't let Jason down.

And Jason?

Leaning there, he started pondering the essentials of the Mu Family Fist.

Aside from the moves, the more self-styled Jason focused on the core parts.

For example: Iron Fist Vigor.

In the Mu Family Fist, there is also a 'Vigor' concept, called 'Tiger Power', a force mimicking a tiger, unlike 'Iron Fist Vigor' which emphasizes both hands, 'Tiger Power' requires full-body exertion.

Pros and cons?

Just having arrived in this replicated world, Jason temporarily couldn't tell the difference.

"Still need satiety!"

"Although I can't directly learn 'Tiger Power', 'Iron Fist Vigor' should be possible."

"Once learning it, I can experience the techniques of this replicated world."

Jason thought like this as time ticked by.

After Dou Bao practiced three more times, she temporarily returned to her room for a nap.

Jason also returned to his room.

Until 3 p.m., the martial arts academy apprentices began returning one after another.

Compared to the laziness in the morning, the afternoon apprentices became more diligent—partly because two had been driven away as examples, but also because today the master unusually was observing them.

Normally, the master stayed in his room, only coming out to guide them on the first morning of the beginning, middle, and end of each month.

This was said when they joined the 'Mu-style Martial Arts School'.

Dou Bao also mentioned it to Jason.

"I've hit a bottleneck, intensive practice isn't helping for now, need to change strategies to break through the bottleneck."

Jason used this as an excuse to deal with Dou Bao.

Dou Bao had no doubt about it.

Because, she also encountered a similar bottleneck practicing 'Mu Family Fist' now.

"Punch open!"

Like in the morning, Dou Bao practiced punches on the stairs.

Jason stood on the steps watching.

The apprentices in front followed suit like copying tigers.

On the weapon rack beside, hung a coat, with towels of each placed below it, two brawny women were sweeping around with brooms, occasionally lifting their heads to look at the young men who kept shouting, but that was it, they quickly lowered heads to work, three Silver Coins a month in Mountain City wasn't low, especially since the work wasn't heavy, after returning home at night, they could still do some mending for extra earnings, albeit little, accumulated over time it was a significant income, hence, they cherished this job more and more.

One round of punching completed.

Dou Bao began to instruct the apprentices on their forms.

Then, she let the apprentices hone their strength.

As for the skill of training 'muscles and tendons', Dou Bao would not teach.

That was only for the inner disciples.

These present?

Only apprentices.

You pay, I teach you.

No money, please leave.

Having witnessed too much while escaping famine, Dou Bao knew the nuances clearly, naturally polite to these apprentices, but also hidden barriers, asking about taught moves was answered frankly, asking about untaught ones or 'Vigor'?

Sorry.

She didn't know either.

Jason watched for a while, earnestly learning a bit from how Dou Bao instructed the moves, then prepared to return to his room.

'He' had done well in this aspect before.

No need for Jason to find excuses again.

As for the Chen Residence?

Until now, they kept silent, Jason didn't care.

Anyway, by dusk, he planned to visit again.

However, just as Jason was about to leave, a few people arrived outside the martial arts school, each wearing dark gray uniforms, the leader had a small silver star on their shoulder, not metal, but embroidery.

The arrival of these people instantly caught the attention of the martial arts apprentices.

"Keep practicing."

Dou Bao shouted low, a rare flash of displeasure appearing on her face.

She hated people not focusing.

Of course, what she detested more were these constables.

In Dou Bao's eyes, these constables were even more scoundrel than bandits, second only to the government soldiers.

Every one of them exploited people, relying on bullying the weak.

Moreover, they always bullied them.

Back home, a widow sister in their town was bullied by a constable then jumped into the river.

Although afterwards, the constable was skinned by someone by the town gate, the dead could not return, pity that widow sister who taught her embroidery, Dou Bao hated these constables to the bone.

Therefore, naturally, Dou Bao did not show a good face.

"What do you want?"

Dou Bao blocked the door, asking stiffly.

"Excuse me, is Master Mu here?"

The leading constable bent over with a smile, asking in the most amiable tone.

No help for it.

He was here to ask for help.

The little girl in front was inconsequential.

However, the person in the distance was a big name.

The previous competition with Peng, Zhang, Li, Zhao, the four masters, although the doors were closed, the fact that a new martial arts school opened on Martial Arts Street said it all.

One must know, it had been over three years without newcomers opening a school on Martial Arts Street.

All these prove the strength of the person.

And now, he needed such a person's help.

Thus, Jia Youcai bent over, secretly glancing at Jason standing on the far steps.

Dou Bao noticed the other's glance, but this young lady answered straightforwardly.

"Not here."

With that, Dou Bao raised her hand to close the door.

"Hey, hey, young lady."

"Wait, don't."

"Hand, hand!"

"It's pinching my hand!"

Seeing Dou Bao closing the door, Jia Youcai couldn't care less, directly wedging his hand into the door gap.

Not that he didn't want to push the door open.

But he didn't dare.

Facing a martial arts school and facing those ordinary folk was different.

The latter, intimidate a bit, he was good.

The former, intimidate a bit, he'd be done.

He was just forty years old, not wanting to meet his dad so early.

Dou Bao quickly opened the door.

She saw it pinched his hand indeed, and the red mark would soon swell.

Once the door opened, Jia Youcai quickly stepped over the threshold, using his knee to hold the door and said with a flattering face: "I really have something important to discuss with Master Mu."

"What important matter?"

"You all... "

"Dou Bao, let the guest in."

Dou Bao was about to say some unpleasant words, but was interrupted by Jason.

With Jason speaking up, even if reluctantly, Dou Bao could only open the door.

Jia Youcai smiled, quickly trotting towards Jason.

"Master Mu, a pleasure to meet you, seeing you surpasses hearing about you!"

Arriving below the steps, Jia Youcai looked at the tall, robust Jason, secretly admiring, immediately cupping his fists.

Although he hadn't seen Jason fight, just based on physique, Jia Youcai believed their whole squad together wouldn't be a match.

No problem.

As long as he agrees to help, it'll surely work.

Jia Youcai thought, his tone more respectful.

"I am the arrest officer of Mountain City, Jia Youcai."

"I have come today to request Master Mu's assistance."

"Of course, it's not for free."

"There's remuneration, and rewards."

Jia Youcai said as he cupped his hands again.

Help?

Jason discreetly scrutinized Jia Youcai and the four constables behind him.

Average builds, iron rulers hanging on their waists, but no calluses on the palms, standing askew, clearly not well-trained, even less like they'd practiced the secret technique.

Wasn't here for the 'Chen Residence'.

Jason thought silently.

But, he did not drop his guard.

He gestured Jia Youcai to enter the hall behind with him.

This was the largest building in the front yard.

Not only where apprentices relaxed on rainy days, but also a place for discussions, if challengers came, sparring would be held here—friendly, behind closed doors.

Following Jason into the hall, away from the crowd, especially when Dou Bao brought tea and smoothly closed the door, Jia Youcai had no worries.

Plop.

This arrest officer knelt before Jason.

"Master Mu, please save us!"

Chapter 1220: The Flying Thief!

Jason tilted his body, avoiding Jia Youcai's kneeling salute.

It wasn't just because he was unaccustomed to it, but also out of caution.

A concealed crossbow hidden beneath a low-bowed posture, Jason knew.

Five Poisons sand shot like a sly serpent, Jason knew.

A deadly smoke trap lurking behind, Jason also knew.

In this unfamiliar, replica-like world, as Jason explored and gathered information, his sense of vigilance was heightened like never before.

On the side, Dou Bao glanced at Jia Youcai and sneered faintly. Setting down her tea, she stood off to the side.

Although Jia Youcai was just like those scoundrels she remembered—those who fawn on the powerful and tread on the weak—Dou Bao refrained from saying much in Master Mu's presence. Besides, Dou Bao trusted Master Mu to handle things appropriately.

Jia Youcai, seeing Jason dodging away, immediately shifted his knees and knelt down once again, this time aiming right for Jason.

Jason evaded him again.

Furthermore, this time, Jason maneuvered behind Jia Youcai, grabbed his shoulder like steel pincers, and directly lifted him up.

"Aiyo, aiyo, pain, pain, pain!"

"Master Mu, please have mercy, this small one's fragile body can't endure your strength!"

Jia Youcai cried out repeatedly in pain, clasping his hands together and bowing incessantly.

His hat fell to the ground. His gray-black uniform, which already had unfastened buttons, coupled with his reed-thin physique, transformed his supposedly formal attire into a crooked mess devoid of any dignity.

Jason loosened his grip, and Jia Youcai repeatedly rubbed his aching shoulder. Without even looking, he knew it must be swollen, especially with the sharp pain now causing his rat-like whiskers to quiver uncontrollably.

However, Jia Youcai did not get angry.

In fact, he seemed somewhat pleased.

Or rather, to put it precisely, the stronger Jason was, the happier Jia Youcai appeared.

Looking at Jason's calm expression, speaking not a word more than necessary, Jia Youcai clasped his hands once again.

"Master Mu, I humbly request your help with a matter."

As he spoke, Jia Youcai stole a glance at Jason. Seeing Jason remain emotionless, he quickly sped up his speech, worried Jason might not give him the chance to explain.

If Jason allowed it, then there was still hope for him.

"Lately, Mountain City has been plagued by a thief."

"A flying thief."

"A flying thief?"

Dou Bao interjected with surprise.

She had not intended to butt into the conversation but couldn't help herself.

A flying thief—that was someone straight out of fictional storytelling.

In real life, she had never encountered such a figure, even with her experience in the martial arts hall.

Moreover, the most puzzling part was that she had never even heard of a flying thief operating in Mountain City.

"Why haven't I heard of this before?"

Dou Bao eyed Jia Youcai suspiciously.

She suspected Jia Youcai might be setting a trap for Master Mu.

Although she trusted Master Mu would be perfectly fine, Dou Bao believed it her duty as his attendant to guard against those harboring ill intent ahead of time.

"Sister Dou Bao, how could you possibly have heard about this? If you had, wouldn't the officials have lost their ranks?"

Jia Youcai, disregarding his own age, shamelessly addressed Dou Bao so intimately. This only made Dou Bao dislike the arrest officer even more, though she still kept a keen ear on what he was saying.

"So you're saying the Mountain City officials suppressed the news? Then handed the task to you, and believing yourself incapable of completing it, you came to ask Master Mu for help?"

Dou Bao asked, pressing him insistently.

"Sister Dou Bao is truly sharp and perceptive. You've hit the nail on the head, though there are some internal details I haven't had the time to share just yet."

Jia Youcai flattered Dou Bao.

Even if Dou Bao had only guessed a fragment correctly, he wanted her to feel as though she had deduced everything perfectly.

Then, he smoothly shifted topics, adding his own explanation.

Not only that, Jia Youcai took special care to imply subtly that it wasn't Dou Bao's fault for misunderstanding—it was on him for not sharing the full story yet.

This kind of ingratiating maneuver Jia Youcai had mastered fully.

Otherwise, how could he have become an arrest officer?

By catching thieves and bandits? Don't be ridiculous.

He had an elderly mother to take care of.

However, what surprised Jia Youcai was that Dou Bao lacked the usual smug demeanor he saw in others after receiving his flattery—neither visible pride nor concealed satisfaction; all she revealed was a watchful gaze.

This young woman wasn't simple.

Indeed, to be entrusted as the martial hall's steward, she must have her own capabilities.

Jia Youcai thought to himself while maintaining the same fawning smile.

But his explanation promptly continued.

"This flying thief is unlike ordinary criminals. He's the real deal, someone who moves high and low with ease. Brazen, reckless, and merciless, he even sends out 'notices' prior to every theft, informing the household when he'll strike. At first, everyone dismissed it as a joke—who would be foolish enough to announce their crimes in advance? But then, thefts occurred one after another. And anyone who dared intervene ended up dead, without exception."

At this point, Jia Youcai sucked in his breath with a sharp hiss, his face drained with fear.

After steadying himself with a few breaths, the arrest officer lowered his voice even further.

"This led to murder cases. Naturally, the households reported to the authorities. After the thief's most recent 'notice,' the official sent the four chief arrest officers from Mountain City's northwest, northeast, southwest, and southeast quarters, along with over a dozen elite fighters, to pursue the thief. Not only did they fail to catch him, but they all met their doom—the four arrest officers and the dozen or so skilled fighters... are all dead."

"The entire ordeal didn't last more than a quarter of an hour. By the time we followed up, all we saw were dead bodies scattered everywhere."

Jia Youcai's expression grew darker and more terrified, as if the scene of carnage was right before his eyes.

Jason remained seated without a word.

He seemed entirely uninterested.

Meanwhile, Dou Bao furrowed her brows slightly.

"What was the strength level of those four chief arrest officers?"