

New Era 161

Chapter 161 - A Narrow Escape

The Giant Scythe Insects move fast. In just a matter of seconds, the foremost insect appeared right in front, followed by a dense cluster. Chen Shouyi was the first to release an arrow, pinning the leading Giant Scythe Insect to the ground.

The next moment, arrows rained down, and in less than three seconds, more than thirty Giant Scythe Insects were completely killed by the team.

To conserve his energy, Chen Shouyi only shot three arrows sparingly. The other two martial artists also didn't shoot much, with most of the insects being taken down by the martial artists.

The team pressed forward, occasionally confronting waves of Giant Scythe Insects that were easily dispatched, boosting their confidence tremendously.

"If we continue at this rate, I bet by the time we return, there won't be many Giant Scythe Insects left, and the military should award us a big medal," Zhou Dapao said with a relaxed expression.

"Don't get complacent. Only the black Giant Scythe Insects have shown up so far, the Silver Giant Scythe Insects haven't appeared yet," Zhao Zhishan warned with a grin on his face.

"Be careful, more Giant Scythe Insects are coming!" Chen Shouyi said with a serious expression at this moment.

Seeing the nonchalance on everyone's faces, Chen Shouyi had to speak up and remind them again, "There are a lot this time, both in front and behind, we're surrounded."

These Giant Scythe Insects possessed considerable intelligence; the relentless killing by humans had obviously stirred the entire insect nest.

Xiao Changming also heard it now, the crisp footsteps of the Giant Scythe Insects nearly blending into one continuous sound, making his scalp tingle. With a grave expression, he quickly said, "This is not

going to be easy. Lao Qin, your City Government martial artists defend the front, we defend the rear, Brother Chen, support from the middle, alright?"

"No problem!" Qin Liuyuan promptly agreed. It was the best approach; if they acted freely, they'd definitely be overwhelmed and lose focus.

"I have no problem either!" said Chen Shouyi.

Immediately, the two teams formed a back-to-back formation, tossing a dozen glow sticks to the sides of the corridor, brightening the view instantly.

Xu Jie quietly moved next to Chen Shouyi, recognizing him as the strongest of the three martial artists. Being near him was undoubtedly safer.

Chen Shouyi caught a whiff of a female fragrance, glanced at her, but said nothing.

As seconds ticked away, the clamor grew, giving the illusion of a thousand troops charging forward, the ground slightly trembling. Everyone's expressions turned grave, their hearts pounding, with a slight sweat on their palms.

"Prepare for battle!" Xiao Changming shouted.

"Fire!"

The City Government's side was relatively quiet, but their actions were swift. The seasoned martial artists didn't need reminders as they drew their bowstrings.

The corridor was high and wide enough for three Giant Scythe Insects to advance side by side.

However, many more emerged simultaneously, with many insects scaling the corridor walls rapidly.

The next moment, arrows rained down, the corridor echoing with the sharp whistling of arrows slicing through the air.

The front group of Giant Scythe Insects fell instantly, and soon more fearlessly rushed forward over the corpses.

With Chen Shouyi's timely aid in times of danger, a stalemate formed between the Giant Scythe Insects and the team. The bodies at the front quickly piled up, and were it not for the corridor's height of five or six meters, it might have been blocked.

At that moment, Chen Shouyi's expression slightly changed.

Damn!

A small, silvery figure swiftly darted along the corridor wall, heading toward them.

It didn't fly within the corridor, but its speed was still alarming, like a car racing over a hundred miles per hour.

Chen Shouyi immediately let off an arrow.

However, just as he released the bowstring, the small figure leapt swiftly to the opposite wall.

Chen Shouyi focused intently, eyes locked on its jumping trajectory, his hands a flurry of movements as he seamlessly picked another arrow, drew his bow, and released in one fluid action. The Silver Giant Scythe Insect had barely landed its six legs on the opposite wall before it had an arrow lodged in it, dropping from the wall.

Indeed, with the tripled gravity, its reactions were noticeably slower. Were it on Earth, such an easy feat would be impossible.

Xiao Changming and Qin Liuyuan had been startled by the silvery figure, but before they could react, it was already shot down with an arrow.

Does it really have to be this monstrous?

Chen Shouyi shot two more arrows, and that Silver Giant Scythe Insect finally ceased struggling.

Before he could catch his breath, another Silver Giant Scythe Insect rapidly approached. Fortunately, he was experienced by now, using the same method. An arrow coaxed it into jumping toward the opposite wall.

As it had just landed on the wall, not fully steady, unable to fully exert its six legs, he shot it with another arrow.

Qin Liuyuan felt his slightly aching muscles, his expression anxious. The fight had been going for nearly a minute, yet the Giant Scythe Insects continued to surge in, especially with the appearance of the Silver Giant Scythe Insects, setting his hackles on end, filling him with unease.

Don't be fooled by Chen Shouyi's seemingly easy handling; it was because he was far stronger. Qin knew well that if it were him facing these creatures, his odds would be slim. Should several appear at once, it would be dire.

"Colonel Xiao, Brother Chen, we must retreat!" he spoke up.

"How do we retreat? Continue forward or go back the way we came?" Xiao Changming, already of similar mind, hurriedly asked.

Martial artists are not machines; their bodies also tire, especially in high-stress rapid-fire situations. After a hundred consecutive shots, their arm muscles were nearing their limits. He noticed the martial artists under him shooting arrows with less force than before, some struggling to fully draw their bows. Continuing at this pace, they wouldn't last long.

Chen Shouyi spoke, "Keep going forward, I hear the wind howling; we should be close to the exit."

As he spoke, he shot an approaching Giant Scythe Insect dead.

"Alright, Brother Chen supports us, we'll move quickly," Xiao Changming said, wiping sweat from his brow.

Chen Shouyi, feeling still full of energy, immediately unleashed a rapid burst of arrows, firing four in half a second, instantly clearing the way ahead of Giant Scythe Insects.

A few military martial artists were shocked momentarily, then seized the opportunity, moving forward quickly.

The team advanced as they fought, laboriously covering over a hundred meters. While the Giant Scythe Insects still surged from behind, none came from the front, and the corridor began to widen with light gradually increasing.

Everyone felt a wave of refreshment, the previously aching and sluggish arms seemed to regain some strength.

The wind's wailing whooshed through, occasionally accompanied by thunderous booms, as if a storm was raging outside.

But at that moment, the sound in their ears was like celestial music, urging them to retreat quickly for a few more seconds.

In the dim twilight of dawn, a lush green forest came into view.

As the group retreated, looking disheveled and worn at the mouth of the cave, expecting the battle to still rage, they were surprised to find the Giant Scythe Insects suddenly halted at the entrance hesitating to proceed. After a moment, they receded like a tide, leaving behind a ground littered with corpses.

Chapter 162 - Battle of the Gods

Everyone was gasping for breath, standing dumbfounded at the entrance of the cave, looking at each other in dismay.

The strange and abnormal behavior of the Giant Scythe Insect instilled a sense of unease in everyone's hearts.

Chen Shouyi held an arrow in his hand, looking outside with full vigilance.

At this moment, it was still the dim morning outside, with thunder and lightning overhead, the wind howling, and the air filled with a suffocating restless atmosphere.

"Brother Chen, any discoveries!" Xiao Changming asked. Among everyone, Chen Shouyi had the most sensitive senses, both hearing and vision, far exceeding him and Lao Qin.

Chen Shouyi shook his head and said in a deep voice, "Not yet, but I have a bad feeling. Since the Giant Scythe Insect doesn't dare to leave the cave, there might likely be something outside it fears. We might have just escaped the wolf's den, only to enter the tiger's lair."

"Then we won't go out. Anyway, there are no Giant Scythe Insects coming out; we might as well rest at the cave entrance," Qin Liuyuan said. He breathed a little heavily, as the continuous high-intensity combat for three minutes had worn him out.

No one objected to this; it was undeniably foolish to take risks at this moment.

The group chose a relatively flat spot at the cave entrance and sat down cross-legged.

Many people's arms were swollen, and their muscles were trembling slightly.

The atmosphere was quiet and heavy, no one spoke much, silently dealing with their own thoughts.

Although everyone had anticipated the danger of this mission before coming out, no one expected it to be this dangerous.

Had it not been for the addition of an extra Martial Artist in the team, and such a powerful one at that, this mission might have been a total failure.

Chen Shouyi leaned against the cave wall, closing his eyes to rest and recovering his energy.

"Want to drink some water?" Xu Jie beside him suddenly asked quietly, taking out a bottle of water.

"Oh, thank you!" Chen Shouyi opened his eyes, looked at her, and took the water.

The water was bottled mineral water, still sealed. Since the mutation, it had been hard to find on the market, completely sold out by the citizens.

After twisting it open and drinking a few mouthfuls, Chen Shouyi sealed it again.

The lightning outside became increasingly fierce, occasionally illuminating the cave entrance intermittently, adding to the oppressive atmosphere.

Entirely out of instinct, Chen Shouyi discreetly used his Wind Control Ability under the cover of the cave's howling winds, only to find that his always-reliable Wind Control was surprisingly difficult to manipulate.

It seemed as if some terrifying power was interfering with his ability.

This was the first time since he gained his abilities that such a situation occurred, filling his heart with unease. If it truly was caused by some creature, then such a creature would be overwhelmingly powerful.

At this moment, a bolt of lightning flashed in the sky, striking a distant mountain peak.

"Boom!" A dull sound rang as a small hill crumbled, large boulders rolling down, illuminating the entire cave bright as day.

Everyone's faces turned pale; the power of the lightning completely exceeded human comprehension of what lightning should be, more akin to a large bomb.

"Do you think the lightning will strike here?" After a while, Zhou Dapao asked.

"Shut up!" Qin Liuyuan angrily whispered, feeling uneasy himself. Logically, the chance of being struck by lightning was low, like winning the lottery, but who could say for sure, especially in this otherworldly place.

"I was just... just saying." Seeing everyone glaring, Zhou Dapao knew he had angered them all, awkwardly smiling and muttering before shutting his mouth.

At this moment, Chen Shouyi sensed something unusual, suddenly standing up, taking a few steps forward to the cave entrance, and looking up at the sky.

The inky black clouds were violently surging, as if a powerful force was stirring these thick clouds.

"Brother Chen, what are you looking at?" Xiao Changming, unable to sit still, leaned over to ask.

"I feel the clouds are unnatural, not formed naturally," Chen Shouyi said in a deep voice.

After watching for a while, Xiao Changming's expression also turned serious, "There might be supernatural creatures up there."

Just then, an invisible force instantly pierced a large hole through the clouds, revealing a patch of blue sky through the hole. The next moment, a massive and blurry figure fell straight down from the sky.

Its surroundings were filled with streaming light, lightning, and flames, warping the air endlessly.

"No good, it's falling this way."

Chen Shouyi shouted frantically in his mind, feeling a strong sense of panic, heart desperately wishing to turn and flee, yet his body seemed paralyzed in a nightmare.

Fortunately, a few seconds later, this colossal object crashed with a "boom" into a valley not far away.

An earthquake ensued, followed by a massive mushroom cloud rising.

The clouds overhead rapidly changed.

In an instant, the clouds condensed into a colossal Giant, with half of its body sinking into the cloud layer, the other half reaching into the air. Its appearance was quite indistinct, with rough, cloud-formed features, making its face hard to discern, but its majestic, enormous figure was overwhelmingly imposing.

Countless bolts of lightning coursed swiftly through the giant's inky black body like twisting serpents, revealing a violent energy, making the entire world flicker between light and dark.

The Giant looked indifferently down at the earth.

The Giant Beast fallen in the valley struggled to its feet, leaping ferociously, crossing several kilometers in an instant, standing on a nearby mountaintop, revealing itself to be a lion-like Giant Beast.

Its golden fur appeared as if ablaze.

Though clearly injured, a terrifying charred wound oozing golden blood continuously.

"Kabaro, do you really want to pursue me relentlessly?" It roared at the sky.

The intense energy waves instantly turned nearby trees into fine dust like weathering, scattering, and even slightly dispersing the clouds overhead.

"It's just that you're too weak!" The half-formed Giant opened its mouth, releasing a grand buzzing sound, as if the heavens and earth were resonating.

"Alright, alright, alright! We'll see who lives or dies!" The Giant Beast roared, its limbs pounding fiercely, shattering the mountaintop into a terrible shockwave, and in the next moment, its figure shot like a stream of light towards the half-formed Giant.

The ensuing battle blurred beyond Chen Shouyi's vision, only the incessant roaring of thunder and swirling clouds.

As the intense fear slowly faded, Chen Shouyi found his legs weakening from exhaustion, barely managing to hold onto the wall, avoiding disgrace.

"God!" Xiao Changming said, looking pale.

"Go back inside first!" Chen Shouyi said with difficulty.

No wonder the Giant Scythe Insect dared not leave the cave—two deities were fighting.

The group immediately reacted, hurriedly returning to the cave on unsteady feet. During this, a Martial Artist stumbled on a stone, falling hard—a feat unimaginable for someone with precise bodily control.

Yet no one had the mind to laugh, as none felt much better than the rest.

Chapter 163: Melting Corpse

Everyone quietly listened to the fierce thunder outside, no one spoke, only pairs of still-frightened eyes communicated with each other, but this was more like an attempt to gain some pitiful sense of security from one another.

Time passed second by second, each one so agonizing.

Chen Shouyi leaned against the wall, his eyes vacant as he looked up at the jagged rock ceiling above. Beside him, Xu Jie lightly leaned against him, her body trembling slightly,

The warm and soft body of a mature woman was resting beside him; if it were another setting, Chen Shouyi would have already been tempted.

But at this moment, he had no such thoughts whatsoever.

Who knows when, but the sound of thunder suddenly stopped abruptly.

At the same time, the dim light outside the cave gradually brightened.

A beam of sunlight shone at the cave entrance, countless specks of dust dancing in it.

"It seems to be over! The sun has come out." Zhao Zhishan broke the silence and said.

"Captain, I'll go out and take a look!" A martial artist from the military stood up, cautiously walked to the cave entrance, glanced at the sky, then turned back to report to Xiao Changming: "It's really gone."

Chen Shouyi came back to his senses, his body jolted, and he gently pushed Xu Jie, who was leaning on his shoulder, and stood up.

Xu Jie rubbed her sore jaw, secretly resenting him, he truly had no tenderness at all.

Chen Shouyi quickly walked to the cave entrance and found that the dark clouds were gradually dissipating. Sunlight pierced through the gaps in the clouds, shining on the earth. The oppressive atmosphere from before had vanished, and even the air felt fresh.

As the gloom cleared, the group's mood became lively again.

"This is my first time seeing an otherworldly god, and I didn't expect it to be so terrifying, it scared me to death." Jin Feiyan patted her towering chest, speaking with lingering fear, as earlier it felt as though her heart was being seized, as if death was imminent.

"It's my first time too, what about you guys," Zhao Zhishan said.

"Mine too!"

"Same here!"

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It seemed everyone was discussing fervently to vent the previous fear.

As they chatted, the topic turned to the beast-like god, and everyone speculated that the unfortunate deity had already fallen.

"It's just a pity about its body!" Xiao Changming said with regret. At thirty-five years old, he was considered young for a martial artist, becoming one at twenty-three, just missing the benefits of the first-generation divine blood.

"I saw it shed a lot of blood!" Chen Shouyi said.

The atmosphere instantly quieted down, and everyone's eyes lit up.

Divine Blood was not unfamiliar to any martial artist, apart from Chen Shouyi, everyone had consumed it more than once, and this was even with the greatly degraded version, whose effects had become quite weak.

And now the true first-generation divine blood was seemingly within reach, seemingly easily obtainable, no one could remain calm.

"How about we go take a look?" Another martial artist from the military said.

Without much hesitation, after a simple discussion, the group quickly set off.

About half an hour later, they arrived at the valley, the place where the giant beast had fallen, trees around were awkwardly tilted, and leaves were shredded by the impact of its fall.

Chen Shouyi noticed that although the giant beast was long gone, a kind of oppressive aura still lingered here, making it hard to breathe.

Not far away, from a pit, wisps of smoke rose up. After walking for several more minutes, the group finally stood at the edge of the pit.

This was a giant pit with a diameter of fifty or sixty meters and a depth of over ten meters, shrouded in blue smoke; at the bottom, one could still see dark red, nearly solidified magma, waves of heat rising up.

One could imagine the terrible impact the giant beast suffered when it fell.

"What is that?" Zhao Zhishan suddenly pointed somewhere, speaking.

Chen Shouyi immediately looked in the direction, it was a drop of golden liquid clinging to the edge of the pit. It looked quite mystical, the surface shrouded in a halo, emitting an enchanting glow.

At first sight, everyone's breathing slightly quickened.

"I'll go help get it." Yu Hongyong, standing nearby, his eyes lit up, said. He then entered the pit. The slope was not steep, he quickly walked a few steps on the pit wall before reaching the divine blood, reaching out to take it.

"Dangerous, don't touch it with your hands!" Xiao Changming seemed to think of something, his face changed and he hurriedly said.

However, it was too late; whether intentionally or unintentionally, Yu Hongyong did not take any precautionary measures, directly touching the golden divine blood with his finger.

Upon contact, the divine blood quickly seeped into the skin of his finger as if it were a living thing.

Seeing this anomaly, Chen Shouyi's pupils involuntarily shrank.

A trace of joy just flashed through Yu Hongyong's mind, but his expression quickly changed.

His skin became increasingly red, as countless blue veins bulged out from his skin, like tangled earthworms; his body was in severe pain, as if being burned by fire, a strong panic arose in his heart: "Help... me!"

His mouth opened, spewing a scorching blue smoke

Fool!

Chen Shouyi had already guessed a bit of the other's previous thoughts, a hint of mockery flashed across his face.

Truly blinded by desire.

On Earth, divine blood specifically sold to martial artists was nothing more than the cell fluid of godly blood. How could blood cells not be more effective? Indeed, divine blood was horribly genetically invasive; consuming it rashly was a surefire death.

The already degraded divine blood was so, let alone this fresh, just-dripped, undegraded first-generation divine blood. It was like an old man eating arsenic, tired of living.

In just a few seconds, Yu Hongyong's skin seemed to completely lose its resilience, starting to tear apart, revealing the bloody muscles underneath.

Drops of reddish-yellow pus fell from his wounds, as time passed, the pus from his body increased dramatically.

His body seemed to be rapidly melting, and before long, his hair, along with his scalp, slipped off.

Initially, some in the crowd who still harbored fantasies, their desires stirring, were fully sobered by this horrific scene.

Yu Hongyong's body wobbled, and after a few seconds, he finally couldn't stand, falling and rolling to the pit's bottom.

At this time, the magma at the pit's bottom hadn't completely cooled, with blue smoke still rising, the temperature remained three to four hundred degrees Celsius. As he rolled in, the sizzle of roasting meat was heard, an eerie aroma of cooked meat spreading out.

But he seemed to feel no pain, his back lying against the magma, scarcely struggling, leaving himself at the mercy of the intense heat.

Many martial artists averted their eyes in discomfort.

"Lao Qin, give him a quick death?" Smelling the scent of the roasted meat, Chen Shouyi felt a bit queasy in his stomach, turning to Qin Liuyuan and saying.

It wasn't that Chen Shouyi was being delicate, but Qin Liuyuan was the leader of the city government's martial artists, this matter should be handled by him, not for Chen Shouyi to overstep his bounds.

Qin Liuyuan nodded gravely, took an arrow from the quiver, half-pulled the bowstring, slightly looking away, and then quickly released the arrow.

The arrow pierced through Yu Hongyong's forehead in an instant.

His body trembled violently for a moment, then completely relaxed, a pair of half-melted eyes, weakly staring at the sky.

Half a minute later, Yu Hongyong's corpse, except for the bones, had completely dissolved into a puddle of blood.

Chapter 164: Master Level

Aside from this drop of divine blood, no other divine blood was found in the pit.

After a quick search, the group headed towards the mountain not far away.

Perhaps there's more divine blood hidden beneath the solidified lava, but without proper digging tools, it's impossible to excavate with swords. Furthermore, the bottom of the pit was polluted by the blood from Yu Hongyong's corpse. With the grim fate before their eyes, everyone hesitated.

Fortunately, there might be more divine blood at the mountain peak nearby.

It paused there for several seconds, and there must have been plenty of divine blood left behind.

Chen Shouyi followed the group to the mountaintop, looking shocked.

The entire summit was flat and barren, with web-like cracks spreading from the center outward. If it weren't for the occasional tree roots showing signs of erosion by divine power, one might suspect this place was naturally desolate.

This was just the aftermath of one roar from the other party.

Chen Shouyi felt a weight in his heart; if such power appeared in Hedong City, who could resist it?

Maybe on Earth, it would become much weaker, but even then, going from a Tyrannosaurus Rex to a tiger makes little difference to frail humans.

He shook his head slightly, turning away from these thoughts. As that deity said, to be weak is a sin. Overthinking would only bring unnecessary trouble.

Seeing someone had already discovered divine blood ahead, Chen Shouyi quickly sped up to follow.

A large pool of divine blood, spanning half a meter in diameter.

Even though the sun had risen and it was already daylight, the surface still shimmered with a radiant glow, exuding a suppressive and fear-inducing aura. Chen Shouyi even noticed the air above the divine blood was slightly distorted, clearly containing immense energy.

Many people gazed at the pool with shining eyes, their breaths a bit hurried.

Fortunately, this time, everyone remained much more rational, with nobody daring to act rashly, only observing from afar.

"How should this be distributed?" Qin Liuyuan asked, forcing himself to look away from the divine blood.

Once these words were spoken, the atmosphere became somewhat tense. The formerly harmonious environment now seemed to have subtle implications, while the Martial Artists from the city government and the military grew slightly wary.

Conflicts over interests during inter-world joint explorations were not uncommon. The other world was a lawless place where killing required no reservations.

Xiao Changming glanced at everyone, remaining silent for a moment before stating, "This divine blood was obtained from this exploration, so it should be distributed according to the Explorer's allocation method. No objections, right?"

"Of course not!" Qin Liuyuan immediately smiled, relieved that he was most worried about the military claiming carelessness as an excuse for monopolizing. Since it would be distributed according to the Explorer's method, there was no issue.

Several military Martial Artists also breathed a sigh of relief. After all, not everyone is a saint. Who wouldn't feel a bit covetous? Having taken such great risks, only to receive a commendation or scraps wouldn't sit well with anyone.

"That's good. We three and the other nine Martial Artists will split six to four, with Chen Shouyi getting 30% of our 60%. Does anyone have any objections?"

In a joint exploration, regardless of how much the Martial Artists contributed, the other Grand Martial Artist couldn't receive more than 20%, sometimes even less. This was an unwritten rule.

"No problem!" Qin Liuyuan hesitated for a moment but then nodded, acknowledging that this distribution was fair. The Martial Artists' circle respects the powerful, and strength dictates a larger share. Chen Shouyi's contribution in this adventure indeed far surpassed theirs combined, thus deserving 30%.

Chen Shouyi naturally had no objections!

This proportion far exceeded his expectations; he would have been satisfied even with a fifth.

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Everyone started to work, collecting hard leaves nearby to carefully store the divine blood in a military canteen.

What couldn't be taken was also not wasted.

Using swords, they scraped and took the soil with the stones.

In the end, Chen Shouyi received about thirty milliliters of divine blood, forming a thin layer in the mineral water bottle, radiating a mesmerizing glow under the sunlight. He also got about half a pound of blood-soaked soil.

Chen Shouyi removed his clothes, wrapped the blood-soaked soil into a bundle, and placed it in the backpack alongside the mineral water bottle.

On the way back, Chen Shouyi asked Qin Liuyuan, "How do you plan to handle this divine blood?"

"A biological laboratory can handle it," Qin Liuyuan replied cheerfully. "The main task is to remove the genes from the blood. The deity's genes are too aggressive. Consuming it would cause genetic collapse. If efficiency isn't a priority, it's simpler; just filter out the cells, and it can be used."

Chen Shouyi nodded secretly. As someone who was still a high school senior six months ago, he knew how to extract plasma.

Add anticoagulant to the blood, centrifuge or let it settle naturally; the upper yellow translucent liquid is plasma. For purer plasma, take the upper liquid, centrifuge, let it settle, and you'll get pure plasma.

The only hassle is that there is no power now; centrifuges are unusable.

But surely the laboratory has alternative methods since these are basic biological operations. If they can't solve that, the laboratory might as well shut down.

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On the way, they discovered traces of the Giant Scythe Insects. Clearly, with the divine battle over, these creatures no longer hid in their burrows and began to venture out. After a brief discussion, they found an open area and stopped to rest.

Firstly, only an hour and a half had passed since the battle, and everyone's fatigue hadn't completely faded. Secondly, the more Giant Scythe Insects roamed outside, the safer it would be to raid the nest later.

After resting for two hours, the team set off again.

They took down over a dozen black Giant Scythe Insects along the way, carefully approaching the cave entrance.

Before entering, Xiao Changming gravely said to the Martial Artists, "Once inside the cave, move quickly and fight decisively. When we return to Hedong City, I hope no one gets left behind!"

Whether they were military Martial Artists or from the city government, they nodded gravely.

Despite having rested for over three hours, how could their conditions recover so quickly? Many, even with strained arm muscles, found their arms weak and useless, severely reducing combat power. If they faced the previous siege again, they might all be wiped out.

Once inside the cave, everyone sprinted forward.

At this moment, Chen Shouyi's agility far surpassed that of a Grand Martial Artist, allowing him to move with ease.

Whenever Giant Scythe Insects appeared, before the other two Grand Martial Artists even reacted, an arrow had already swiftly pierced through the creature.

Whether facing one or two, there seemed to be no difference; the group didn't even pause or slow down while running. Even when unexpectedly encountering a Silver Giant Scythe Insect, it was the same.

In mere half a second, Chen Shouyi shot five arrows lightning fast. Ordinary Martial Artists only heard the continuous hum of arrow shots. The Silver Giant Scythe Insect was already lying on the ground, completely powerless to struggle.

Qin Liuyuan and Xiao Changming exchanged glances, their hearts filled with shock. Such power was simply unimaginable, not far from rivaling a Martial Artist.

Martial Artist refers to someone of grandmaster level, with a scarce number almost at the pinnacle of human combat strength. There wasn't a single one in the entire Jiangnan Province, and each one was a prominent figure, akin to national treasures, rarely seen.

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Chapter 165: Another Wave Begins

A few seconds later, after a turn, the passage was already in sight.

"Quick, quick, quick, faster!" Chen Shouyi whispered urgently, as he could already hear the sound of chaotic and noisy footsteps coming from all directions.

Chen Shouyi swiftly shot three arrows in succession, killing several giant scythe insects near the passage.

With a few steps, he was already standing on the pile of rubble under the spatial passage, holding his war bow on guard.

The distance to the spatial passage was just over two meters, but less than three meters high. Even in a world with three times the gravity, he could barely jump over.

At this moment, scattered giant scythe insects had already begun appearing from various passages.

Chen Shouyi quickly shot arrows, his hands almost turning into a blur, while saying, "Quickly, you go first!"

All the martial artists flashed a hint of gratitude on their faces, said nothing, and seized the opportunity to climb up quickly along the dangling ropes.

These people were not ordinary; their physical fitness was more than three or four times that of normal people; each was an elite among elites. In less than a second, only Chen Shouyi was left in the passage.

The emerging giant scythe insects were becoming more and more numerous. Chen Shouyi retracted his war bow and leaped fiercely towards the spatial passage.

Just as he jumped, a premonition of danger emerged in his heart, and he instinctively glanced.

Just one glance and he felt his scalp tighten, a strong sense of crisis surging in his heart.

It was a mysterious giant scythe insect emitting an uncertain luminescence. It appeared like a majestic king, surrounded by several slightly smaller silver giant scythe insects, emerging grandly from one of the massive passages, looking particularly striking in the dark cavern.

In that instant, a sharp screech seemed to pierce directly into his soul, Chen Shouyi's mind buzzed, his vision darkened, nearly fainting. In this moment of crisis, Chen Shouyi steeled himself, biting hard on the tip of his tongue.

The intense pain on the tongue barely pulled his consciousness back to clarity.

After a shift in space, he found himself already out of the other world. Quickly using the irregularities of the pit wall, he moved his hands and feet, and in the blink of an eye, he was standing on the ground.

Feeling a sense of relief, his body swayed involuntarily, and Xiao Changming immediately supported him: "Brother Chen, are you alright?"

Chen Shouyi felt a bit dizzy, seeing double, but this clearly wasn't the time to address that: "Let's get out of here first, there's a more terrifying giant scythe insect inside that could come through the passage at any moment!"

Everyone's faces turned drastically at the revelation, their previously relaxed expressions from the mission's completion vanished without a trace.

The silver giant scythe insects were already terrifying, yet now they found out there was an even stronger presence. Besides, with the area heavily fortified with firepower, the vicinity of the passage was undoubtedly the focal point of defense; if a swarm of giant scythe insects emerged, the situation would deteriorate, and the military might open fire.

"Move quickly!" Xiao Changming urged, lifting Chen Shouyi and swiftly running forward.

After running just tens of meters, the familiar screech of the giant scythe insect echoed from behind, and the nearby machine guns began to roar, causing Chen Shouyi's heart to tighten.

Feeling the dizziness in his mind greatly subsided, he immediately broke free from Xiao Changming's arm and ran on his own.

With the help of his wind control ability, he could now, at full speed, run a hundred meters in less than two seconds, within just a few steps reaching the very front.

Bullets rained down densely from all directions; ahead, soldiers kept gesturing for everyone to lie down, but no one dared stop. Each person was sprinting for their life.

A second later, the whistling of artillery shells finally sounded.

A deafening explosion erupted behind him, the ground gently shaking, Chen Shouyi almost feeling the rushing heat and wind at his back.

Although the power of gunpowder weapons decreased significantly after the mutation, it was only relative.

Now artillery explosives were a mix of Hexogen and TNT, a power several times that of black powder from World War I. Even if the power decreased, it far exceeded artillery from WWI, and could easily tear through flesh.

As for why firearms' power was diminished so much, that involved the amount of propellant.

Since the human race entered the information age, there was a pursuit of beyond-visual-range, high precision, intelligent, and high destructive capability, while the requirement for individual weapons focused on reliability, safety, economy, specialization, and achieving maximum efficiency within effective range.

Except for specialized arms like sniper rifles, most firearms no longer pursued longer ranges, but no one expected this sudden mutation to turn most firearms into mere sticks.

...

Seconds later, after running past the innermost artillery positions, he continued to run less than ten more seconds, having already exited the encirclement.

He glanced back, feeling completely at ease. In the not-so-distant field, covered in gunfire, flames soared into the sky, and countless giant scythe insect remains, tossed by the surging heat waves, fell like rain.

By then, the others had also arrived, each one present and accounted for.

Except for one military martial artist seemingly grazed by a shrapnel on his cheek, leaving a bloody mark, the rest were unscathed.

At this moment, a middle-aged man with a major general's insignia quickly approached from a distance.

"Commander, good to see you!" Xiao Changming and several military martial artists immediately saluted.

The military district commander glanced at the battle situation, seeing the situation still under control, then relaxed, retracting his gaze: "Colonel Xiao, welcome back safely. Won't you introduce me?"

"Haha, Commander, my mistake. This is General Sun from our Hedong City garrison, and this is the lead martial artist from the city government, Qin Liuyuan!" Xiao Changming said with a smile, his tone rather casual, indicating a good relationship.

"General Sun, nice to meet you!" Qin Liuyuan extended his hand to shake with Major General Sun.

"And this is the city government's martial artist, Chen Shouyi!" Xiao Changming continued introductions, whispering in his ear: "Brother Chen here is quite strong, I suspect he may have martial artist-level strength."

Xiao Changming did not lower his voice intentionally, so everyone nearby heard it clearly, causing many martial artists to have their hearts surge with waves, expressions of disbelief on their faces.

Chen Shouyi was also a bit surprised. What level was a martial artist?

Above the martial elite?

Major General Sun's eyes lit up upon hearing this, taking a good look before immediately extending both hands: "Brother Chen, hello, truly talented and promising."

"General Sun, nice to meet you! Overpraise!" Chen Shouyi dared not be neglectful, quickly extending both hands as well. After all, this was the commander of the garrison in Hedong City, holding the military power for the entire city, not someone to offend lightly.

"Interested in a career with the military?" Major General Sun offered enticingly.

While the military didn't think much of unregulated martial artists, martial elites were entirely different.

The military was quite tolerant of such figures, willing to accommodate them even if they did nothing but be honored, serving a crucial role in critical times, not to mention that he possibly had the power of a martial artist.

Chen Shouyi was momentarily stunned; he was doing well as a security advisor, free and easy, not wanting to join the military.

Just as he was about to gently refuse, a commotion arose from afar!

Looking over quickly, he saw the mysterious giant scythe insect glimpsed earlier, fiercely charging out of the flames, screeching shrilly as it darted towards them, with its wings reduced to a few bone spurs.

It no longer had the flickering anomaly that previously enveloped it, now severely injured, bleeding profusely, its forelimb blown off, and one of the six running legs broken. Yet its speed was still exceedingly fast, like a golden lightning bolt, crossing over a hundred meters in the blink of an eye.

"Commander, be careful, fall back!" Xiao Changming urged in a low voice.

"This is a battlefield!" General Sun said solemnly, maintaining a calm demeanor. As the military district commander, fleeing publicly on a battlefield would reflect poorly on his political awareness.

This terrifying creature seemed quite frantic at the moment, with no mind to attack nearby soldiers, dragging something assumed to be its viscera, recklessly bolting in a straight line desperately towards them.

Chapter 166: Frightening Encounter

Everyone was suddenly on high alert, bracing themselves for a major threat!

But as it ran, its speed gradually slowed down, and the intestines dragging behind it grew longer and longer, with more organs being pulled out during the run.

The tense atmosphere gradually dissipated, giving way to a slight sense of relief.

"It's not going to make it!" Qin Liuyuan said.

This wasn't just idle talk; who could possibly stay alive and lively dragging such a long intestine? Its initial speed was merely a desperate struggle before death.

Just seven or eight seconds later, its speed wasn't much faster than a normal person's jog.

It struggled to drag a five to six-meter long intestine, barely moving, and after a few minutes, it finally collapsed on the ground and never got up again.

Chen Shouyi drew his sword and quickly walked towards the powerful Giant Scythe Insect.

"Brother Chen, what are you doing?" Xiao Changming asked from behind.

"Getting some meat." Chen Shouyi replied without turning his head.

In recent days, his skills had improved faster than ever, suspecting it was the effect of eating Silver Giant Scythe Insect meat daily.

Given that the Silver Giant Scythe Insect was already so potent, this even more terrifying Giant Scythe Insect would surely be more effective.

"Can the meat of this insect be eaten?" Qin Liuyuan asked in confusion.

"Seems like it can be eaten!" Zhao Zhishan answered, "I've seen many citizens eating it; it should be edible."

"I'll check it out too!" Qin Liuyuan said. The stronger the creature, the more nourishing its flesh. He hadn't realized it before; now that he thought of it, he couldn't hold back.

"This is completely our soldiers' spoils; you can't take it all." General Sun joked, feeling somewhat protective; this was a rare treasure.

"Rest assured, General Sun, our Martial Artists in the City Government are few, so there's little to share. The bulk is still yours." Qin Liuyuan said with a smile.

On the other side, Chen Shouyi had already reached the side of the golden Giant Scythe Insect, feeling some admiration for its strong vitality despite its miserable state.

Its shell had been blown to pieces, especially the soft tail, which had a section blown off, leaving bloody and mangled flesh, with most of its intestines pulled out and sunken in a large part. Yet, it hadn't completely died.

Sensing Chen Shouyi approaching, it made a feeble cry, struggling to rise again.

But for Chen Shouyi, it posed no threat anymore.

He aimed at the insect's remaining one front leg and forcefully slashed with his sword, producing a loud metallic bang, as if cutting into metal. The sword only cut halfway before stopping.

Damn, it's really hard.

After withdrawing the sword, he slashed the wound again, finally severing the front leg.

The golden Giant Scythe Insect was several times larger than the delicate Silver Giant Scythe Insect, with the whole front leg comparable to an adult's thigh, about two and a half meters long when straightened.

Enough to eat.

The Silver Giant Scythe Insect meat from last time still has less than a third eaten!

...

The artillery fire gradually subsided,

The battlefield was littered with the remains of Giant Scythe Insects, and the sky had fully darkened.

The group politely declined the military's invitation and eagerly boarded the steam car they arrived in to return.

The car was filled with heaps of insect limbs and meat, both from Silver and Golden Giant Scythe Insects.

Ultimately, General Sun stingily reneged, stating only senior Martial Artists could take away the golden Giant Scythe Insect meat, leaving others to pick some Silver Giant Scythe Insect remains, causing everyone to quietly grumble.

...

Half an hour later, Chen Shouyi got off the car at the small door entrance.

It was already seven-thirty; he carried the giant front leg up to the fifth floor, took out his key to open the door, and found his parents and Xing Yue still awake.

"Thank heavens, blessed by Buddha, you finally returned!" Mrs. Chen sighed in relief, coming to greet him.

"I said before, it's just a simple task without danger, nothing to worry about?" Chen Shouyi reassured them: "See, I'm fine."

"There's no such thing as not worrying about this!" Mrs. Chen replied: "Why did you bring back such a thing again?"

"This giant insect is different; it just emerged from the spatial passage and was killed by the military's artillery, it hasn't eaten any humans." Chen Shouyi said, while putting the giant front leg in the corner of the living room.

"It looks like it's glowing?" Chen Xingyue said in amazement: "This golden insect is definitely stronger than the last silver one!"

In the dim candlelight, the front leg emitted a faint glow, appearing quite mystical.

"Of course!" Chen Shouyi said, then added to Chen Dawei: "Dad, is there any food left? I'm starving!"

"Yes, yes!" Chen Dawei said: "I'll go check the kitchen; the food should still be warm."

As he said this, he was about to go to the kitchen, but Chen Shouyi quickly held him down: "Dad, don't bother, it's pitch dark; what if you trip? I'll go instead!"

...

After dinner, he returned to the bedroom.

"I smell Yaqiao Flower again!" Once Shell Lady was placed on the bed, her nose kept sniffing, more sensitive than a dog's.

"This cannot be eaten; it's lethal." Chen Shouyi sternly warned while taking out a small vial of Divine Blood from his backpack.

Even on Earth, the Divine Blood still emitted a mysterious aura, though it had weakened considerably.

Chen Shouyi discovered that during this time, it showed no signs of solidifying, looking as if it had just flowed out from a god, and after watching it for a while, he set it aside, planning to inquire tomorrow about any nearby biological laboratories.

Then he took out from his backpack a bundle wrapped in clothes containing Divine Blood Soil, unfolded the clothes, and found that the surface Divine Blood on the soil was also moist, not showing any normal blood drying. Its blood cells were likely still alive.

A truly terrifying entity.

He clicked his tongue in wonder.

Shell Lady sniffed even more intensely; it was that smell, her eyes lit up as she leapt off the bed, sneaking towards him, and suddenly jumped into the Divine Blood Soil when Chen Shouyi wasn't paying attention.

But just as she jumped into the air, she was firmly caught by a large hand.

"Let go of me; you're squeezing me flat." Shell Lady shouted and fussed.

Chen Shouyi felt a chill run through him; fortunately, he caught her. If he hadn't, and she fell onto the Divine Blood Soil, the consequences would have been disastrous—recalling Yu Hongyong's experience sent shivers down his spine.

He placed Shell Lady aside, then hurriedly packed the Divine Blood Soil into a suitcase, locked it, and stored it in the top shelf of the wardrobe. This stuff was too dangerous; if Shell Lady or any family member accidentally touched it, regret would come too late.

Chapter 167: Safety Education

After doing all this, Chen Shouyi turned to look at the Shell Lady, who was tilting her head and sulking.

He was instantly filled with frustration,

"Do you know how dangerous that was just now?"

"Can you just eat things like that casually?"

Chen Shouyi looked at the silent Shell Lady, feeling the urge to poke her water-logged head with his finger.

He picked her up and put her back on the bed:

"Come, let me see if you've been squished."

The Shell Lady rolled her eyes at him, let out a cold snort, and looked completely uninterested in engaging with Chen Shouyi.

This reaction seemed fine; Chen Shouyi thought to himself, and no longer bothered with her. He was already used to her behavior like this, which happened almost every few days, and she'd be fine after a while.

He stood up, took a spoon, scooped some honey, and mixed it with warm water.

"If you're hungry, come over and eat." Chen Shouyi said, and with that, he continued practicing the Thirty-Six Body Refinement Techniques on his own.

The Shell Lady turned her head, and after a while, seeing that Chen Shouyi wasn't paying attention to her, she finally couldn't resist the hunger in her belly and jumped from the bed onto the table.

After the transformation, her abilities had slightly recovered, and a height difference of one or two meters was no longer challenging for her. If she wanted, she could effortlessly jump from the floor to the computer desk.

She drank the entire spoonful of honey, licking it clean.

Deliberately said loudly: "It's really awful."

Chen Shouyi had just finished a set, glanced at her amusingly, and continued practicing.

He practiced fifteen sets in a row before stopping.

Sweat was pouring out all over his body. When he turned to look at the Shell Lady, he saw that she had long returned to the bed, playing with a game of airplane chess by herself.

...

Chen Shouyi opened the attribute panel:

Strength: 14.4

Agility: 14.4

Constitution: 14.6

Intelligence: 13.9

Perception: 12.1

Willpower: 13.1

Knowledge: Chinese Language (Mastery 6); Physics (Proficient 12); Biology (10) Chemistry (Proficient 11); Mathematics (Proficient 9); English (Proficient 6); Programming (Beginner 6); Cooking (Beginner 5); Thirty-Six Body Refinement Techniques (Mastery 8); Meditation Refinement (Mastery 5); Swordsmanship (Mastery: 1); Archery (Proficient 18)

Innate Abilities: Natural Healing, Atmospheric Control (Beginner)

Energy Accumulation: 3.51

Chen Shouyi discovered that this mission experience had increased his willpower by a whole 0.3 points.

But then again, when had any mission ever been like this, almost facing a divine being directly?

The kind of fear as if facing a natural disaster was still chilling to think about, only a step away from death. If he had been even slightly affected by the aftermath, he probably would have died.

He looked at the knowledge skill column, swordsmanship was still only (Mastery: 1), and since the last upgrade to mastery, there had been hardly any progress for a long time. On the other hand, archery had improved rapidly recently, and he suspected it had much to do with the rapid improvement in perception. Mastery of archery to a certain extent relied heavily on intuitive judgment, and intuition came from perception.

Looking at the array of attribute skills,

"The strength is still too weak!" Chen Shouyi sighed inwardly.

Recalling the despair and powerlessness during the divine battle deeply stimulated him and also instilled a strong sense of crisis and urgency within him.

He had never realized so clearly what it was like to be an ant.

Facing a divine being, even a great martial artist is just an ant.

He now desperately wanted to improve his strength, not to face the divine beings directly, but to increase his survival capabilities as much as possible against potential future dangers.

This period is almost the most fragile time for humanity, and also the most dangerous time. He glanced at the energy accumulation that had reached 3.51, originally planning to continue accumulating it to further optimize the Thirty-Six Body Refinement Techniques. But now it seemed the wait was simply too long, and there were too many variables during that time, with danger potentially looming at any moment.

Instead of waiting for the future, it was better to seize the present.

Having thought so, he chose the swordsmanship option and immediately began optimization.

The next moment,

A dreamlike sensation came again.

Under a blanket of gray mist, he practiced the lunging stab over and over, with smooth and extremely skilled movements. Each thrust caused the gray mist to churn, with great momentum. As time went by, his movements subtly adjusted and changed by an almost imperceptible margin.

More and more muscles joined in this sword form, and muscle exertion became increasingly coordinated, synchronized, and nuanced. The power of the lunging stab became greater and greater, and by the final stab, it was like a sudden bolt of wind and thunder, as quick as lightning.

Compared to before, the speed increased by nearly thirty percent.

He then shifted his sword form, switching to another, and continued practicing like before, over and over...

...

At some point, Chen Shouyi opened his eyes in a daze, secretly savoring the moment with a flicker of strange light in his eyes.

"Never imagined that the swordsmanship I thought was already well-honed was actually crude under the Book of Knowledge. Not only were there numerous mistakes in the movements, but even the muscle exertion couldn't be called coordinated or synchronized, not to mention the finer muscle control.

If my previous power exertion was like a 10-thrust ratio aero engine, then after optimization, with the same material, it became a 13-thrust ratio.

Once I integrate and utilize these optimized sword forms, my strength would improve by more than threefold. Even facing the Silver Giant Scythe Insect, I could confidently slay it without even using the War Bow."

He picked up his sword and said to the Shell Lady: "I'm going out. Do you want to come?"

He wasn't planning to sleep anymore today.

Memory is, after all, memory. If he didn't practice and master it promptly while the memory was fresh, it would gradually fade away, and more troublesome was that the memories granted by the Book of Knowledge had no backup in the Memory Space.

The Shell Lady continued playing airplane chess, humming, and ignoring him.

"So temperamental today?"

"Then you stay here, don't leave, and don't run around," Chen Shouyi said, checking the door gap to make sure she couldn't get through, then pulled open the curtains, opened the window, and jumped out from the fifth floor.

As soon as the window opened, the Shell Lady beside him suddenly gaped in astonishment, no longer caring to play airplane chess, and hurriedly jumped to the computer desk, then sprang to the window ledge, standing there and gazing at the vast, mountain-like buildings outside, her little face filled with terror.

This was her first time seeing the outside world. Ever since she was captured by Chen Shouyi, she had always stayed inside the room, with the curtains usually drawn.

Upon suddenly seeing the vast buildings outside, she couldn't help but feel a strong sense of panic, seeing Chen Shouyi jumping down and walking away in the distance, her unease grew stronger.

Then she bit her lip, and leaped down as well, floating down through the air while crying out:

"Good Giant, wait for me, I'm scared!"

If it weren't for Chen Shouyi's keen hearing, he might have completely ignored it.

He watched as the Shell Lady floated down from mid-air, looking slightly surprised.

Soon the Shell Lady adjusted her direction, swung into an arc, and landed accurately on Chen Shouyi's shoulder, clinging tightly to his clothes, trembling all over.

"Since you're scared, you shouldn't have jumped down; it's so dangerous." Chen Shouyi said, thinking she was frightened by the height, and tried to comfort her.

The Shell Lady, terrified, looked at the surrounding buildings that appeared like mountains: "Are all these... the lairs of bad giants?"

Oh!

Chen Shouyi was taken aback, looking at the surrounding buildings generally around twenty floors high, and he suddenly realized, finding it amusing but maintained a serious face and said: "You're right, the bad giants live inside, and they love eating little ones like you, all tender and white. It'd only take two bites."

"Good Giant, you'll protect me, right?" The Shell Lady, frightened stiff, grabbed Chen Shouyi's clothes tightly, looking up at him with hope.

"Of course, I'm a Good Giant. You've been so well-behaved; I must protect you." Chen Shouyi reassured her, stopping the teasing.

"Yes, I've always been very well-behaved!" The Shell Lady said, and immediately sat upright, posing as a good little girl.

Chapter 168 - Promotion

The temperature was icy cold, and the night was as clear as water.

On the lawn of a park near the neighborhood, a figure moved like a phantom, with the light of the sword crossing in all directions.

Stab, slash, cut, flick, sweep; combined with basic footwork like step forward, step back, insert step, jump step, as his feet moved rapidly, deep pits exploded on the lawn sporadically, frozen soil splattered everywhere, making the area within several tens of meters pitted and uneven.

The optimization by the Book of Knowledge not only improved his swordsmanship but the entire Martial Arts Power System.

Every move, every stance, underwent a transformation.

For example, with the basic step, he used to take strides of eight or nine meters, but now he could effortlessly step over ten meters away, and this was only the result of just practicing. Once he becomes proficient, he believed that a stride of eleven or twelve meters would be no problem.

...

Perched on the top of a slender branch of a large tree not far away, the Shell Lady looked curiously and fearfully at the tall skyscrapers in the distance, occasionally turning her head to glance at Chen Shouyi. Seeing that Chen Shouyi was right beside her, she felt reassured and continued to watch.

Although the power had been cut and the city was plunged into darkness, the magnificent material civilization of humanity still provided the Shell Lady with an unparalleled visual impact. Her vision was extremely sharp; compared to Chen Shouyi, she was like a great sorcerer to a mere novice, being able to clearly see every detail of the distant buildings, even in the night.

"So many gems," the Shell Lady murmured, looking at the enormous glass walls of the skyscrapers.

...

Time swiftly passed, and soon the sky turned a bit brighter, dawn had arrived.

Chen Shouyi finally sheathed his sword and stopped, his skin flushed red, steaming.

Looking at his clothes and pants, which were torn to shreds from the intense friction, he let out a sigh internally.

These clothes are becoming less and less durable!

Fortunately, he had the foresight to take off his coat and shoes before practice, preserving them.

"Let's head back!" Chen Shouyi shouted towards the distance.

"Oh!" the faintly weak voice of the Shell Lady echoed distantly, as she agilely leaped a few times among the branches, jumping off the tree.

Her calves moved swiftly through the grass like a mouse, quickly running toward him. When she was less than two meters away from Chen Shouyi, she leaped up, glided through the air momentarily, and landed accurately on Chen Shouyi's shoulder, sitting firmly.

It was still only four in the morning, and besides patrolling soldiers, the streets were deserted.

Chen Shouyi deliberately avoided the soldiers and headed toward the neighborhood.

"Are those all bad giants?" the Shell Lady anxiously whispered, looking at the soldiers.

Ugh!

Chen Shouyi was momentarily stunned, thought for a moment and explained, "Not to me, but yes to you. I don't eat small beings like you, but they do."

The Shell Lady nodded seemingly understanding, gripping her clothes even tighter, and after a while, she asked, "Are there many small beings like me here?"

This question stumped Chen Shouyi briefly, but then he had a sudden idea and said, "No, but there are lots of Prepared, and they eat the Prepared."

The Shell Lady opened her mouth in horror: "The Prepared are my friends and so cute, why would they eat them?"

"They eat them because they're cute."

"Then these bad giants must want to eat me too. Good giant, let's move faster; we must not let them find us!"

Safety education worked well! Chen Shouyi felt satisfied and said, "Okay."

Before long, Chen Shouyi returned to the neighborhood, looked up at the window of his bedroom on the fifth floor, and swiftly leaped to grab the window sill on the third floor. He then used his strength again, silently flipping into the window and entering the bedroom.

...

"Bai Xiaoling, the Director wants to see you!" a young assistant entered the big office of the second squad to announce.

"What does the Director want with me?" Bai Xiaoling asked as she put down the files in her hands.

Since the military imposed martial law after the anomaly, the Public Security Bureau no longer maintained social order, but the surge in criminal cases and the restriction of traffic communications made the Public Security Bureau's work countless times busier, with unsolved cases piling up like a mountain.

Thus, the previously idle Bai Xiaoling transitioned from being a full-time liaison to a part-timer.

"I don't know!" replied the assistant.

Bai Xiaoling stood up. She actually missed the days of being a full-time liaison, where work was easy, without much pressure, and she could often see handsome guys. Unlike now, writing case files every day, even her eyes were getting strained.

She soon reached the door of the office, knocked on it.

After hearing "come in," she stepped into the office, finding more than one person inside:

"Director, what do you need me for?"

"Sit, sit, sit, don't stand!" Director Huang said kindly: "Let me introduce you, this is Director Lin from the City Government office, who wants to know about Advisor Chen!"

As her butt just touched the sofa, Bai Xiaoling saw this and quickly stood up: "Hello, Director Lin."

"Don't be nervous, you're Advisor Chen's liaison officer, how is your relationship usually?" Director Lin asked kindly, with his face full of smiles.

"It's okay!" Bai Xiaoling said, puzzled.

"Specifically what level, acquaintance, friend, or close friends?" Director Lin asked.

"Director Lin, did something happen to Advisor Chen?" Bai Xiaoling felt something was amiss, her expression turning tense.

"Don't guess wildly, Advisor Chen is fine. I'm asking on behalf of the organization," Director Lin quickly replied.

"Just ordinary friends!" Bai Xiaoling suppressed her inner confusion, thought for a moment, and said.

Director Lin seemed slightly disappointed, but then continued asking, "How would you describe Advisor Chen's personality?"

"A bit aloof, but easy to talk to, not much arrogance, just..."

"Just what?"

"Just a bit of a homebody, besides training, he rarely goes out or socializes!"

"Indeed, geniuses are born from diligence!" Director Lin couldn't help but sigh.

Director Lin then asked some unrelated questions, such as hobbies, and family situation, all of which Bai Xiaoling answered one by one.

"In the future, you'll continue to be Advisor Chen's... no, now it's Chief Advisor Chen's full-time liaison officer," Director Lin said.

Though the power of Martial Artists remains merely a rumor and cannot be confirmed, the power of Advanced Martial Artists has been completely proven, and it's far stronger than ordinary Advanced Martial Artists. Such a person needs to be highly regarded.

Bai Xiaoling looked at Director Huang, dumbfounded.

Director Huang smiled and said, "No need to look at me; this is the organization's decision. Also, you will be promoted to a deputy section chief level."

...

Until Bai Xiaoling left the office, she remained dizzy and in disbelief; although an Advanced Martial Artist might not necessarily become a Chief Security Advisor, those who are Chief Security Advisors are definitely Advanced Martial Artists.

Could it be that Advisor Chen is already an Advanced Martial Artist?

And now she also got a promotion, like a rising tide lifting all boats; it all felt like a dream.

Chapter 169: Blow

Chen Shouyi opened his eyes after sleeping until half past nine.

Although he only slept for five hours, he felt refreshed, with no trace of sleepiness, and the exhaustion of his body had vanished, leaving him full of energy.

His constitution was strong, especially with his innate ability of Natural Healing, making his body's recovery speed astonishing. Other Martial Artists might experience muscle strains after long periods of intense activity, requiring extended rest, but he had no such issue.

He lay there with his eyes open for a few seconds before sitting up from the bed.

Turning his head to look beside the pillow, he found that Shell Lady had already vanished.

He clearly remembered that when he went to sleep at dawn, Shell Lady had also lain down.

Fortunately, after carefully searching every corner of the bedroom for a while, Chen Shouyi found traces of her. Her small body was squatting on the windowsill, and her pea-sized eyes were sneakily peeking outside through a tiny gap in the curtains.

Chen Shouyi felt speechless and, after getting dressed, walked over: "What are you looking at?"

Perhaps too focused, Shell Lady was startled by Chen Shouyi's voice, trembling all over and nearly falling from the windowsill: "Good Giant, you scared me to death!"

Then, nervously whispered; "I see many bad Giants down there!"

"I've been saying all along, there are bad Giants everywhere here. Alright! Stop watching and go to sleep."

"But!" Shell Lady looked as if she wanted to say more: "I heard a bad Giant next to us speaking just now."

It's likely she heard the voices of his parents and sister talking in the morning.

Feeling somewhat helpless, Chen Shouyi comforted, "Don't be afraid. Isn't there me here? I will protect you."

"Giant, you really are a good Giant." Perhaps recalling Chen Shouyi's consistent display of strength, Shell Lady instantly felt reassured and said flattery.

Glad you know.

Chen Shouyi felt comforted and took out a spoon to mix a spoonful of honey for her: "You are also the most obedient little one. Eat it and go to sleep soon."

"Oh!" Shell Lady nodded obediently, jumped from the windowsill to the computer desk, and began drinking the honey.

After she drank it, Chen Shouyi stuffed her into the briefcase and zipped it up.

...

"Brother, you're up!" Chen Xingyue greeted Chen Shouyi as he came out of the bedroom.

"Hmm, where are Mom and Dad?" Chen Shouyi asked.

"They went to the community park." Chen Xingyue said, "There's food still warm in the pressure cooker!"

In recent days, with the comprehensive construction of defense outposts in Hedong City and the large-scale recruitment underway, the situation in Hedong City has gradually improved, and the city has begun to bustle with life. Plus, with soldiers enforcing martial law, daytime security is reasonably good.

Chen Shouyi wasn't too worried about his parents' safety and acknowledged with a sound before heading to the bathroom to brush his teeth and freshen up.

The tap water was only shut off for three days and had promptly been restored.

After freshening up, Chen Shouyi went to the kitchen.

The pressure cooker was a large-capacity one used in restaurants. As the family had a Martial Artist and a Martial Artist Apprentice, the two big and small gourmets, breakfast was mostly solid food every day, with rice consumption alone comparable to five or six families combined.

To save trouble, Chen Shouyi simply served a large bowl of rice, and while eating breakfast, said to Chen Xingyue, "I guess it won't be long before we have to move."

"Move? We're living just fine, why move? And where will we get the money?" Chen Xingyue asked, surprised.

"No need for money!" Chen Shouyi raised his eyebrows, somewhat smugly said, "The military and city government are planning to build a Safe Zone, and we will have a house inside, a villa!"

Chen Xingyue squealed in delight: "Brother, when did this happen?"

"Yesterday, perhaps. I forgot to mention it, but it might take some time to move in."

"No matter how long it takes, it's not a problem. Brother, you're amazing." Chen Xingyue, thrilled, hugged Chen Shouyi and gave him a kiss.

"Gross, all slobber!" Chen Shouyi immediately put down his chopsticks, wiped his face in disgust, and retorted.

...

After eating, Chen Shouyi fetched his sword from the room, picked up the golden foreleg in the living room, and stepped onto the balcony to start processing.

He used the sword to split open the hard outer shell, revealing muscle inside as white as jade, with a translucent hue, looking appetizing enough.

Chen Shouyi couldn't resist tearing off a small piece and slowly chewing it.

It wasn't as fishy as he thought, and aside from being quite chewy, it carried a strong freshness and sweetness while chewing. With wasabi and soy sauce, the taste might be even better.

Not long after eating, there was a faint warmth from the stomach.

"Is it tasty?" Chen Xingyue squatted beside him, asking curiously.

"It's good. Do you want to try?" Chen Shouyi asked; people in Jiangnan are used to eating raw fish and shrimp and are relatively unopposed to raw food.

"I don't want to eat it. Beware of parasites!"

Chen Shouyi felt he had swallowed a fly, annoyed by her words, and said with a dark face, "Go, go, go!"

At this point, a knock came at the door, and Chen Xingyue immediately ran over to open it: "Brother, Sister Xiao Ling is here."

"Oh, let her sit for a while. I'll come when I'm done."

Since it wasn't a guest, Chen Shouyi wasn't overly courteous, continuing to chop at the giant foreleg.

"That's just the way he is. Sister Xiao Ling, don't mind!" Chen Xingyue apologized, her brother was a typical straightforward guy, hoping for him to be considerate and cherish beauties—impossible.

"It's alright, it's alright, you carry on!" Bai Xiaoling walked into the living room hastily.

Watching on the balcony, each chop made his hands seem to vanish, creating loud noises, even causing the air in the living room to flow rapidly, the wind blew strongly, her heart felt awe-struck.

"Is your brother really only seventeen? Could he have reported a younger age?" Bai Xiaoling recaptured her gaze and couldn't help but ask Chen Xingyue.

"No, he is, seventeen, after New Year, he's eighteen. What's wrong?" Chen Xingyue asked, bewildered.

"Do you know your brother is a Martial Artist?" Bai Xiaoling suddenly whispered.

"A... great Martial Artist?" Chen Xingyue heard this and was dumbfounded.

"A great Martial Artist!" Bai Xiaoling nodded, confirming.

"But... my brother just became a Martial Artist, you must be mistaken." Chen Xingyue said in disbelief.

"That's why your brother is a genius!" Bai Xiaoling asserted as if it were a matter of course.

Chen Xingyue wanted to say something, but... she was also a genius, wasn't she? From childhood till now, she was the little star, little princess within her friends and family circles. Conversely, her brother was always dim, unknown, letting her bully him every day.

It wasn't until after last summer vacation that he suddenly became impressive.

Why is it that the more effort she put in, the wider the gap became? There must be some mistake.

...

Chen Shouyi was busy for half an hour, scooping out all the meat before standing up to wash his hands, smiling and asking, "What were you chatting about?"

Chapter 170: Circulation

"So, does this mean my status has been enhanced?" After Bai Xiaoling explained the purpose of her visit, Chen Shouyi asked.

This didn't surprise him. Since he was already exposed, these things were bound to happen sooner or later, but he didn't expect it to happen so quickly.

"Yes, although you can't register just yet, the City Government has recognized your status as a Martial Artist, and you will receive the benefits afforded to a Martial Artist. The city will also help supplement the national Martial Artist stipend."

Bai Xiaoling handed over some documents. Chen Shouyi flipped through them and discovered that the benefits of a Martial Artist were worlds apart from those of an ordinary martial artist.

The national stipend alone is fifty thousand, with the province and city each supplementing two hundred thousand, for a total of four hundred fifty thousand, all tax-free. Adding the salary from being the Chief Security Advisor with the City Government, it's almost a million. The benefits are quite substantial.

If this were the peaceful times before the crisis, an unregistered and untested Martial Artist would never encounter such an extraordinary set of circumstances. It's only during such crises that this becomes possible.

Hedong City is certainly handling this special situation with special measures.

While Chen Shouyi was skimming through the documents, Bai Xiaoling took the opportunity to gaze at him with her heart pounding.

This is a Martial Artist.

The ultimate human warrior, a killing machine, yet so handsome and striking, with skin so fair it seemed you could squeeze water out of it. He's like the perfect idol.

Chen Shouyi remained cool and oblivious.

After a while, he put down the documents and looked at Bai Xiaoling, asking, "By the way, do you know anyone involved in biological research?"

"Ah!" Bai Xiaoling quickly averted her gaze, nervously fixing her hair. "Advisor Chen, what were you asking me just now?"

Without much thought, Chen Shouyi repeated, "What I asked was if you know anyone involved in biological research."

"Biological research? I have a cousin who's an associate professor in microbiology at Jiangnan University. Why do you ask?" Bai Xiaoling responded, puzzled.

His sudden shift in topic left her bewildered.

Weren't we just talking about the benefits?

"That's great! When will you be free?" Chen Shouyi's heart leaped with joy. He only asked casually and ended up with a pleasant surprise.

Divine Blood isn't an ordinary item; its value cannot be measured in money. It's priceless, and people would be uneasy entrusting it to strangers. If it's with a relative of someone trusted, the confidence in them is naturally higher.

After all, there's also a hostage involved.

"I'm free every day now," Bai Xiaoling said.

"Great, let's go now!" Chen Shouyi stood up and said.

"But Jiangnan University is far from here!" Bai Xiaoling hesitated.

"No worries, I have a car!" Chen Shouyi replied.

Then Chen Shouyi went to his room, took the Divine Blood stored in a bottled water container, wrapped it in several layers of plastic bags, and carefully tucked it into his pocket.

Before leaving, he called out to Chen Xingyue: "Xing Yue, tell mom and dad I won't be coming back for lunch!"

"Got it!"

...

As they reached the parking lot, Bai Xiaoling was still wondering what Chen Shouyi meant by saying he had a car. Then she realized she had overthought it when she saw he had only a bicycle.

"Hop on!" Chen Shouyi said.

"I also came by bike," Bai Xiaoling replied modestly.

"You're too slow, just get on!" Chen Shouyi urged.

Bai Xiaoling sat demurely on the bicycle's back seat, and as soon as she did, the bike jerked, startling her to hug Chen Shouyi's waist tightly.

Such a strong and warm body, it felt like his muscles were moving powerfully and rhythmically beneath her.

But soon she lost interest in daydreaming.

As the bicycle left the housing complex, its speed increased. The scenery on both sides blurred past, making her feel as if she were on a motorcycle speeding at sixty to seventy kilometers per hour, not on a bicycle.

The sky is overcast today with no trace of sunlight. Even though it's nearing noon, the temperature hovers around minus two or three degrees. The biting cold wind felt like knives cutting through, and Bai Xiaoling huddled behind Chen Shouyi, silently complaining.

This is worse than riding my own bike.

Chen Shouyi couldn't feel Bai Xiaoling's discomfort. Feeling the slender body pressed against his back, he couldn't help but let his mind wander. His sharp senses vividly perceived her curvy, delicate, and supple form.

If only it were summer.

The season for spilling hormones.

...

Chen Shouyi's bicycle sped along the road for motor vehicles, his feet pedaling powerfully.

Occasionally, he would see a steam-powered car spitting white exhaust, either passing by or being overtaken by his bike.

Despite the time passed, the steam-powered cars in Hedong City remained scarce, not exceeding ten thousand. In this massive city, they were like pepper scattered on a vast area, barely noticeable.

These steam-powered vehicles were mostly large trucks, loaded heavily with mountains of goods, lumbering forward like old oxen pulling carts.

Grains, meat, vegetables, coal, steel...

To keep a mega-city with a population of over ten million running, the daily consumption of resources was unimaginable.

Logistical transportation was undoubtedly the biggest challenge at present.

Half an hour later, as they passed a railway viaduct, a long whistle sounded from behind.

Curious, Chen Shouyi stopped his bicycle and looked back.

Before long, an old steam locomotive, as if it had come out of a museum, puffed thick white smoke, pulling heaps of coal carriages slowly forward.

Indeed, on the front of the locomotive, Chen Shouyi could see the slogan "Serve the People." As someone born on the cusp of the millennia, he had only ever seen this scene online.

It emitted powerful, clanging sounds, like a roaring Giant Beast!

The national logistics seemed to be on the move again, indicating a positive shift in the situation.

Only after the last carriage had passed did Chen Shouyi snap out of it, feeling invigorated.

"When did the trains start running again?"

"I think it was two days ago. Didn't you read the newspaper?" Bai Xiaoling replied.

...

After riding for another half hour, Chen Shouyi and Bai Xiaoling finally arrived at the Jiangnan University campus.

Soldiers were stationed on the periphery, and every few hundred meters, there was a defense outpost loaded with artillery.

As one of the country's top universities, the importance of Jiangnan University was undoubtedly significant.

Not only were tens of thousands of students from across the country stranded here, but there were also numerous national and provincial key laboratories concentrated here.